

Peace is the Way: Valuing and Incorporating a Spiritual Paradigm in Peace and Conflict Studies

by

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## **Abstract**

One of the most salient issues the world faces is World Peace. Humans are the only species on the planet who are systemically and intentionally violent with intent to harm and kill. At the same time, there is significant evidence suggesting that humans are inherently peaceful. What then, could account, not for violent behavior, but from preventing us from living peacefully and harmoniously as we were intended to do? Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) is an academic discipline which has focused on identifying the root causes of conflict and violence with the conviction that by addressing the roots of conflict and violence, peace can ensue. However, the goal to attain positive peace and sustainable peace have remained elusive. Even though PACS theories have been changing and responding to various factors to help address issues that hinder direct and indirect violence, in order to attain peace, this goal has remained elusive. This dissertation is a theoretical investigation and exploration of PACS to understand PACS' theories from the discipline's ontological lens. I surmised that PACS' ontological lens has been grounded in colonial ideology which I have argued is divisive; entangled in violence and has an external focus. These three elements are not grounded in peace; as such, I have made the claim that they can be a hinderance to peace. In light of this observation, I make a case to support my conviction that what is needed in PACS is another ontological lens to understand and know peace – one that is spiritual. From a spiritual lens, peace is characterized by nonduality (which harmonizes us); by ahimsa (a commitment to nonviolence); and by an internal focus (meaning that peace is a practice that comes from consciousness). From a spiritual lens, peace is understood for what peace is, as opposed to what peace is not, i.e. the absence of violence. Thus, to understand and learn about peace from a spiritual ontological lens, I develop a spiritual theoretical paradigm and a spiritual conceptual framework for undertaking peace research in PACS.

## **Dedication**

Maria, Destatadora de Nudos

The late Jayden Michael Baker, may peace always be with you.

To all of humanity - for doing their best to make this beautiful and amazing world more loving, joyful and peaceful.

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## List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Spirituality Spectrum excerpt from Grunwald (2025)</i> .....	87
Table 2 <i>The Cultural Proficiency Continuum</i> .....	131
Table 3 <i>The Spiritually-based Framework for Peace</i> .....	133
Table 4 <i>Essential Elements Cultural Proficiency and Spiritually-based Framework for Peace</i> .....	134
Table 5 <i>Questions for Intersubjective Qualitative Inquiry</i> .....	171
Table 6 <i>A Spiritual Theoretical Framework for PACS</i> .....	172

## List of Figures

Figure 1 <i>Linear representation of the Cultural Proficiency Continuum</i> .....	130
Figure 2 <i>Holistic representation Peace-is-the-way</i> .....	135
Figure 3 <i>Conceptual Framework for a Spiritual Paradigm</i> .....	169
Figure 4 <i>Spiritual Conceptual Framework Centred in Nonduality (for PACS)</i> .....	169

## Table of contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Dedication .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Tables .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Background, Context and Structure of Study.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Negative Peace, Positive Peace, Sustainable Peace and Peacebuilding.....	6
The Issue and a Proposal.....	9
Structure of the Study.....	13
<b>Part One: The-Way-to-Peace.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter 1: A Genealogy of PACS’ Theoretical Frameworks.....</b>	<b>22</b>
Conflict Management.....	22
Mediation.....	23
Sanctions.....	25
Legal Mechanisms.....	26
Peace Operations .....	29
Conflict Resolution .....	31
Problem Solving Workshops.....	32
Needs-based Identity Theory.....	33

Liberal Peacebuilding and Statebuilding.....	37
Liberal – Local Hybridity.....	39
Critical and Emancipatory Peacebuilding.....	40
<b>Chapter 2: Characteristics of the-Way-to-Peace .....</b>	<b>45</b>
The Colonial, Colonization and its Impact .....	47
Othering as a Divisive Tool .....	51
Feminist Perspectives .....	55
Impact of Othering.....	56
The Entanglements of Violence .....	58
The Roots of Violence.....	59
Measuring Peace.....	66
External Focus on Peacebuilding .....	70
Focus on Structures .....	71
Violence As a Satisfier .....	74
<b>Part Two: Peace-is-the-way .....</b>	<b>82</b>
Religion and Spirituality .....	83
<b>Chapter 3: Spirituality and PACS.....</b>	<b>90</b>
Textbooks .....	92
Journals.....	94
Baseline for Spirituality in PACS .....	106

<b>Chapter 4: Characteristics of Peace-is-the-way .....</b>	<b>109</b>
Nonduality .....	109
Ahimsa (Non-violence) .....	114
Inner Peace .....	120
The Insight of Peace .....	123
Three Domains of Existence.....	125
A Spiritually-based Framework for Peace .....	129
<b>Part Three: Applying a Spiritual Ontological Lens in PACS.....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Turning Inward - Meditation .....</b>	<b>143</b>
Identity Narratives.....	144
Attachment .....	145
Connecting with our True Selves .....	147
<b>Chapter 6: A Spiritual Theoretical Framework Centred in Nonduality.....</b>	<b>153</b>
Ontology.....	153
Epistemology and Conceptual Frameworks.....	157
Position-taking.....	159
Researcher Preparation .....	160
Research preparation .....	162
What Are Research Paradigms? .....	164
What Is a Spiritual Paradigm?.....	165

A Spiritual Conceptual Framework and a Spiritual Theoretical Framework for PACS..... 167

**Conclusion: Is Peace Possible When We Are Not at Peace?..... 176**

**References ..... 186**

**Appendix A ..... 209**

## Background, Context and Structure of Study

One book that resonated with me very deeply, around the age of 10, was the tale of *Robin Hood and His Merry Men*. I fell in love with the idea that they robbed from the rich to help the poor. Perhaps it started then, but I have often felt a calling towards social justice. Throughout my career in the discipline of education - beginning in a daycare centre, then as an English language instructor to immigrants in Canada, as Education Director of an adult literacy program, as a Curriculum Consultant for Intercultural Teaching and Learning in a post-secondary institution, and as a Program Manager for an Indigenous teacher-education program – I have been advocating for systemic and structural change to the best of my ability, approaching my work from an equity, diversity and inclusion lens.<sup>1</sup> Alongside my career development, something else was unfolding. In my late 20s, I was drawn to yoga, compelled by the teachings. More specifically, the notion of *ahimsa* which I understood early on to mean nonviolence and non-competitiveness spoke to me. These preliminary understandings of some of the Yogic teachings enticed me to learn more and subsequently led to a spiritual practice. Both the practice of yoga and meditation subsequently became a regular part of my life. Both practices have ebbed and flowed over the years – sometimes strong and other times, thinning out. This pattern has been an opportunity to learn, grow and develop spiritually. Spiritual growth and development, I have come to understand, is ongoing. That is, there is no end point, and nothing specific and tangible to accomplish (unlike a degree where one is presented with a credential of proof). Our spiritual journey is one that potentially deepens over a lifetime and beyond. Even as I approached the end of writing this dissertation, I encountered a series of profound spiritual experiences (which I will

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<sup>1</sup> The language now used - equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) – in the 1980's and 90's used to be multicultural education which evolved to anti-racist education circa the 2000's and now is more broadly referred to as EDI – and sometimes IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility).

elaborate on in the conclusion of this dissertation). If we are aware of it, and allow it, all our experiences can indeed be spiritual. However, profound spiritual experiences are those which stand out to us for some reason. These experiences beg us to take pause and reflect on what teachings they offer.

For many years, my spiritual practice had been separated from other aspects of my life. Even as I wrote the previous sentence, it seemed like an odd thing to say. How can a spiritual practice be separated from other aspects of one's life? However, it might not be that uncommon. Western culture is secular, individualistic and often compartmentalizing. People tend to have a work life, a home life, a play life, a family life, a spiritual life, etc. When one is conditioned/socialized to compartmentalize their lives, it stands to reason that the spiritual aspect of our lives would also be compartmentalized. For instance, in Canada, in academia, a secular stance is the norm, unless in a faith-based institution, in Theology departments and/or in specific courses. In fact, I would argue that in general, it is practically a cultural taboo to speak openly of one's faith and religious beliefs in school and in the workplace; and more so must be avoided if one's religion is not Christianity (mainstream). As a result of such socialization (in Canada), not only did I avoid acknowledging my Hindu and Islamic upbringing, but I also learned to separate my spiritual life from the other aspects of my life. In some regards, I even separated it from myself.

It was during a particularly difficult period in my life that I made the connection or had the realization that the spiritual aspect of my life would be the part that would bring resolution. The resolution I needed was inner peace. At the time, I would not have called or even recognize that my need was a need for inner peace. I knew I was in distress, and I needed my situation to change. This was ultimately a leap of faith, after all else had failed – all things external and all

things lodged in the ego had failed to bring me inner peace. It was a leap of faith that was difficult because my ego fought hard against it. Thus, my acknowledgement that a spiritual path would bring inner peace, if I am speaking honestly, was a last resort, almost an act of desperation. Having fallen ill from the conflict I had been experiencing for an extended period of time and having fallen ill from the experience, it became clear that change was imperative. The moment I surrendered to the spiritual side, peace and relief were instantaneous. This specific experience does not mean that I have always followed my spiritual inclinations since then – no. There have still been times and circumstances when the ego has taken precedence. Such experiences have served as reminders and as teachers that a spiritual option is always possible. The challenge has been to hold one’s awareness on the spiritual plane. How can we keep our awareness focused on the spiritual? This question will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Over time, my spiritual cultivation and practice have helped me in overcoming some difficult challenges, particularly when dealing with conflict. Not an easy task, and not without its challenges, my commitment to a spiritual practice, has nonetheless been a “game changer” in my life’s journey. However, relying on spiritual guidance should not be reserved only for times of conflict and troubles. Spiritual guidance is always accessible and can serve us in other aspects of life. For example, as I began to take chances exploring my spiritual inclinations (so I could learn how to trust this aspect of myself), I began to gain more insight and develop the courage to explore its application more broadly. Thus, I incorporated a spiritual element professionally, and now academically.

As I matured, my passion and conviction that I had a role in social responsibility became more profound. With the support of some mentors, I subsequently found myself exploring options for graduate programs with a focus on social justice. By then, I was certain that a

spiritual component would be prioritized in whatever academic adventure awaited. I applied to the Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) program at the Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice at the University of Manitoba. In my application for admission to the PACS program, my letter of intent stated the following:

Growing up in Guyana, moving to Canada and working in the field of adult education are significant life experiences that have shaped both my personal and professional interest and commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and social justice. I believe it is time for me to build on and develop my own level of social responsibility, from a place of ahimsa, and as such, my endeavour to further my studies in a doctoral program which is as much a personal and spiritual journey as it is an academic one. To this end, I hope to expand my theoretical knowledge with respect to social justice which will in turn inform my practical work in the field of adult education. As discussed in more detail in my research proposal, I would like to examine whether or not self-reflection and spiritual practice can be an alternative for measuring and promoting peace if such practices are fostered within an educational setting.

When I embarked on my PACS educational journey, I was excited and intrigued to learn within a new discipline. Without a doubt, I was exposed to many new ideas, and I was particularly thrilled to learn that PACS had a strong social justice bent. However, it was not long before I could see some limitations in PACS' theories and practice. The most poignant was witnessing and experiencing racism in the program. These experiences left me feeling frustrated and disillusioned. I was distraught as I had not expected to find racist constructs operating in PACS. I wondered how it was possible that prospective peace scholars and practitioners were unaware that they were upholding ideology, structures, systems and practice that were divisive and harmful? Not being able to make sense of this initially, there were times when I wanted to withdraw from the program. When I felt this way, I would meditate and remind myself to be led by my spiritual guides who always led me back to the program. There were times when it was very difficult to stay on the path. As mentioned earlier, a spiritual journey is ongoing, and for me, witnessing and experiencing racism in the program meant that there was something that I

needed to learn – a spiritual lesson was waiting for me. In retrospect, I had to experience the racial incidents so I could learn how to quell the anger and frustration I felt, and more importantly make peace with these experiences. That this lesson was imminent was not something I recognized immediately. It took months to recognize and acknowledge that the experiences were opportunities to temper my ego and move ahead spiritually. Approaching racist incidents from a place of peace (as opposed to anger and frustration) is not an easy endeavour. However, I learned that coming from a place of peace enabled me to engage more effectively with perpetrators and (hopefully) move them along as well, if there was a willingness to do so.

By the end of my coursework, I had surmised that the current state of PACS could best be described as at an impasse. I drew this conclusion based two aspects. One, with respect to racism, was briefly discussed above. That is, the racist attitudes and behaviours I observed enabled division (which to me was the opposite of peace). The other aspect was that there had not been any theoretical developments in the discipline that fell outside the dominant ontological and epistemological frameworks in PACS. In other words, even though there had been new and significant theoretical developments in the discipline, these theories, I argue, have all been grounded in colonial ontological and epistemological underpinnings. In addition, the theories that fell outside the boundaries of PACS' dominant ontological and epistemological frameworks have had to operate on the periphery. Hence, one of the most salient points of this dissertation is the proposition that PACS must establish space to incorporate and place value on a variety of ontological perspectives – and one such example, which I develop in this dissertation, is a spiritual perspective. Some scholars such as Pugh (2013) and Chandler (2017) have noted that PACS does indeed need to challenge its foundations, however they have not provided any direction on how to do so. In this dissertation I will explore and examine PACS' ontological

underpinnings arguing that it is grounded in colonial ideology and that absent altogether, is a spiritual component. However, prior to delving into greater detail the issue and the proposal of this work, I first define some key terminology – negative peace, positive peace, sustainable peace and peacebuilding.

### **Negative Peace, Positive Peace, Sustainable Peace and Peacebuilding**

*Negative peace, positive peace, sustainable peace, and peacebuilding* are commonly used terms in PACS. PACS scholar, Johan Galtung has most often been cited and credited for distinguishing between the terms *negative peace* and *positive peace*. However, Galtung (2008) has pointed out that the term positive peace ought to be credited to Marie Jahoda (circa 1958). The term positive peace was in response to an interest to define peace as more than the absence of violence (Galtung, 2008). Peace had to be something else (demarcated as “X”). Thus, *positive peace* was substituted for X to complete the understanding of peace at the time (Galtung, 2008). In current PACS literature, negative peace is defined as the absence of war and direct violence and positive peace is defined as a social justice endeavour that includes sustainable development, political participation, social inclusion and reconciliation, to list a few (Byrne et al, 2020; Tschirgi, 2020). Put another way, negative peace is the absence of personal violence and positive peace is the absence of structural violence (Cormier, 2020). *Structural violence* refers to “mechanisms through which injustices are built into the rules of the game and the kinds of ills people suffer from lost opportunities at different turning points in their development” (Simmons, 2011, p. 116). The main argument Galtung has made to support the distinction between positive peace and negative peace is that peace is not sustainable if there is no justice. In other words, achieving positive peace is a prerequisite for attaining sustainable peace (Byrne et al, 2020).

Sustainable peace, in general is most commonly used in relation to positive peace. According to Caparini and Milante (2017), “sustaining peace seeks to shift actors away from structural violence and towards collaborative solutions and development, and thus towards positive peace outcomes” (para 3). Mahmoud (2018) has pointed out that the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council has defined sustaining peace as “a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society” (para 1). However, Coleman (2018), co-director of the Advanced Consortium for Cooperation, Conflict, and Complexity (AC4), has cautioned that there is a lack of evidence or data as to what encompasses a peaceful society – as peaceful societies have been rarely studied – thus, making the task of measuring peace a challenge (as cited in Mahmoud, 2018). Nonetheless, Coleman (2018) has also pointed out that research has been undertaken to learn what produces sustained peace. The AC4 has acknowledged that determining the precise factors which can be attributed to sustainably peaceful societies is complex. However, the AC4 has identified some of predictive factors (among many) for peaceful societies. These factors are shared identities, common goals among citizens within a country, and celebrating gender equality (Mahmoud, 2018). At the same time, Coleman (2018) has drawn the conclusion that the fundamental factor for sustainably peaceful societies is “how members of one group respond to and treat members of another group” (as cited in Mahmoud, 2018, para 5). While Coleman (2018) did not elaborate on what this could mean, he has pointed out that teaching peaceful values in early education results in societies with positive conflict management. His claim, while not conclusive, leaves one to infer that perhaps learning shared values and common goals from an early age could potentially result in peaceful behaviour among citizens which will subsequently lead to peaceful societies.

The phenomenon of peacebuilding emerged at the end of World War II (Ryan, 2013). At its emergence, the term peacebuilding specifically referred to post-war rebuilding and reconstruction for Western Europe and Japan (Ryan, 2013). The current conceptualization of peacebuilding, however, did not enter the mainstream until 1992 when the United Nations introduced a new definition in their publication, *An Agenda for Peace* (Ryan, 2013). The UN definition of peacebuilding is “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, para 21). This definition, some PACS scholars have argued, is broad and open and has led to various interpretations. For instance, Tschirgi (2013) has cautioned that there is no universal definition of *peacebuilding*. She has added that the expansive breadth of the concept of peacebuilding has led to its appropriation by different actors in order to accommodate their respective agendas and interests, in particular, the neoliberal agenda (Tschirgi, 2013). Lederach (1997) has viewed peacebuilding as more than standardized formulas and mechanical strategies. In fact, he has claimed that the aforementioned practices are ineffective, irrelevant in many settings or simply offensive (Lederach, 1997). Lederach (1997) has conceptualized peacebuilding as a “process of integrated roles, functions, and activities...that focus on the restoration and rebuilding of relationships” (p.23-24). The central component of peacebuilding, he has stated is addressing and engaging in the relational aspects of reconciliation (Lederach, 1997).

The mixed scholarly interpretations of peacebuilding have been problematic for PACS. In fact, the very inconsistencies is a key critique in this dissertation. The terms negative peace (absence of war and personal violence), positive peace (absence of structural violence), sustainable peace (achievable when positive peace has been realized) and peacebuilding (steps and actions needed to reach the goal of positive peace) are complex and interconnected concepts.

The definitions are to provide the reader with a general sense of what each of these terms mean. Throughout this dissertation, the terms *negative peace*, *positive peace*, *sustainable peace*, and *peacebuilding* will be used in accordance with the above “definitions” unless used otherwise, in which case I will clarify the different usage.

### **The Issue and a Proposal**

PACS, as a discipline that drives peacebuilding, has been advancing the discipline with new theories in hopes of reaching positive peace and sustainable peace. One of the major critiques, that has risen in PACS as a discipline, is that the goal to reach positive and sustainable peace has remained elusive despite conscientious efforts to do so. PACS, in the past six or so decades, has developed four major theoretical frameworks and now finds itself embarking on its fifth. These are conflict management (1950s – 1970s), conflict resolution (1970s and 1980s), liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding (late 1980s and 1990s), liberal-local hybridity (2000s); and the newly emerging, critical and emancipatory peacebuilding (2020s). Each theoretical framework (which will be presented in greater detail in Chapter One) has been an attempt to improve its respective predecessor. Each theoretical framework has had at least one major critique. These critiques have pointed to the reasons why positive peace has not been attained yet alone be sustained. As such, the critiques have provided opportunities for PACS to continuously evaluate and assess the outcomes of each theory, as well as the theory itself. Given these opportunities, PACS as a discipline has indeed made conscientious and commendable efforts to address shortfalls and gaps so that positive and sustainable peace can be achieved. However, despite these efforts, positive peace and sustainable peace have yet to be realized. The newly emerging, fifth theoretical approach (critical and emancipatory peacebuilding) holds the promise to reach these goals; however, it is too soon to determine if this promise can be upheld.

Broadly speaking, PACS as a discipline is grounded in the notions of interdependence, nonviolence, problem-solving, people's agency and resilience, and social justice (Byrne et al., 2020). Scholars and practitioners have been committed to working through the complexity of conflict with innovative and creative processes to promote human rights, human security, and peacebuilding (Byrne et al., 2020). While noble and necessary as these efforts are, there is still a long way from reaching the overall goal of positive and sustainable peace for all. There have been distinct reasons speculating on what can be attributed to the failure of reaching this goal. In particular, there have been tensions, controversies and inconsistencies in international peacebuilding which have been attributed to due to different actors (e.g. UN, international NGOs, and regional organizations) having different roles and responsibilities in peacebuilding and being unable to effectively coordinate and carry out their respective mandates (Barnett et al., 2007; Newman, 2013). Tensions have also risen among actors with respect to fundamental ideological differences regarding peacebuilding (Barnett et al., 2007; Newman, 2013). In addition, as there has not been any proof of success of peacebuilding process(es) which have managed to attain sustainable peace (Barnett et al., 2007; Newman, 2013). As such, it can be argued that there is no solid foundation for any ideological stance to rests its laurels. In fact, negative and positive peace outcomes have been concerning. For example, 72% of peacebuilding operations have maintained authoritarian regimes and close to 50% of countries receiving peacebuilding assistance have relapsed into conflict within five years (Barnett et al., 2007). As has been noted by many scholars, international peacebuilding set out to create sustainable peace in post-conflict or conflict-prone zones by widely applying the liberal frameworks of democracy, constitutionalism, market freedoms, and rule of law (Chandler, 2017; MacGinty & Richmond, 2015; Paffenholz, 2015; Richmond, 2010), despite the fact that these measures have not been

substantiated with theoretical grounding or empirical evidence of producing sustainable peace (Chandler, 2017). Thus, instead of creating sustainable peace in post-conflict or conflict-prone zones, a twenty-year crisis was created from 1997-2017 (Chandler, 2017). Chandler (2017) has further argued that this crisis is “the product of accident, of hubris and of a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of peace, of politics and of the unintended consequences of external policy interventions” (p. 9). This crisis is a clear example Western effrontery; however, it has also served as an opportunity to be critical of the ideology and practices of liberal peacebuilding.

These undesired peacebuilding outcomes have led to an urgent plea to those who engage in liberal peace practices to examine whether their work enables local dynamics of peace or whether it has been enabling an international architecture of peace (Richmond, 2010). The international architecture of peace refers to creating structures to institutionalize peace (e.g. social, economic, political, security, etc.) (Barnett et al., 2007; Newman, 2013). The international architecture of peace/the neoliberal peacebuilding ideology is the dominant one which frames current Western approaches to peacebuilding (Byrne & Thiessen, 2020; Newman, 2013; Pugh, 2013; Pugh et al., 2008; Visoka & Richmond, 2017); and the failure of these approaches to achieve positive peace and sustainable peace has been duly noted. At the same time, it is relevant and essential to note that the theoretical approaches which were intended to counter the neoliberal approach have also failed to deliver positive and sustainable peace. As such, I am asserting that from a disciplinary lens, *the main issue is the ontological and epistemological lens which frame current PACS theories* could be where the problem lies. I believe that current PACS theories rest in colonial ontological and epistemological understandings of peace. These understandings of peace, I will subsequently argue are Othering,

entangled in violence and externally-focused. This is the ontological and epistemological lens which have been informing and grounding PACS theories – therefore, it is the discipline’s ontological and epistemological foundations which required examination.

In this dissertation, I argue that PACS is grounded ontologically and epistemologically in colonial ideology. Based on this assertion, I am proposing that what is needed in PACS to counter a colonial framework of peace is a spiritual framework for peace. Rather than viewing the absence of a spiritual notion of peace as a gap in PACS, I believe that a spiritual notion of peace ought to be its own entity. If we were to frame the absence of a spiritual notion of peace as a gap in PACS, we run the risk of it falling into a colonial framework. In other words, a spiritual notion of peace could potentially become subsumed in the colonial framework – the very framework being critiqued. As such I set out to answer the following questions: (a) What are some limitations of the current theoretical approaches to peace in PACS? (b) How can a spiritual notion of peace address some of the limitations of the current theoretical approaches in PACS? (c) What are the essential components of a spiritually-engaged PACS program?

To answer these three key queries, I approached this study from a theoretical and values engagement with the literature using a critical lens. PACS, is now embarking on its fifth theoretical approach to peacebuilding – critical and emancipatory peacebuilding. Critical and Emancipatory Peacebuilding can best be defined as incorporating authentic, empowering and harmonious processes, epistemologies, networks, practices and resources which operate within a social justice framework; meeting local people’s everyday needs; giving them ownership of their peacebuilding processes - to ensure that the dignity and needs of all are met equally (Byrne et al., 2020; MacGinty, 2013; Thiessen, 2011). It is from this lens, that my work is situated – that is, I have taken a critical look at PACS, arguing that the discipline rests in colonial ontological

assumptions of peace and I provide a new ontological lens for understanding and framing peace – one where spirituality is centred.

Given that there is no empirical data available that I could draw on regarding spiritual approaches in PACS, a content analysis was the only option. In other words, there has not been any studies, empirical or theoretical for that matter, which has inquired into the necessity or benefits of including a spiritual ontological lens in the discipline. I began by reviewing the five theoretical frameworks in PACS to determine how each “defines” peace. I asked what peaceful outcomes look like and what strategies have been employed to achieve the aforementioned peaceful outcomes. Next, I wanted to know to what extent each theory achieved what it set out to do (i.e. establishing peaceful outcomes). Finally, I compared the theories for differences and similarities. Based on the elements they shared (Othering, an entanglement in violence, and an external focus), I drew the conclusion that their ontological foundation is a colonial one. This observation also revealed the absence of a spiritual element in the discipline. I then engaged in a second literature review to learn what had been written about spirituality and PACS. I reviewed PACS journals and textbooks (detailed in Chapter Three), using inner peace as the search term. I used “inner peace” because – as the discussion in Chapter Four will make clear – I was interested in exploring inner peace as a spiritual approach as it pertains to PACS. The benefit that resulted from the spiritual literature review is that a baseline for the role that spirituality has played in PACS has now been established.

### **Structure of the Study**

This dissertation is divided into three parts. Part One is entitled The Way to Peace; Part Two - Peace is the Way; and Part Three - Applying a Spiritual Ontological Lens in PACS. As already been presented, I have provided the background, context and argument to support my

conviction that PACS ought to be considering another ontological and epistemological understanding of peace. In Part One, I address the question: What are some limitations of the current theoretical approaches to peace in PACS? In Chapter One, I present the four overarching generations of theoretical frameworks in PACS (conflict management, conflict resolution, liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding, liberal-local hybridity), pointing out that these frameworks have been evolutionary to some extent; as each has aimed to counter the shortfalls of its respective precursor. The goal of each theoretical framework has been to yield a sustainable peace; however, this goal has yet to be unattained. A newly emerging theoretical framework, the fifth generation – Critical and Emancipatory Peacebuilding – holds promise of making sustainable peace attainable, however it is too soon to determine if this promise will materialize. Hence, in Chapter One, I describe each theory’s respective objectives and shortfalls; drawing the conclusion that an investigation into PACS’ theoretical foundations is warranted.

In Chapter Two, I support my claim that PACS has been grounded in colonial ontological and epistemological rhetoric. I illustrate how colonial narratives have been upheld in PACS and I argue that the very narratives have been a hinderance to sustainable peace. I identify three characteristics of colonial ideology and legacy that I believe to be embedded in PACS. The first is that colonial ideology and legacy is divisive – particularly with its inherent practice of Othering (Said, 1995; Smith, 2021; Spivak,2006). Second, I posit that the very colonial legacy has been entangled in violence (Williams, 1994) which has obscured a pure vision of peace. And, lastly, I claim that colonial narratives place emphasis on external ways of being which has been reflected in peacebuilding theory and practice; thereby largely ignoring and/or dismissing internal ways of being (i.e. the notion of inner peace). These characteristics of colonialism – Othering, violence-entanglements, and externally-focused – all have roots in a colonial

ontological system of beliefs. Such notions of peace can be categorized as “the way to peace,” to use Gandhi’s terminology (Chopra (2005). From this point forward, the colonial notion of peace - “the way to peace” will be written as “the-way-to-peace.” Chapter Two concludes Part One, addressing the question: What are some limitations of the current theoretical approaches to peace in PACS?

In Part Two – Peace is the Way; I address the question: How can a spiritual notion of peace address some of the limitations of the current theoretical approaches in PACS? In Chapter Three, I begin by illustrating the distinction between religion and spirituality - as the two terms are often used interchangeably. Having done so, I then provide a literature review focussing on the role of spirituality in PACS. The purpose of this literature review has been to learn to what extent a spiritual component exists in PACS and to establish a PACS spiritual baseline. From this review, I was able to ascertain that in PACS there is no place for scholars and practitioners to ground their scholarship and practice from a spiritual theoretical lens as any notions of spirituality can primarily be found (if at all) on the periphery of PACS scholarship.

Chapter Four introduces the concept of “peace-is-the-way,” beginning with its characteristics – nonduality, ahimsa and an internal focus. Nonduality, the first characteristic, can be described simply as the interconnectedness of all beings; thus, nonduality harmonizes. The second characteristic, ahimsa means to do no harm and generally refers to the commitment of living a life of nonviolence. The third characteristic is an internally-focussed peace; otherwise known as inner peace. Having established from the literature review there is a need for a spiritual framework for peace in PACS, I conclude Chapter Four with a spiritually based framework for peace centering nonduality, ahimsa and an internal focus. A spiritual framework for peace provides a starting point for those in PACS who wish to ground their work from a spiritual lens.

To sum up Part Two, I have provided a literature review of spirituality in PACS; I determined that from a *theoretical* lens (and arguably from an ontological and epistemological lens), a spiritual perspective of peace has not been established in the discipline. The literature that speaks to spirituality has been sparse, nonetheless, not altogether absent. This is an indication that there is some interest that spirituality has a place in PACS – although there has been no strong convictions or efforts to put it into place. In response to this PACS landscape, I develop a model that centres the notion of peace-is-the-way which can be applied in PACS. In Part Three of this dissertation, I expand the spiritual theoretical framework providing a rationale of how it can be applied in PACS research. what that means in practical terms.

Part Three of this dissertation focuses on the question: What are the essential components of a spiritually-engaged PACS program? I first provide a practical example (using identity) on how to reframe a colonial narrative to a spiritual perspective. Identity has been identified as a major source of conflict in PACS (although the accuracy of this nexus has been a topic of debate). Nonetheless, due to the popularity of this theory, it seemed fitting to illustrate how identity narratives can be transformed from colonial to spiritual. I subsequently discuss how our attachment to identity narratives can be limiting and I illustrate how it is possible to detach from said narratives through meditation. Meditation connects us to our true self, a connection that I argue is key for conducting peace research from a spiritual lens. I then venture into what is meant by ontology and epistemology, making a case for the importance of being explicit regarding one's ontological and epistemological views and positioning. From here, I emphasize that a spiritual ontology and a spiritual conceptual framework are essential components for developing a spiritual theoretical framework. I provide examples of what a spiritual ontology for PACS could look like, as well as a spiritual conceptual framework which can assist one in drawing out,

identifying and explicitly expressing their ontological truth claim. I then offer a spiritual theoretical framework for peace which can be applied in PACS. I conclude Part Three with the conclusion of this dissertation, summarizing the main line of argumentation that I have developed, sharing my own personal development and understanding throughout this endeavour and finally offering some insights for the future of PACS with respect to incorporating a spiritual paradigm.

**Part 1**  
**The-Way-to-Peace**

*If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character.  
If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home.  
If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nations.  
When there is order in the nations, there will be peace in the world (Confucius)*

## **Part One: The-Way-to-Peace**

PACS, as a discipline, emerged with the intent of preventing future wars by way of teaching for peace (Bajaj, 2015). Today, PACS aims to promote social justice and create sustainable peace by fostering “interdependence, nonviolence, problem solving, people’s agency and resilience” (Byrne et al., 2020, p. 5). Multiple perspectives, including an interdisciplinary lens, have been used to contribute to theories, policies, practice and methods to inform both conflict analysis and peacebuilding with the hope that these varied insights will provide viable solutions for attaining sustainable peace (Byrne & Senehi, 2011). Without question, the various contributions to PACS have certainly informed theories, approaches and practice by building on and improving what has already been developed. At the same time, despite these purposeful and well-intentioned efforts, the expected outcomes derived from existing theories, approaches and practices have not consistently yielded what has been hoped for – positive peace and sustainable peace (Byrne et al., 2020). Positive peace, as defined by Galtung (1967) is the end of structural violence (indirect violence) where social justice (an egalitarian society) prevails. Chandler (2017), a critical scholar in PACS, has made the claim that international peacekeeping has collapsed. What he means by this claim is that peacebuilding efforts have not yielded positive peace and/or sustainable peace and, more so, the very efforts aimed at creating positive peace have at times ended up causing more harm than good. What could account for this state of affairs? I believe that to find the answer to this question, an interrogation of the ontological assumptions (which inform theory and practice) in PACS is warranted.

PACS, a discipline still considered to be in its infancy, emerged from International Relations (IR) (Byrne et al., 2020; Scott, 2020a). From an IR lens, the state is key, hence the state’s protection from external threats is deemed essential (Wylie, 2020). Thus, the primary

focus of IR in theory and practice has been state security (Wylie, 2020); a commitment that has strengthened in the past two decades (Christie & Hanlon, 2020). PACS, now stands independently as a discipline, however, arguably, there is still a relationship between PACS and IR. The relationship between the two disciplines raises questions regarding PACS' ontological, epistemological, theoretical assumptions; research queries; and methodological frameworks (Pugh, 2013). Although PACS is an independent discipline from IR, I believe that PACS has remained aligned and informed by IR's ontological, epistemological, theoretical and research methodological assumptions and frameworks. PACS, on the surface appears to have extricated itself from its IR parent, however, I argue, this has been a *theoretical* extraction rather than an *ontological* one. As such, it could be argued that PACS has not been able to “fully tackle unjust social, economic, cultural, political, global, and postcolonial structures so that a lasting peace can be forged for all global citizens” (Byrne et al., 2020, p. 5) because the discipline is still ontologically tied to IR. In other words, PACS must define and distinguish itself ontologically from IR – a move that could potentially position PACS to develop new theories which could yield positive peace and sustainable peace.

In this dissertation, I make a case for why an alternate ontological lens is needed in PACS and I present one such option. One of my key arguments is that there is an absence of a spiritual element in PACS – an absence that could account for the failure to reach sustainable peace. I hold the conviction that a spiritual perspective in PACS is necessary to complement and enrich the discipline rendering it more holistic and inclusive. Thus, in Part One, I set out to illustrate what I believe to be the limitations that challenge the discipline, making a case to support my assertion that a spiritually-based paradigm to inform PACS' theory is necessary. First, in Chapter One, I provide a summary of the five overarching theoretical frameworks in PACS, pointing to

where elements of colonial ideology have been reflected; thereby supporting my argument that PACS' ontological and epistemological underpinnings uphold the colonial apparatus. I establish that the colonial narrative of peace is divisive, entangled in violence and externally-focused. Borrowing a phrase from Gandhi, I conceptualize and describe the colonial notion of peace as "the-way-to-peace" (as cited in Chopra, 2005). In Chapter 2, I present three characteristics of colonial ideology which I believe have influenced the current notion of peace in PACS. These characteristics are Othering; an entanglement in violence and externally-focused. The respective attributes of these characteristics are divisiveness, a belief that violence is inevitable, and a materialistic and problem-solving approach to peace – all of which I argue, are hinderances to positive peace outcomes.

In sum, Part One sets out to answer the question - what are some limitations of the current theoretical approaches to peace in PACS? Having demonstrated that the discipline is grounded in colonial ontological and epistemological perspectives of peace, I concluded that failure to reach positive peace and sustainable peace can be attributed to a colonial vision of peace. To counter this vision of peace, I proposed exploring a spiritual notion of peace, which I set out to do in Part Two.

## **Chapter 1: A Genealogy<sup>2</sup> of PACS' Theoretical Frameworks**

The aim of Chapter One is to provide an overview of PACS' theories. This overview will bring to light the limitations of the theories - the most salient - failure to achieve positive peace and/or sustainable peace. This observation is not intended to dismiss or disregard genuine efforts made by PACS' scholars and practitioners who have been working diligently over the past five to six decades to improve the discipline's major theoretical frameworks in their quest to provide sound theoretical principles for making the world a more peaceful place. Academically, PACS theories have been categorized into four generations (Richmond, 2010; Visoka, 2024), with the discipline recently embarking on its fifth (Byrne et al, 2020). These are - conflict management; conflict resolution; liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding; liberal – local hybridity; and the most recent, critical and emancipatory peacebuilding. These five theoretical frameworks are overarching, meaning that they are broad theories; they tend to overlap at times; and there are mini-theories or sub-theories that fall under their respective umbrellas (Kriesberg, 2020). What follows is the central hypothesis of each theoretical generation and their respective approaches to peace building. I also delve deeper into identity theory - one sub theory that has received significant attention in PACS. This exploration of PACS' theories provides some insight to their foundation. Highlighting the commonalities among the first four theories, I have gleaned that a colonial ideology of peace is what connects the theories. As such, this connection could be the indicator for why peace has been unattainable via these theoretical approaches.

### **Conflict Management**

The purpose of conflict management has been to “successfully manag[e] conflicts by...controlling the levels of cultural, structural, and direct violence” (Galtung, 2015, as cited in

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<sup>2</sup> Term borrowed from Richmond (2010).

Matyók & Stauder, 2020, p. 344). There are four approaches used to mitigate conflict: mediation, sanctions, legal mechanisms, and peace operations (Diehl et al., 2020). What follows is a brief description of each approach.

### ***Mediation***

The goal of mediation is for disputants to mutually consent to terms of agreement to forge a lasting peace. The mediation process requires two disputing parties to mutually consent in engaging a third party (mediator) to assist in reaching a resolution (Diehl et al., 2020). The mediator may be an individual, a non-governmental organization (NGO), an international organization (IO) or a coalition of states (Byrne, 2007; Diehl et al., 2020; Zartman, 2003). Mediated agreements are non-binding (Diehl et al., 2020). According to Polkinghorn and Foutz (2020), mediation is both an art and a science with various styles such as “facilitative, directive, inclusive, evaluative, narrative, and transformative” (p. 114). Mediators determine which style is suitable based on their preference and the context. Although mediation has its virtues, having successfully addressed many negative peace (direct violence) issues (Byrne et al, 2020), many mediation efforts have failed (Diehl et al., 2020).

Mediation efforts, despite being based on mutual consent have, for the most part, been unsuccessful in international conflicts (Greig & Diehl, 2005). Some of the reasons for failed mediation efforts include disputants’ insincerity in participation in the process, distrust of the mediator, mediator’s insufficient understanding of the conflict, and mediator’s lack of experience in the field (Byrne, 2007; Diehl et al., 2020). One sub-theory, under the conflict management umbrella - ripeness theory - is noteworthy and requires a more in-depth discussion.

**Ripeness Theory.** According to Zartman (2003), ripeness theory is a strategy for determining when the time is right for disputing parties to engage in mediation. However, a

mutually hurting stalemate (MHS) between disputing parties is a prerequisite. The MHS creates the ripe moment, which is a window of opportunity for negotiation or mediation (Richmond, 2010; Zartman, 2003). The logic behind this approach lies in a cost-benefit analysis where each party determines (for their respective reasons) that victory is not possible without catastrophic consequences; a risk that neither party is prepared to take (Lund, 1996; Zartman, 2003). Ideally, by recognizing the risk, disputing parties ought to be more amenable to negotiation, and more likely to consider items on the negotiation table they may have previously rejected (Zartman, 2003). A typical outcome of the MHS approach is a victor's peace that comes from a military victory and results in negative peace (Richmond, 2010).

Ripeness theory has been critiqued for some of its limitations. One limitation, as has been noted by Zartman (2003) is although ripeness theory can be used to predict the elements and conditions that must be present for the moment to be ripe, it does not guarantee that disputants will come to the table. In other words, conflict analysts might be able predict a potential ripe moment on the horizon, but cannot, with any certainty, predict the mindset and behaviour of adversaries (Byrne, 2007; Diehl et al., 2020; Zartman, 2003). Examples of such incidents occurred in Bosnia in 1994 and in Ethiopia-Eritrea in the early 1980s and 1990s when conflict analysts had pinpointed the ripe moment in each of these conflicts. However, adversaries did not willingly come to the negotiation table (Zartman, 2003). Another concern of ripeness theory is questionable ethical practices such as using speculation as a method to determine the ripe moment. This practice has ethical implications (Zartman, 2003). Greig and Diehl (2005) have provided an example from the Congo when the United Nations (UN) planned to employ the ripe moment tactic. Anticipating that the disputants would reach a mutually hurting stalemate that would result in the signing of a peace agreement, the UN decided against deploying

peacekeeping forces until a peace agreement had been signed. However, the UN's tactic did not go as expected (the conflict prevailed), resulting in the loss of many civilian lives, an extended period before an agreement was signed; and, once the agreement was signed, it did not hold (Greig & Diehl, 2005). In this case, the cost of human life was either not taken into the calculation or was possibly dismissed altogether. Either way, not factoring in the cost of human life is ethically unacceptable. A third limitation of ripeness theory is that it appears to be essentializing. In sum, ripeness theory is a tactic used to coerce disputants into coming to the negotiation table. The use of coercion to bring disputants to the table could explain why ripeness theory has been ineffective. As Greig (2001) has pointed out, mediation has been successful when the process has been initiated by disputants, as this move signals a potential willingness to settle; thereby there is stronger likelihood of success in the process. Thus, bringing disputants to the table via ripeness theory tactic might have poor success rates as it is a forced action. According to the PACS literature, mediation efforts have not been able to yield positive peace outcomes. Mediation, as a conflict management approach is more likely to yield a negative peace outcome (stopping physical violence).

### ***Sanctions***

The purpose of sanctions, the second conflict management approach, is to force a "target" to acquiesce by imposing economic strain (Morgan & Schwebach, 1997). Sanctions require an existing trading relationship between senders (i.e., the sanctioner) and receivers (i.e., the targets) (Diehl et al., 2020). Sanctions can be characterized as imposing and coercive (Morgan & Schwebach, 1997). The use of sanctions has persisted mainly because of lower costs for the sanctioner and arguably, it is more humane, as there is no use of military force (Diehl et al., 2020). At the same time, higher costs for the receiver can cause human suffering if civilians are

cut off from food and medicine resulting from an embargo (Diehl et al., 2020); thereby questioning the alleged clemency of the instrument. Sanctions do not foster or prompt cooperation (Polkinghorn & Foutz, 2020) or lead to behavioural change (Pape, 1997). Sanctions have been proven to be ineffective (Morgan & Schwebach, 1997; Pape, 1997). The Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot (HSE), a historical database created to analyze the efficacy of economic sanctions was reviewed by Pape (1997). Following his own analysis of the HSE database, which had claimed a 34% success rate for sanctions, Pape (1997) learned that the HSE findings had been flawed and misrepresented. And, in fact, only five out of 40 cases (12%) were successful. Morgan and Schwebach (1997) have also reviewed the HSE data and have drawn similar conclusions as Pape (1997). They have concluded that sanctions, in general do not significantly alter dispute outcomes compared to cases without sanctions and rarely result in significant policy change (Morgan & Schwebach, 1997; Pape, 1997). Based on these reviews, it is evident that the use of sanctions has not resulted in behavioral change - which one can argue is essential to yielding positive or negative peace. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that sanctions, as a conflict management approach, is unlikely to yield sustainable peace. Despite the proven ineffectiveness of sanctions, they have remained in play.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Legal Mechanisms***

Legal mechanisms have been employed to manage conflict when disputing parties have exhausted diplomacy and coercion and are prepared to engage a third party to determine their resolution(s) (Diehl et al., 2020). There are two legal processes in international conflicts: adjudication and arbitration (Diehl et al., 2020). In the adjudication process, disputing parties

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<sup>3</sup> In February 2024, Canada had 24 sanctions imposed on other countries *Current sanctions imposed by Canada*. (2024-02-06). Government of Canada. Retrieved February 16, 2024 from [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international\\_relations-relations\\_internationales/sanctions/current-actuelles.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/sanctions/current-actuelles.aspx?lang=eng).

submit their case to standing courts such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), or ad-hoc courts (Diehl et al., 2020). The courts have operated using existing laws such as treaties and common practice. The outcomes of the adjudication process are binding (Diehl et al., 2020). There have, however, been some concerns regarding the adjudication process including matters such as jurisdiction, a lengthy and time-consuming process and a significant number of dismissed cases (Diehl et al., 2020). First, in regards, to jurisdiction, the ICJ has only accepted applications for adjudication from UN state members (Diehl et al., 2020). Second, the length of time from application to ruling has averaged four years (Mitchell et al., 2018). In addition, it takes the ICJ an average of three years to determine if an application is admissible. Third, the rejection rate for applications is approximately 28% (Mitchell et al., 2018). Furthermore, Mitchell et al. (2018), have pointed out that the wait time itself while a case is being deliberated appears to have had an indirect incentive for disputing parties to resolve cases on their own. Roughly 18% of applicants have requested that their case be removed from the court in order to resolve them independently (Mitchell et al., 2018).

Arbitration, the second of the two legal conflict management processes, is similar to adjudication in that the process requires a third party to resolve the conflict, and the outcome is a binding resolution (Diehl et al., 2020). However, the differences between the two legal processes lay in how the third party is culled and how the resolution is reached. In arbitration, the disputants select a third party of their own choosing, determine the principles to be used to reach a resolution; and agree that a compromise is a mandatory part of the process (Diehl et al., 2020). Arbitration, while less formal than adjudication, allows disputants to have more autonomy over the process.

In terms of critiques of the legal mechanisms of international conflict management, Diehl et al. (2020) have presented two which are noteworthy. The first critique has raised the question as to whether legal approaches accomplish what they set out to do? That is, are conflicts resolved and does peace ensue? Scholars have argued that the ICJ has a less than impressive track record, having deliberated only 134 cases over 69 years (1946-2015); and even so, these have not been the most serious global conflicts (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009). Mitchell et al. (2018), on the other hand, have disagreed with Bercovitch and Jackson (2009), suggesting instead that the involvement of other states in the IJC cases is sufficient evidence that legal mechanisms have merit and are respected by the most powerful states. Adding to this debate, Helfer and Voeten (2014) have argued that due to rulings from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), there has been an indirect ripple effect on policy changes from states which were not in court. That is, out-of-court actors have adapted or changed policies to align with rulings from the ECHR (Helfer & Voeten, 2014). As such, Helfer and Voeten (2014) have viewed the indirect ripple effect as a positive outcome of adjudication.

The second critique pertains to the level of compliance from states once a ruling has been issued from the court or arbitrator (Diehl et al., 2020). Diehl et al. (2020) have pointed out that even though scholars agree that adjudicated and arbitrated resolutions have greater compliance rates than bilateral negotiations, the very scholars hold different opinions on why states have complied with rulings issued from a court or an arbitrator. For example, Allee and Huth (2006) have contended that the primary reason disputants have opted for the legal routes to manage conflict has been politically driven. That is, leaders, in accordance with the process, are prevented from directly having input on the settlement or outcome of the dispute and must rely on third party actors to make such decisions (Allee & Huth, 2006). Thus, in adherence to these

procedures, as leaders are obligated to comply with the rulings, they are (potentially) absolved from constituents' repercussions, as they had not been directly involved with determining the resolutions (Allee & Huth, 2006). Another reason for compliance, according to Simmons (2002) is that there are reputational costs associated with non-compliance. Posner and Yoo (2005) have attributed compliance to the intent of states when choosing the legal route. That is, even before the case is heard, the state has already determined that it will respect the subsequent ruling (Posner & Yoo, 2005). The limitations of legal mechanisms, as conflict management approaches, are lengthy and prolonged processes and in some cases dubious reasons for compliance. Regardless of the reasons that disputants have chosen legal mechanisms to manage conflict, PACS literature has suggested that legal processes have been more effective than bilateral negotiations. At the same time, like mediation and sanctions, adjudication and arbitration (the legal mechanisms of conflict management) have yet to produce positive peace outcomes.

### ***Peace Operations***

Peace operations are the fourth conflict management approach. The goal is to contain or end conflict and secure lasting peace. There are two types of peace operations – traditional peacekeeping and peacebuilding (Diehl et al., 2020). In traditional peacekeeping, lightly armed troops (i.e. peacekeepers) are deployed in conflict zones after a ceasefire has been reached with the goal of keeping combatants separated (Diehl et al., 2020). Peacekeepers are not deployed in the centre of the conflict zones but rather are placed in outlying areas to ensure the ceasefire is upheld and that violence does not recur (Diehl et al., 2020). Peacekeeping missions vary in length and have proven to be effective. Indicators of the efficacy of peacekeeping, have been preventing the spread of conflict and civilian casualties and reducing interstate wars by (30-95%)

and intrastate wars by over 70% (Diehl et al., 2020). Put another way, peacekeeping has been effective in attaining negative peace.

The overall goal of peacebuilding and peacekeeping are similar – and that is to ensure conflict does not recur (Remland et al., 2015, as cited in Scott, 2020). Peacebuilding activities are employed once a peace agreement has been signed and these activities aim to address the root cause of conflict in a civil context (Diehl et al., 2020). These activities have included humanitarian and security assistance, monitoring elections, and governmental and economical enhancements, to list a few (Diehl et al., 2020). Peacebuilders are not soldiers (Diehl et al., 2020). The efficacy of peacebuilding efforts has remained illusive at best. This is because peacebuilding is a long-term process. It aims to prevent conflict from recurring by addressing root causes. Success depends on factors such as reconciliation, local capacity, partnerships with local populations, and adequate time and resources (Diehl et al., 2020; Lederach, 1997). Measuring the success rate of peacebuilding is challenging due to the complexity and incomplete nature of many cases (Diehl et al., 2020). Of the conflict management approaches – mediation, sanctions, adjudication, arbitration, peacekeeping and peacebuilding – the most contentious has been peacebuilding, heavily criticized for imposing liberal values. These critiques will be discussed in detail under the third PACS theoretical framework - liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding. It ought to be noted that before peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities can begin, there must be a signed peace agreement. The approaches employed to bring disputants to agreements – mediation, sanctions and legal mechanisms - have all proved to be less than effective. Even though peacekeeping has been effective in attaining negative peace (not to be dismissed), the outcome is still negative peace, not positive peace. Peacebuilding, a contentious

term, due to its broad and inconsistent definitions, and often critiqued for creating more harm than good is a core and central discussion in this dissertation; and will be subsequently discussed,

In summary, conflict management, the first generation of PACS' theoretical frameworks, has been equated with political realism, has been limited to state-centric discourse, has upheld the assumption that conflict is biological/inherent (Richmond, 2010); and its instruments (mediation, sanctions, legal mechanisms and peace operations), while holding some benefits, have demonstratively been ineffective in attaining positive peace. The (in)effectiveness of these tools can be assessed based on the outcomes of the processes. The outcomes, it can be argued, has resulted in negative peace; and social justice, the primary outcome of positive peace has yet to be attained via conflict management approaches.

### **Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution, the second generation of PACS' theoretical frameworks, has differed from conflict management by moving away from the top-down, state-centric methods and taking on a civil peace focus. A civil peace approach is aimed to empower civil society through the individual, using bottom-up strategies that aim to prioritize agency (Richmond, 2010). Conflict resolution has examined the impact of political, economical, and social structures regarding the denial of or impediment to addressing human needs (Richmond, 2010) while placing an emphasis on the psychological consequences of conflict. The cause of conflict, from a conflict resolution lens, has been viewed from social and psychological perspectives (Fisher, 2020). Within the conflict resolution framework, new strategies and sub-theories have been developed. Problem Solving Workshops and Needs-based Identity Theory are examples of one strategy and one sub-theory, respectively, that have been developed under the conflict resolution umbrella (Fisher, 2020).

### ***Problem Solving Workshops***

Problem solving workshops (PSWs) have a narrow scope and focus on a specific issue or problem to identify root causes of a conflict. PSWs fall within the broad scope of a multi-track approach. John Paul Lederach's multitrack approach provides a framework from which PSWs can operate. Lederach's (1997) model has been significant to PACS as it was one of the first to turn towards the "local" or those on the ground in peacemaking and peacebuilding processes (Paffenholz, 2015). The assumption of this approach is that leadership from different societal levels has the power to influence their constituencies in peacebuilding initiatives (Lederach, 1997). Lederach's (1997) multi-track model is divided into three tracks. Track One involves high profile figures (e.g., political and military leaders), where a single mediator is central and holds the most influence. The aim of Track One strategies is to cease hostilities between disputing parties. Track Two level involves middle-range leadership (e.g. leaders from religious affiliations, NGOs, and academics) and peacebuilding strategies are focussed on problem-solving workshops and peace commissions. Track Three involves grassroots leadership (e.g. community and local leaders) and peacebuilding strategies have emphasized grassroots conflict resolution training and working with local peace groups. According to O'Brien (2007), what has stood out in Lederach's (1997) multi-track approach is the potential influence that Track Two leaders may have on both Tracks One and Three leadership. That is, Track Two leaders can be a conduit between Tracks One and Three leaders, as Track Two leaders are more likely to have relationships and connections with leaders from Tracks One and Three. Fisher (2020) has stated that the purpose of PSWs has been to bring unofficial representatives of disputing parties in an informal group setting with an unofficial and impartial third party to discuss their shared

problem(s) and possible solutions. PSWs, in essence, have provided the opportunity for disputing parties to analyze the conflict and develop their own resolutions (Coy et al., 2020).

PSWs, as a conflict resolution approach have contributed to successful peace processes; however, this strategy has not achieved positive peace. One critique, as noted by Coy et al. (2020), has been the tension in PACS regarding conflict resolution and social justice. Coy et al. (2020) have argued that the former came at the expense of the latter, meaning that conflict resolution was the priority and social justice, even if it were addressed, has been the consolation prize (Coy et al., 2020). Put another way, even though bringing different levels of society (in particular the local) to the table to engage in a peace process has been an improvement from the state-centric models of conflict management, not addressing structural injustices over the long-term has remained problematic (Coy et al., 2020). Thus, Coy et al. (2020) have made the claim that the multi-track approach, despite being well-intentioned has failed to address the inequalities and injustices entwined in conflict. This broader understanding of conflict resolution subsequently contributed to a commitment to social justice and empowerment in PACS, both in theory and in practice (Coy et al., 2020).

### ***Needs-based Identity Theory***

In PACS, a strong belief is held that identity plays a vital role in creating conflict (Cook-Huffman, 2011). Thus, notions theorizing identity and conflict has now established solid ground in conflict resolution theories and practice (Cook-Huffman, 2011; Fisher, 2020). Defining identity is complex as historical and social contexts have shaped identities and perceptions about identities (Cook-Huffman, 2011). However, in general identity can be categorized as personal or self-identity and a collective or social identity (Cook-Huffman, 2011). With respect to protracted social conflicts, Edward Azar and John Burton have put forward needs-based identity theory as

an explanation on what could account for/might be at the root of protracted social conflicts (Cook-Huffman, 2011). To begin, Azar (1990) has determined that the foundation of Needs-based Identity Theory rests in the combination of two historical pre-conditions which are tied to the deprivation of basic needs. The first pre-condition is a multi- or bi-communal societal composition and the second is a historical antecedent of a colonial divide and rule legacy. Azar's claims have been tied to Burton's (1987) belief which is that identity recognition and security are basic human needs, which must be satisfied (Cook-Huffman, 2011). From Burton's (1990) perspective, all humans have some universal basic needs which are non-negotiable; four of which are - personal development, security, recognition, and identity. Burton (1990) is of the mind that these needs are fixed, and people will go to any lengths to have them satisfied, if they are unmet. Thus, he has argued that social conflict is rooted in the denial of the aforementioned basic human needs (Burton, 1990). Azar (1990) has identified three fundamental basic needs variables – acceptance needs, access needs and security needs. Acceptance needs concern the recognition of communal identity; access needs concern effective participation in society; and security needs concern physical security, housing and nutrition. Azar's theory is that when hegemonic control from the dominant group(s) deny minority group(s) their basic needs, social conflict is likely to ensue. Thus, according to Azar (1990), at a societal level, the refusal of one community to respect or accept another is at the core of basic needs deprivation and it is, in principle, the state's duty to ensure that all basic needs are met. In other words, Azar (1990) has indirectly stated that social inequity (structural violence) is a result of colonial legacy, and the state holds the responsibility for rectifying the situation. Although he has not explicitly used the term structural violence, the outcome from the denial of the three fundamental basic needs

(acceptance, access and security) is an example of structural violence. Thus, we can glean from Azar's theory that structural violence can lead to conflict.

Needs-based Identity Theory has received a lot of traction in PACS and is currently at the forefront of conflict analysis regarding injustices and inequalities. This theory has often been used to identify root causes of conflict speculating that identity is a primary factor. Despite the theory's prominence in PACS, it has not been without its critiques. Some PACS scholars, Polkinghorn and Foutz (2020), Singh (2023) and Wolff (2007) have not been convinced that identity is a key factor in creating conflict. In fact, Polkinghorn and Foutz (2020) have claimed that identity has been staged, as a matter of speaking, to instigate conflict, a tactic they view as "unconscionable and immoral and yet ... [has been] deployed more often in recent years" (p. 112). Specific to ethnic conflicts, Wolff (2007) has also pointed out that conflicts do not start because of ethnicity/identity alone. Conflicts can also start for reasons such as political recognition, economical equity, use of natural resources, to list a few, but that they then can escalate and play out along identity lines (Wolff, 2007). When conflict has occurred on any of the aforementioned basis, Polkinghorn and Foutz (2020) have noted, the focus of the conflict has been shifted to identity politics.

Wolff (2007) has posed a provocative question: To what extent are ethnicity and belonging (a basic need as proposed by Azar and Burton) used as common denominators to organize conflict groups in the struggle over resources, land or power? Wolff's question implies that there are other factors at play which instigate conflicts and which ought to be considered. Wolff's view has been substantiated by Polkinghorn and Foutz (2020). As significant as Wolff's question is, it must also be noted that it is still framed within a problem-solving narrative – a method of analysis that Pugh (2013) has cautioned against. In other words, it is assumed that by

identifying and attributing other/different factors that instigate ethnic conflicts, these revelations could potentially settle the social conflict “problem.” At face value, this resolve may appear reasonable but is it truly getting to the root of the issue? As Pugh (2013) and Polkinghorn and Foutz (2020) have pointed out, to truly interrogate hegemonic orthodoxies, we must dig deeper and one way to do so is by reframing how we see and understand things. Thus, in the context of Needs-based Identity Theory, Wolff’s question can be reframed as, *what are some alternate ways of understanding and conceptualizing identity and belonging?* In other words, if we can come to understand ethnic conflicts and belonging outside the current dominant paradigm, an alternate way to creating peace could be possible. However, as it currently stands, needs-based identity theory as a medium for conflict analysis is commonly used in PACS. Even though the analysis might be vigorous, positive peace outcomes stemming from needs-based identity theory have yet to be realized – thereby, shedding more doubt on the efficacy of this theory.

In summary, conflict resolution has attempted to address some of the shortfalls of conflict management by introducing the notion of a win-win peace, paying attention to the psychological and social dimensions of conflict, prioritizing human needs over state security, and raising the idea that the denial or impediment of human needs can lead to conflict (Richmond, 2010). PSWs and Needs-based Identity Theory have been two significant contributions to PACS as conflict resolution approach and sub-theory, respectively. A key assumption in conflict resolution is that the root of conflict can be found in social inequalities therefore resolutions must remove these underlying causes (Jeong, 2020). This means undergoing major social and political changes, as without such changes, it is only a matter of time before the conflict will emerge again (Coy et al., 2020; Jeong, 2020). Given that the outcomes of conflict resolution have not yielded positive peace – the specific aim of conflict resolution – it is reasonable to conclude that this theoretical

framework, like conflict management has limitations. Despite attempts to address the shortfalls of conflict management, as a theoretical framework (and in practice) conflict resolution has not been successful in attaining positive peace as it has not adequately addressed social justice matters.

### **Liberal Peacebuilding and Statebuilding**

The third generation of PACS – the liberal peacebuilding theoretical framework - has claimed that for peace to ensue, the emphasis and priority must be democratization. However, the conditions of development, marketisation, rule of law and human rights of this concept of peacebuilding are inescapable (Campbell & Peterson, 2013; Dueck-Read, 2020; MacGinty, 2013; Richmond, 2010). As such, liberal peacebuilding has been characterized by its universal formula for peacebuilding (Richmond, 2010) – Western beliefs and practice of democracy, capitalist market-based economy, individual human rights, and rule of law. As the liberal peacebuilding formula resembles Western ideals of state, it has gained the reputation of being synonymous to statebuilding.

Campbell and Peterson (2013) have claimed that the purpose of statebuilding has been to sustain domestic and international peace. Western governments have assumed and concluded that “weak” or “failed states” have been the cause of conflicts; and said states are perceived as global security threats (Campbell & Peterson, 2013; Pugh, 2025). The solution to this “problem” is statebuilding which physically creates institutions using developed states in the global north as the model/template for strong states (Campbell & Peterson, 2013). In other words, statebuilding is an attempt to architect and engineer structures of peace based on Western ideals of statism (i.e. democracy, capitalist market-based economy, individual human rights, and rule of law) (MacGinty, 2013; Newman, 2013; Richmond, 2010). The concept of engineering peace has

equated statebuilding with peacebuilding, but to use the two interchangeably is misleading. Campbell and Peterson (2013) have made a distinction between statebuilding and peacebuilding. They have contended that statebuilding is akin to peacebuilding in that both strive to strengthen systems, structures and behaviours to sustain peace. However, peacebuilding, as it has been theoretically conceptualized, aims to do so gradually by strengthening and restoring relationships and by transforming unjust institutions and structures (Campbell & Peterson, 2013; Richmond, 2010).

Liberal peacebuilding has not given much attention to structural change. In fact, liberal peacebuilding has been reputed to be intellectually incoherent in terms of its “emancipatory potential, its reification of state sovereignty, its difficulty in dealing with issues related to justice, reconciliation, identity, gender, culture, and welfare” (Newman, 2013; Richmond, 2010, p. 26). Other critiques have reiterated the model’s claim to universality, top-down institutional and neocolonial overtones, and its secular and rationalist nature (Richmond, 2010). Furthermore, the liberal peacebuilding framework has not been an organic process, nor has it placed value on strengthening the relationships between/among disputing parties. Above all, liberal peacebuilding has failed to deliver positive peace (Richmond, 2010). This failure can be attributed to the approach taken, which has been to enhance state security by implementing a universal formula for statebuilding. The emphasis on state security is the likely explanation as to why positive peace has not been achieved by the liberal model of peacebuilding. Of the five PACS theories, liberal peacebuilding has been the most heavily critiqued, yet it appears to be the dominant theoretical framework that has been informing peacebuilding activities. Nonetheless, from these critiques, liberal-local hybridity theory has emerged, placing an emphasis on including local notions of peace.

## **Liberal – Local Hybridity**

The fourth generation of PACS theoretical frameworks – liberal-local hybridity - has taken on a more inclusive perspective of peacebuilding in comparison to conflict management, conflict resolution and the liberal peacebuilding/statebuilding (Richmond, 2010). The liberal-local hybrid model can be distinguished from the previous generations with respect to placing emphasis on everyday notions of peace and for being more aware and sensitive to the relationship/interconnectedness among the local, the state, the region and the global (Richmond, 2010). Hybrid peace models are unique to each situation, however they have been defined, in general, as a technique where both local and international actors “reshape the norms, institutions and activities in question by means of everyday practices such as verbal interaction, organization and even overt conflict” (Richmond & Mitchell, 2011, p. 33). A hybrid peace is contextualized such that it has encompassed social, cultural and historical norms; all identities; and has involved a range of actors inclusive of their preferences and security interests (Richmond, 2014). In other words, hybrid peacebuilding has integrated international and local dynamics of peace through consensus while reflecting local interests (Richmond, 2010).

Paffenholz (2015) has asserted that there have been merits to the local/hybrid peacebuilding paradigm. However, she has also noted that the local has been placed in binary opposition to the international, romanticizing the local and painting Western liberal agents as culprits. She has viewed this bifurcation as problematic (Paffenholz, 2015). Within this discourse, Paffenholz (2015) has claimed that hybrid governance approaches have neglected to address power and dominance which can potentially undermine local governance structures. She has also pointed out that the hybrid peace literature has downplayed the power of local elites, has overstated the resistance of the local, and has continued to place the local turn in peacebuilding

in the margins even though it has become a part of the mainstream orthodox of peacebuilding (Paffenholz, 2015). Paffenholz (2015) has also noted that there is a lack of empirical evidence to support the efficacy of the hybrid model in creating positive peace.

Liberal – local/hybrid peacebuilding has played a significant role in PACS, particularly because of the emphasis placed on including the local in peacebuilding. Although local/hybrid peacebuilding has attempted to be more relational and reconciliatory; divisiveness and competition (e.g., international vs. local) and issues of power (e.g., among local elites) have rendered the fourth generation insufficient to address the shortfalls of conflict management, conflict resolution, and liberal peacebuilding/statebuilding theoretical frameworks. In other words, the fourth generation, similar to its predecessors, has not yielded positive peace outcomes either, even though the intention behind this new theoretical development had been to do so (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2015).

### **Critical and Emancipatory Peacebuilding**

PACS as a discipline is currently at a junction at which the beginnings of a fifth theoretical framework have been emerging - critical and emancipatory peacebuilding. In the PACS literature, there has been very little written on this framework to date, and in terms of outcomes, most of it has been speculative as sufficient time has not yet passed to ascertain if the fifth generation can yield positive and sustained peace. What then is critical and emancipatory peacebuilding and what does it promise?

According to Thiessen (2011), emancipatory peacebuilding “broadens the narrow top-down state-building focus of liberal peacebuilding, and holistically redirects the project as grassroots, bottom-up activity-engaging in the local and the marginalized” (Thiessen, 2011, p. 123). This definition has been reiterated by MacGinty (2013), who has stated that critical and

emancipatory peacebuilding should include local ownership of peacebuilding processes. Adding to this, Thiessen and Byrne (2018) have drawn attention to poverty, conflict and basic human needs and have called for the necessity to work for peace and social justice within a critical and emancipatory peacebuilding framework. With respect to PACS as a discipline, this “necessitates including local and international actors, epistemologies, networks, practices, and resources in authentic and empowering processes that work in harmony to ensure that the dignity and needs of all people are met equally” (Byrne et al, 2020, p. 500). Based on the characterization of the critical and emancipatory peacebuilding theoretical framework by prominent PACS scholars, it appears as though this emerging theoretical framework has been developed to address the shortfalls of the previous four theoretical frameworks. It is too soon to determine if the expected outcomes - social justice (positive peace) and a sustained peace – will be delivered. A noteworthy observation is that the very outcomes – social justice and positive peace – have been promised by the second, third and fourth generations of theoretical frameworks in PACS. To get a sense of how the critical and emancipatory peacebuilding framework plans to correct and/or adjust existing shortcomings of the previous theoretical frameworks to create positive and sustainable peace, let us look at the existing literature. Following is a review and summary of some of the emerging scholarship in critical and emancipatory peacebuilding, drawing on contributions from one of the most recent comprehensive volumes in PACS literature, the *Routledge Companion to Peace and Conflict Studies* (Byrne et al., 2020) with a dedicated section (five chapters) under the heading - critical and emancipatory peacebuilding.

First, Tschirgi (2020) has pointed out that the peacebuilding community has been placed on the sidelines and margins as proponents of military solutions have gained more influence and power, both nationally and internationally. To counter this, she has asserted that PACS must shift

its focus away from local and hybrid approaches of peacebuilding and turn towards engaging with larger policy agendas on international peace and security (Tschirgi, 2020).

Second, Pruitt (2020) has argued in favour of engaging youth in peacebuilding processes, pointing out that youth are affected by conflict as victims or perpetrators of violence, as well as having roles in working for peace. As a result of these experiences, Pruitt (2020) has claimed that it is critical to work with youth garnering their input to inform theoretical concepts (scholarly work) and practices (day-to-day work) on how to engage youth in peacebuilding.

Third, Matyók and Stauder (2020) have approached their contribution from a conflict management perspective, arguing for a Civil Military Interaction approach to peace. Their main argument is that the military should develop offensive competence (political acumen) to move governments and societies from unstable to stable.

Fourth, the insights from Cormier (2020), who has written from a Canadian Indigenous perspective, has brought attention to the “paradox of complexity” (p. 350). He has juxtaposed the conditions of Indigenous communities in Canada (as a country that posits itself as a leader on the world stage for excellent social programs) to similar conditions in Third World countries - a paradox, he has argued, that is critical to consider in understanding contemporary conflict. He has created a conceptual tool, the Complex Indigenous Conflict System (CICS), for managing and analyzing the paradox of conflict. The Complex Indigenous Conflict System holds an Indigenous worldview that embraces “change as constant, circles/cycles/patterns, and the internal/external dynamic of peace” (Cormier, 2020, p. 350).

Lastly, Standish (2020) has provided an overview of peace education and has pointed out two new innovations in the field - Critical Peace Education and Yogic Peace Education. The former is concerned with the development of critical consciousness and works to transform the

violent context outside the individual; the latter works to transform violence in an individual (Standish, 2020), thereby combining the local context with the individual human instrument.

The contributions of these six scholars are an indication of the emerging scholarship in critical and emancipatory peacebuilding. What has stood out in this literature review has been the different interpretations of what the concept means. Richmond (2010) has asserted that an emancipatory peace framework presents an opportunity to include the elements that have been absent from the liberal peace paradigm; however, he has simultaneously cautioned that the projection of a universal, emancipatory peace is also not idyllic. critical and emancipatory peacebuilding has set out to incorporate authentic, empowering and harmonious processes which operate within a social justice framework to meet local people's everyday needs giving them ownership of their peacebuilding processes (Byrne et al., 2020; MacGinty, 2013; Thiessen, 2011). The question is, can this new generation deliver on its promise or is it another reiteration of liberal and local-hybrid peacebuilding?

To sum up Chapter One, it is evident that each theoretical generation in PACS – conflict management, conflict resolution, liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding, liberal-local hybridity; and critical and emancipatory peacebuilding - has made multiple attempts to revise and redevelop theories to improve and address shortfalls identified for its respective predecessor. There have been efforts to move away from state-centred, top-down approaches of peacebuilding and an exploration of local grassroots notions of peace. In addition, a universal model of statebuilding has been applied as a peacebuilding strategy but has not yielded positive peace. Each of the four theoretical framework approaches has stemmed from a conflict analysis lens which aims to identify the root cause(s) of conflict(s) with the assumption that by addressing the

root cause, then conflict will subside, and peace will ensue. However, these efforts have all fallen short of delivering positive peace. The different ideologies for peacebuilding can lead, and in some cases have led, to further polarization, violence and insecurity – none of which can be equated with negative or positive peace (Chandler, 2017; Newman, 2013; Richmond, 2010; Thiessen, 2011).

The emergence of critical and emancipatory peacebuilding has opened some space for exploring different perspectives of peace; as noted by the contribution of Cormier, who brings a Canadian Indigenous perspective to PACS. At the same time, the perspectives of the other authors writing from a Critical and Emancipatory lens do not clearly indicate a shift away from Western ideology of peace. Thus, we must ask the question: What can different perspectives of peace look like if PACS theories continue to rest in Western narratives, versions and ideologies of peace? Without a doubt, PACS scholars and practitioners have made numerous efforts to address shortfalls and gaps regarding conflict analysis and peacebuilding both in theory and practice. However, these efforts have been *theoretical*. That is, the theories have been changed and redeveloped (and these efforts have indeed been commendable). However, what has not changed are the ontological and epistemological underpinnings on which these theories have been grounded. PACS scholars such as Pugh (2013) and Chandler (2017) have called for a thorough investigation of the ontological and epistemological foundations of PACS. However, to date, there has been no scholarship indicating that this recommendation has been adhered to. In the following chapter, I set out to examine the foundations upon which PACS rests, using critical inquiry and spiritual inquiry.

## Chapter 2: Characteristics of the-Way-to-Peace

Pugh (2013) has noted that those in the peacebuilding industry (scholars, practitioners, policymakers, etc.) have neglected to recognize the limits of peacebuilding analysis. He has pointed out that the dominant peacebuilding paradigm is a *subparadigm* located within the larger (neo) liberal paradigm; and he has brought to the forefront two issues that requires attention in analysis (Pugh, 2013). The first issue, he has cautioned, is using a problem-solving method of analysis which is concerned with improving existing peacebuilding systems (Pugh, 2013).

MacGinty (2013) has concurred with Pugh's (2013) observations, claiming that most peacebuilding scholarship (particularly coming from the United States) offers "solutions" to problems (MacGinty, 2013, p. 3). Pugh (2013) has argued that even though "international actors and agencies in peacebuilding disavow their impositions with discourses of good governance, law and order, stakeholding, participation, local ownership, empowerment, and trouncing spoilers" (p. 21), they still hold these elements in common with colonial power. Thus, Pugh's first point is to be aware of peacebuilding analysis and subsequent activities that are upholding the neoliberal/statebuilding agenda and colonial power.

Building on his first point, the second issue that Pugh (2013) has raised is the necessity to examine the foundation of peacebuilding that goes "beyond the limits of analysis established by hegemonic orthodoxies" (Pugh, 2013, p. 11). Critique, he has claimed, is required to interrogate the authority of hegemonic theories (Pugh, 2013). To exemplify this, he has presented a parliamentary interrogation trope: "what power do you have; where did you get it; in whose interest do you exercise it; to whom are you accountable; and how can we get rid of you?" (Pugh, 2013, p. 12). Pugh's point is well-taken, as he has nudged us towards self-interrogation, however, he has stopped there.

Western notions of peace have been constructed to fit Western ontological and epistemological assumptions (Byrne & Thiessen, 2020); and Western ontological and epistemological assumptions have been privileged in academia (Chilisa, 2012). Views that differ from privileged notions of knowing are either under-researched or lack empirical support, for there has been limited, if any, space for such perspectives within Western paradigms (Bai et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2016; Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011). In addition, there are powerful global and regional actors which can shape conflict outcomes by using (neo)liberal peacebuilding strategies to manage conflict, furthering the neoliberal agendas – which result in negative peace (Paffenholz, 2015, as cited in Byrne et al., 2020). Given these factors, it is not unreasonable to draw a conclusion that PACS has been upholding colonial systems - arguably unknowingly so. Some PACS scholars are likely to point out that there have been peacebuilding initiatives which have operated outside the boundaries of each of the first four major theoretical PACS frameworks (to bring positive peace); such as feminist (Reardon, 2014) and queer perspectives (Yavuz, 2024) and peace education (Standish (2020). However, I am not entirely convinced that such initiatives are still not renditions of the established ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the discipline – which I am arguing is a colonial one. The dominance itself of Western colonial peacebuilding paradigms is a colonial activity. As Mac Ginty (2008) has pointed out: “Whose peace is it? External donors? Powerful third parties?” (as cited in Byrne & Thiessen, 2020, p. 135). In this chapter, I argue that PACS is nestled in a colonial ontological framework. I support this claim by presenting three principal characteristics of Western peacebuilding that depicts colonial ideology. These are Othering, an entanglement in violence and an external focus on peacebuilding. However, I first delve into what is meant by the colonial and why it is necessary to understand its impact in today’s context.

## **The Colonial, Colonization and its Impact**

Imperialism, colonization and dominance among tribal groups, regions, and nations are not “modern” phenomenon. Human history tells us that such occurrences have dated back before the Common Era. Broadly speaking, imperialism and colonization influence and have an impact on shaping culture to varying degrees. More specifically, a key argument in this dissertation is that PACS, as a discipline, has been nestled in colonial ideology – an uninterrogated stance – which I have asserted has been a hinderance to attaining peace. The colonial ideology that I refer to within the PACS context has stemmed primarily from European colonialism, dating back to Christopher Columbus’ first voyage in 1492. Columbus “has come to represent a huge legacy of suffering and destruction” (Smith, 2021, p. 57) over the past 500 plus years as his so-called discovery of the New World was the onset of a “long and bitter international rivalry over colonial possessions for which, after four and a half centuries, no solution has yet been found” (Williams, 1994, p. 3). Both Smith (2021) and Williams (1994) are referring to the impact of one historical event that initiated an overwhelming amount of damage and harm in centuries to come.

Specific to the European context, colonialization was a tool used to enable imperialism - an economic system of control (Smith, 2021). According to Adam Smith, the prosperity of a new colony depended on one simple economic factor—“plenty of good land” (as cited in Williams, 1994, p. 4). That is, the colony had to sustain the large-scale production of staple articles for an export market (Williams, 1994). At the same time, labour was also essential for the expansion to be successful. The labour demand that was required to facilitate the expansion was too high for 16th century Europe to fulfill which subsequently gave rise to African slavery and later indentured labour (Williams, 1994). The reasons for slavery, wrote Gibbon Wakefield, “are not moral, but economical circumstances; they relate not to vice and virtue, but to production” (as

cited in Williams, 1994, p. 6). Furthermore, the transportation of slaves, became an industry itself – and one of the most profitable for European economies.

According to Rediker (2008) and Samuelson (2018), the Middle Passage which was the route transporting slaves from Africa to the Americas (and lasted for about 400 years), became known as the sea of red (referring to the blood of slaves). Slaves who died, who were ill, and who attempted to rebel were tossed over-board (Rediker, 2008; Samuelson, 2018). In addition, there were those who chose to die by suicide by jumping into the ocean. The bodies that ended up in the sea or devoured by sharks, staining the waters red. As these occurrences were so common, sharks began to follow the ships as they were guaranteed to be fed (Rediker, 2008; Samuelson, 2018). Some species of sharks changed their migration patterns as a result of the Atlantic slave trade (Rediker, 2008; Samuelson, 2018). This example illustrates an environmental impact of European colonialism – one that is not commonly known. Furthermore, this example vividly portrays the extent of one of the impacts of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade; it also brings to light the the layers of complexity involved. In other words, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was not one act or one incident - it lasted for centuries and therefore to minimize or ignore its impact would be remiss.

The colony, on one hand, served as ports to access raw materials and transfer commodities to the imperial centre; and, on the other hand, also preserved the image of the West and what it stood for (Smith, 2021). This preservation remained intact by the settlers who “cut a devastating swathe, and left a permanent wound, on the societies and communities who occupied the lands named and claimed under imperialism (Smith, 2021). An example of how the preservation remained intact was the creation of the Other. The Other was created by contrasting Indigenous populations and the Orient to the West (Said, 1995; Smith, 2021). As Smith (2021)

has pointed out, a Western system of classification was created to determine “the wider rules of practice which ensure that Western interests remain dominant” (Smith, 2012, p. 49). Said (1995) has asserted that the Orient was constructed as a complex entity by which the West was able to compare and contrast itself to, giving rise to:

study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about [humankind] and the universe, for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character (Said, 1995, p. 90).

Said (1995) has added that the Westerner uses a “flexible positional superiority, [placing them] in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand” (p. 90).

Mamdani (2001) has also added a critical component to this discussion on the impact of colonialism by bringing to our attention how identities had been legally inscribed by the colonial state. The colonial state distinguished between race and ethnicity using law and placing race as hierarchical over ethnicity (Mamdani, 2001). In the context of Africa, natives belonged to ethnic groups and were not governed by civil law as they were not considered part of civil society. Race, by contrast was considered civilized and governed through civil law (Mamdani, 2001). These legal distinctions were enforced by the state and reproduced by institutions that structure citizen participation in the state (Mamdani, 2001). Furthermore, there was a racial hierarchy with Europeans (Whites) on top following by Coloureds, then Asians, then Arabs (Mamdani, 2001; Williams, 1994). Williams (1994) has astutely linked capitalism, slavery and racism, asserting that a “racial twist has thereby been given to what is basically an economic phenomenon” (Williams, 1994, p. 7); and his indisputable grievance is that “slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery” (Williams, 1994, p. 7). Both Mamdani (2001) and

Williams (1994) have clearly articulated how the colonial apparatus has constructed racism; with Mamdani (2001) boldly asserting that “the original sin of civil society under colonialism was racism” (Mamdani, 2001, p. 654).

The examples of slavery as labour, as an industry, of migration patterns shifting, racism and Othering only scratch the surface of the extent and impact of European colonization since Columbus’ historical voyage in 1492. Social, political, economical, environmental, psychological and religious perspectives and belief systems were coerced into falling inline with the European narrative – a narrative that remains dominant today. With respect to PACS, as a discipline, there is recognition and acknowledgement that the impact – imperialistic violence, as Benton (2024) has put it - of the past 500 years of European colonization has created harm, caused conflict and has hindered peace. Scholars in the discipline have deliberately sought out ways to fix and repair this damage this through various theoretical approaches and more recently paying attention to decolonizing efforts; however, there still remains an unawareness that the discipline is engrained in the very colonial narratives it seeks to refute. Lorde and Brydon (2000) have stated that, “the masters’ tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (p. 1670). To exemplify with this means, Lorde has posed the question: “What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy?” (Lorde & Brydon, 2000, p. 1670). To which she answers: “It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable” (Lorde & Brydon, 2000, p. 1670). In other words, if we only have one frame of reference, we can only see things through this particular lens, preventing us from being truly critical. It is from this point of reference that I have used to make the case that PACS is unable to see its narrow perimeters.

At the same time, I would like to acknowledge my own awareness of the bifurcation of the West/Western/Global North against the East/Eastern/Global South in my presentation of this material. Admittedly, the very thing that I am arguing in favour of eliminating – divisiveness – has also crept into this work. This has been tricky to navigate as the language used in PACS as a discipline is often written using these distinctions. Often it is necessary, to distinguish between East/West and North/South, particularly when it comes from critical scholars such as Said, Smith, and Mamdani who have been writing from strength-based approaches and are calling for a dismantling of the very narratives (East/West and North/South) that have now become essentializing in Western scholarship. At the same time, there is also a possible argument, that from a spiritual lens – within the context of nonduality – the East/West and North/South distinctions might just be necessary. This will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Four. Nonetheless, my argument that PACS must examine its ontological and epistemological foundations; discard theories which are essentializing; and incorporate a spiritual paradigm as a way to understanding peace, remains firm. Let us now look at three characteristics of the colonial narrative of peace – the way of peace. These characteristics are Othering as a divisive tool, the entanglement of violence and an external focus on peacebuilding.

### **Othering as a Divisive Tool**

The scholarship of Said (1995), Smith (2012) and Spivak (1995) have highlighted that Othering has been embedded in a system of classification, which has been coded to act as a cultural force field, ensuring Western interests remain dominant (Smith, 2012). From this system, a model for comparison and criteria for evaluation has been produced, generating theories which formed the “totalizing appropriation of the Other” (Smith, 2012, p. 69). The West has defined itself by using “contrasting image, idea, personality and experience” (Said, 1995, p. 87) of the

Orient, hereby creating the Other as well as the “imperialist narrative of reality [that] was established as the normative one” (Spivak, 1995, p. 25). In addition, Chilisa (2012) and Smith (2012) have pointed out that Euro-Western research approaches have operated from a deficit-theorizing model which have served to enable discrimination, marginalization and the colonized Other.

The contributions of Chilisa, Said, Smith and Spivak invite us to pause and examine the deeper historical, political and social contexts to which we (scholars and practitioners in PACS) now find ourselves tied. As the current notions of peacebuilding in PACS have been constructed to fit Western ontological and epistemological assumptions (Byrne & Thiessen, 2020), it is reasonable to assume that Western notions of peace have been reflected in theoretical frameworks, how research questions are framed, how data is collected and analyzed and how practice in PACS as a discipline is carried out. In other words, I am asserting that Othering has been theorized in PACS and as such is inherent in the discipline. For the most part, this has gone unnoticed. Let us look at the following example of how an unconscious colonial mindset can cause damage even when the intention has been the opposite.

Oswald et al. (2021) have stated that “security and peace research require deep decolonisation processes, starting from bottom-up and including the most vulnerable – generally women, girls and ethnic minorities – who are victims of disasters, war crimes and intrafamilial violence” (p. 1). Oswald et al.’s (2021) conviction that a decolonization process is essential to peace research is noted. At the same time, it is unclear what they mean by decolonization (but we will put this aside for now). Nonetheless, by dismantling their statement, it is possible to illustrate how it has been framed from a colonial lens of superiority and from a deficit-theorizing perspective. Dismantling and examining this statement serves as an illustrative example of how

such statements can potentially be problematic. To begin, women, girls and ethnic minorities have been categorized as “vulnerable” and “at the bottom.” In addition, broad and generalized claims have been made regarding to whom and to what the women, girls and ethnic minorities are vulnerable to. Secondly, the women, girls and ethnic minorities have been placed at the bottom; however, it is unclear which or whose yardstick or ladder they are being measured against. In other words, it is not clear where or what the bottom might be. Thirdly, ethnic minority has not been clearly defined. Thus, it is my assumption that “ethnic minority” refers to those who are not of European ancestry (White). If this is indeed the case, then what has been implied is that “ethnic minority” is being compared to White – which, very subtly, is another invisible yardstick that is being used to compare the “ethnic minority” to Whites. What can be inferred by this categorization and the generalization of Oswald et al.’s (2021) statement is that a significant portion of the world’s population (women and girls who are not White) are in dire need of assistance. Fourth, a picture has been painted depicting ethnic minority women and girls as victims of disasters, war crimes and intrafamilial violence. Without dismissing the fact that women and girls are in fact more disproportionately impacted by disasters, war crimes and intrafamilial violence than men; it is nonetheless important to note that the statement: “security and peace research require deep decolonisation processes, starting from bottom-up and including the most vulnerable – generally women, girls and ethnic minorities – who are victims of disasters, war crimes and intrafamilial violence” Oswald et al. 2021, (p. 1) – has painted a picture of ethnic minority women and girls as hopeless, without agency, implying that the vulnerable ethnic minorities women are victims stranded in an undefined bottomless pit.

The language in one sentence that has been intended to advocate for the necessity for decolonization in PACS research, is loaded with colonized ideology, beliefs and values. Put

another way, the women and girls have been Othered, positioning them as marginalized and oppressed. Such categorizations operate from a deficit theorizing lens. When research is conducted in such a manner that it confirms what we already believe to be true, it is referred to as “knowledge-confirming paradigms” (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011, p. 13). Scholars who approach their work from a decolonizing lens have referred to knowledge-confirming paradigms as deficit-theorizing approaches (Chilisa, 2012; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Smith, 2012).

Admittedly, Oswald et al. (2021) meant well, however, they were not aware of their own biases, let alone their ontological and epistemological lens. The example I used is very specific and out of the context from which it was written. My critique is not directed at the authors themselves but has been used to point out how easy it can be to Other without necessarily wanting or intending to do so. Too often, contemporary colonizers, not recognizing the colonization of their own minds, are quick to want to help and save the Other (Gebhard et al., 2022). For those of us who have been categorized as the Other, we have also learned to internalize our Otherness just as much as we have learned to Other others. We (the colonizer and the Other) are all burdened by the invisible weight of a colonial history which has played out in explicit and subtle ways in contemporary times. As illustrated in the example above, one seemingly well-meaning statement can very subtly encapsulate colonial indoctrination. When our frame of reference is Othering, we perpetuate divisiveness. Divisiveness is the opposite of harmony and peace.

Othering has been upheld in different ways; and at times, it can be masked or disguised so cleverly, that it can go unnoticed. For example, there have been efforts made to counter and work alongside the neoliberal approach to peacebuilding such as incorporating feminist (Reardon, 2014) and queer perspectives (Yavuz, 2024), decentralizing power (Chinn, 2013; Lederach, 1997), including “local” voices (Lederach, 1997; Richmond, 2010; Richmond &

Mitchell, 2011), to list a few perspectives which have been absent from the neoliberal model.

However, such perspectives are being compared to an ideal – and one that has not been explicitly stated (the patriarchy). By way of example, let us delve into feminist perspectives.

### *Feminist Perspectives*

There are many theories which have operated independently outside of PACS and are now being included in the discipline, adding another dimension or perspective to existing PACS theories (Kriesberg, 2020). One such example is feminist theory (Kriesberg, 2020). The feminine voice has occupied space, in the academy, for several decades confronting the patriarchy, although not consistently so, with respect to promoting and sustaining gender-based violence. Critical feminists, such as bell hooks (2003), have pointed out that both men and women fear contradicting the patriarchal paradigm, and feminist writers and researchers, have often used the term “traditional” to refer to patriarchal practices and values (hooks, 2003). This unawareness has served to uphold the patriarchal system rather than challenge and/or dismantle it (hooks, 2003).

In PACS, feminist theory has been dominated by Euro-Western ideologies of feminism, often holding a colonial gaze on non-Western women. As such, non-Western feminist scholars, such as Chilisa and Ntseane (2010), have been espousing for the deconstruction of “universalised Western gender theory and [the] employ[ment] [of] post-colonial, indigenous and African feminist approaches to reveal local standpoints that express girls’/women’s agency and resistance” (pp. 617-618). Kiprop (2016) has noted that a colonial past has obscured and denied women from participating in peacebuilding and peacemaking activities in Africa. Hargreaves (2017) has concurred with Kiprop’s assertion that the impact of colonization and colonialism has left many societies unhealthy, at the expense of both men and women. Hargreaves (2017), speaking within the Canadian context, has pointed out that legislation such as the Indian Act has

“reordered gender relations to subordinate women” (p. 10). The contribution of Euro-Western feminism, as a body of work has brought to light the male bias, particularly in the academy and it is duly noted (Chilisa, 2012b; Sprague, 2005). However, scholars such as hooks have added another dimension to the Euro-Western lens.

hooks (2003) has strongly asserted that at the root of patriarchy lies the denial of men’s wholeness as humans. That is, their socialized denial to access and express feelings of love and empathy has evoked frustration which has manifested in acts of violence (hooks, 2003). She has emphasized the importance of “healing [the] male spirit” (hooks, p. 135) through compassion and forgiveness. While she has called for feminist blueprints for change (hooks, 2003), she has also been critical of radical feminists who cannot “acknowledge the possibility of male suffering or [willingness to] forgive” (hooks, 2003, p. 139). She has further asserted that “to heal, men must learn to feel again” (hooks, 2003, p. 143); and both men and women must be willing to hear men speak of their pain. hooks (2003) has emphasized caring for the soul and aligning our personalities with our souls as a requirement for both men and women. Put another way, I believe that hooks (2003) is saying that we need to heal the male spirit so that manifestations of violence can cease. The contributions of non-Western feminists bring another dimension to the feminine voice – however, these voices tend to be on the periphery of Western feminism.

### ***Impact of Othering***

Based on my (socially constructed) racial identity and by being born a woman, the adjectives such as marginalized, vulnerable, racialized, underprivileged, minority and oppressed all apply to me. What happens psychologically to a person when they are fed narratives about themselves which encompass these sentiments? They begin to believe that is who they are. When and why has it been acceptable for some humans to create and perpetuate such derogatory sentiments towards other humans? If I were in an interpersonal relationship with someone and

they referred to me using such adjectives, it would be considered abusive; yet under different circumstances, the very thing is deemed acceptable. There was a time when I felt the psychological power of those words which shattered my confidence and trust in myself. For example, there were times when it would feel futile to apply for jobs even though postings made claims of equitable hiring practices. It has been my experience to be invited to an interview (holding exceptional qualifications) only to be turned away; and subsequently learn that the position had been filled by someone who was White and held less credentials and experience than me. This is an example of structural violence. At the same time, this knowledge is taxing on one's psyche as there is a constant mental nagging that reminds you that there is a system in place which is set up to work against you, based on attributes of your identity. On a personal level, I have had to cleanse myself psychologically, emotionally, physically and spiritually from believing that I am marginalized, vulnerable, racialized, underprivileged, minority, oppressed, etc. to believing that I am a whole person, an expression of love. It is important to point out, that the cleansing process has been a work in progress and continues to be something I need to work on. In Chapter Five, I will discuss in greater detail attachment to identity narratives and how we can extract ourselves from them.

The dichotomy that the narratives of the marginalized, vulnerable, racialized, underprivileged, minority, oppressed, etc. create often goes unnoticed. It is the dichotomy of Othering. To Other, there needs to be a point of comparison. In other words, if you are marginalized – relative to whom are you marginalized? If you are racialized – relative to whom are you racialized? The comparison is subtle. This dichotomy simultaneously creates narratives of “less than” and narratives of superiority which are divisive. Returning to the example from Oswald et al. (2021), I believe that their example has depicted how Othering has been employed (seemingly outside of the neoliberal lens) by using a Western feminist lens to Other. When we

speak of structural violence – it is such subtleties that we must be aware of, otherwise, we continue to uphold the very structures we think we are aiming to dismantle.

In sum, the subtleties of Othering are embedded in PACS theories and even the counter-theories. This means that PACS (arguably unknowingly) has continued to operate from a deficit-theorizing lens which has served to enable narratives of discrimination, marginalization and the colonized Other. Such narratives are divisive and mirror colonial ideology of divide and conquer. At a societal level, divisiveness is a hindrance to peace; particularly if the goal is positive peace, to which the outcome is social justice. At an individual level, divisiveness creates a fractured and disembodied mind which creates inner conflict. Inner conflict is a hindrance to peace. Thus, one characteristic of the colonial narrative to peace is the subtle use of Othering. Another characteristic is the entanglement of violence.

### **The Entanglements of Violence**

A second characteristic that I believe is an indication that PACS has a colonial ontological foundation is the degree to which the discipline is entangled in violence. Colonial violence is indisputable. This narrative of violence has transferred to PACS by way of the discipline's conceptualization of peace. That is, peace has been conceptualized in relation to violence. According to Galtung (1967), peace has two sides – the absence of personal violence (negative peace) and the absence of structural violence (positive peace). Personal violence is direct and structural violence is indirect (Galtung, 1967). A state of negative peace occurs when there is a reduction or elimination of fighting and direct physical violence (Byrne & Senehi, 2012). Structural violence refers to societal systems and structures that perpetuate inequity. Examples of structural violence are racism, economic disparity, elitism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.). Galtung (1967) has made the distinction between negative and positive peace as he has

determined that the absence of personal violence alone cannot yield a specific or defined condition that can be deemed as peace. On the other hand, the absence of structural violence, he has argued can yield a specific and defined condition – one where social justice resides (Galtung, 1967). Social justice, according to Galtung (1967) is “egalitarian distribution of power and resources” (p. 183). In other words, the absence of both physical violence and structural violence must be present for positive peace to be realized. It is from this lens – positive and negative peace - that peace has been framed and understood in PACS – and it is for this very reason that I have made the argument that PACS is entangled in violence as peace is understood to mean the absence of physical and structural violence. It is the very entanglement that has led many PACS scholars to study where the roots of violence lie, hoping that by addressing the root causes of violence, peace will ensue.

### ***The Roots of Violence***

Many scholars in PACS have posited that to build a culture of peace, we need to understand the underlying causes of violence (Byrne & Senehi, 2012). Many theories have been presented in attempt to get to the root causes of violence. For example, Englander (1997) and Boles and Miotto (2003) have presented findings from a broad range of research which has examined if biological and psychological factors, media, drugs and alcohol could be attributed to violent behaviour. Biological influences include nature vs. nurture, physiology and anatomy, neurotransmitters, hormones and genetics. Psychodynamic perspectives such as psychoanalysis and other psychological and psychiatric perspectives which include an association between mental illness and violence and criminality, psychiatric disorders, cognitive distortion and recidivism, have all displayed evidence that these factors may play a role in an individual’s engagement in violence (Englander, 1997). However, whether biological or psychological, the

data has indicated that there has been no conclusive evidence that attributes one factor as the sole determinant of violent behaviours. It appears to be a combination of some of these factors that may increase the risk of such behaviours; that is, not all people sharing the same attributes engage in violent behaviour. In addition, the environment or social component must also be considered as a variable that could interplay with violent behaviours (Englander, 1997). Boles and Miotto (2003) and Englander (1997) have also presented data based on the hypothesis that violent video games, television violence, and substances such as alcohol and cocaine may be factors that contribute to acts of violence. With respect to video games, the evidence has suggested younger children are more vulnerable to the impact of video game violence than older children (Englander, 1997). With respect to alcohol and cocaine, these substances must be combined with other experiences to produce increased violence or aggression (Englander, 1997).

Englander's (1997) data was collated from numerous studies over many decades with a diverse range of participants. Based on her findings, Englander (1997) has determined that there has been no conclusive evidence linking violence to any one factor or to a particular "equation of factors." Boles and Miotto (2003) have provided a literature review based on data from across disciplines on substance abuse and violence. Similar to Englander's data, Boles and Miotto (2003) have also examined studies on how social, economic, and biological factors; as well as psychopharmacological influences can impact violent behaviour. Their conclusion was that the relationship between substances and violent behaviour is a complex one which is influenced by both individual and environmental factors (Boles & Miotto, 2003). The compilation of data from Boles and Miotto (2003) and Englander (1987) is an indication of how prominent violence has been in society/life and therefore the necessity to understand from where it derives is pressing.

According to Turpin and Kurtz (1997), “the web of violence” refers to the inter-relationship among personal, collective, national and global levels that link the personal to the global. This web has framed the public discourse about what violence is and what can be done about it. What has resulted are intervention and prevention models based on Western schools of thought and as such the outcomes of these models reflect these ideologies. This is supported by Enloe (1993), who has stated that a “peace through strength approach” is a manifestation of the patriarchal structure which has often resulted in short term negative peace (as cited in Byrne and Senehi, 2012, p. 219). To gain some deeper insight into what it means that violence intervention and prevention models are framed using Western ideologies, let us look at the following example.

Simmons (2011) has compiled the work of Burton (1979, 1997), Durkheim (1984), Erikson (1963), and Galtung (1969) to demonstrate the relationship between identity theory and generativity and their contributions to conflict theory. Both Burton (1979, 1997) and Galtung (1969) have asserted that if individuals are denied satisfying their basic human needs, violence is likely to ensue. This assertion has been echoed by Durkheim (1984) who has stated that “humans are drawn to confrontation when denied the right to care for the future and to leave something behind” (as cited in Simmons, 2011, p. 121). This belief has been tied to identity, linking it to self-esteem and individual actions. Erikson’s (1963) eight stages of development is one model of psychosocial development which has theorized that life’s course can be sequenced into milestones, each of which, when accomplished, moves the individual forward into a new or different track from the previous course. Individual crisis at stage five of Erikson’s development model - identity vs. role confusion – has been “recognized as a viable root of conflict behaviour of the future adult” (Simmons, 2011, p. 119). Generativity vs. stagnation is the seventh stage of

Erikson's psychosocial development model. Erikson (1963) has defined generativity as "the need for adults to leave their stamp on the world" (as cited in Simmons, 2011, p. 118). According to Simmons (2011), the pessimistic side of generativity as it relates to conflict is that when hopes and dreams have been shattered (stagnation), people will fight to defend what they cherish. Erikson's eighth stage of development is ego integrity vs. despair. Generativity at this stage compels the ego such that we are left with a "world of egocentric moguls competing to leave behind a legacy that outpaces the others" (Simmons, 2011, p.102).

Simmons' synopsis of how generativity, identity and basic needs combine to create conflict and violence raises three points of concern that ought to be considered in PACS. The first concern is that Erikson's model of psychosocial development has been taken for granted. I believe that this unquestioned acceptance has served to justify some violent behaviours (knowledge-confirming paradigms). This acceptance leads us to the other two concerns which are the assumptions that that an identity crisis at stage five can predict violent behaviours in adults and that generativity is the need to leave a stamp on the world. This combination, it can be argued, is potentially destructive because it can serve to justify the means to an end. What has been suggested here is that an identity crisis and generative legacies are critical to one's psychosocial development. That is, identity-based conflict is a psychological manifestation of adolescent frustrations and there are even stronger repercussions of a generativity crisis (Simmons, 2011). Boulding (1990) has reinforced Simmons' view by pointing out that "most wars are traceable to political elites trying to retain and enhance illegitimate power and to oppressed groups rebelling against these elites" (as cited in Byrne and Senehi, 2012, p. 219).

The legacy of leaving behind an accumulation of material wealth and power is a colonial one; and I would argue applies to elitist circles – particular those driven by a capitalist economic

system. Furthermore, the matter of an identity crisis seems to imply that marginalized groups who are not having their basic needs met have a high likelihood of resorting to violence, as means to getting these needs met. In fact, Simmons (2011) has made the claim that the rise of the Black Power Movement in the United States in the 1960's is an example of identity crisis gone awry. What seems to be absent from Simmons' analysis is why violence of slavery has been perpetrated for 500 years. Was this identity crisis gone awry? I believe that the theories of generativity, identity and basic needs which have been combined into a grander theory were developed and designed to fit into a normative social context which has served to justify violent behaviour for minoritized groups, while simultaneously dismissing the violence perpetrated by colonial practice. In fact, generativity almost seems to justify the need to leave a legacy behind and violent behaviour to gain riches and power in this case appears to be justifiable. There has been no indication in Simmons' discussion that violence is preventable. Although he did offer a "thoroughly optimistic outcome" (Simmons, 2011, p.122), claiming that a generative person is likely to be more peaceful and caring towards others than a stagnant person. He has stated, however, that conditions to produce such behaviours and/or psychological conditioning need to be cultivated – and a "vehicle for such a movement might be religious or loosely spiritual with psychological motivations" (Simmons, 2011, p. 122). It is intriguing that Simmons has touched on the spiritual, but one gets the impression that he is not entirely convinced of its potential to deliver peace. What can be gleaned from Simmons' view which is grounded in generativity, identity and basic needs is that violence is inevitable which implies a necessity for violence intervention and prevention strategies. Granted, not all PACS scholars and practitioners believe that violence is inevitable, nonetheless, there have been efforts made to intervene and prevent violence. Intervention strategies aim to address the root causes of violence. Preventative

strategies aim to mitigate the risk factors which are believed to instigate violence. I believe that Simmons' confluence of generativity, identity and basic needs has served to perpetuate a narrative that centres violence – and one which PACS finds itself entangled.

Byrne and Senehi (2012) have distinguished between conflict and violence, stating that conflict is unavoidable and violence is avoidable. Prothrow-Stith and Spivak (2004) have also claimed that violence is preventable. They have asserted that instead of focusing on reducing risk factors that have promoted, encouraged and tolerated violence; attention should be given to factors which can build resiliency, success and a nurturing environment (Prothrow-Stith & Spivak, 2004). What could some of these factors which can build resiliency, success and a nurturing environment be? Prothrow-Stith and Spivak's (2004) conviction that attention ought to be given to factors which can build resiliency, success and a nurturing environment is significant, however, it is still in the material plane as it does not refer to the spiritual. I believe that it is on and from the spiritual plane that we can bring healing.

Let us return back to hooks' (2003) assertion that the male spirit needs to be healed so that manifestations of violence can cease - which is a very different view from the grand theory combining generativity, identity and basic needs theories claiming that unmet needs can result in violence; and therefore by having those needs met, violence can be averted. One may argue that from hooks' perspective, it is the male identity or more so the suppression of the male identity that leads to violence – thereby framing her conviction as an identity crisis. I, however, would argue that on the surface, it might appear as an identity crisis, but this is not the case. In reality, it is not the male identity that is in question but the male spirit which has been stifled.

The “essential nature of the universe is the coexistence of opposite values” (Chopra, 2003, p. 190). For example, humans can be compassionate, brave and unkind just as we can be

unjust, fearful, and unkind- the list is endless. However, on the material plane, these qualities have been genderized – a classification system that has attributed some traits, characteristics and behaviours to men and some to women. These categories have often been presented as polar opposites, creating divisiveness, rivalry and disharmony between the men and women. However, on the spiritual plane, our traits, characteristics and behaviours are not restricted by any boundaries as they are on the material plane.

On the spiritual plane, the narratives of masculine/male and feminine/female traits, characteristics and behaviors are reframed as masculine and feminine energies – and all humans – have feminine elements and masculine elements (Arahmaiani & Campbell, 2019; Bhat & Sisodia, 2016; Chopra, 2003). For example, lunar energy, associated with the feminine, is cooling and receptive. Solar energy, on the other hand, which is warming and active, is attributed to the masculine (Chopra & Keys, 2021a). Feminine qualities include “surrender, receptivity, adaptability, intuition, creativity, beauty, flow, sensuality, nurturing, affection, sharing, gentleness, patience, vulnerability, empathy, inclusion, openness, variety/flavor, trust, and harmony” (Bhat & Sisodia, 2016, p. 10). The complementary masculine capacities include “freedom, direction, logic, reason, focus, integrity, structure, stability, passion, independence, discipline, confidence, awareness, discernment, authenticity, strength, clarity, assertiveness, order, and convergence” (Bhat & Sisodia, 2016, p. 11). Thus, if the essential nature of the universe is the coexistence of opposite values (Chopra, 2003), then from this perspective, it becomes possible to view masculine and feminine energies as *complementary* energies which both men and women hold.

It would be remiss to ignore that fact that masculine and feminine energies can manifest in undesirable qualities. Undesirable masculine energies can be “aggressive, cruel, mechanical,

arrogant, insensitive, violent, power-hungry, and spiritually empty” (Bhat & Sisodia, 2016, p. 11); whereas undesirable feminine energies can be “overly sentimental, needy, dependent, exploited, unfocused, irrational, weak, and manipulative” (Bhat & Sisodia, 2016, p. 11). Chopra and Keys (2021b) have pointed out that Western society, in particular, has been dominated by undesirable masculine qualities, thereby overshadowing and underappreciating the feminine, which is naturally more internal and hidden than the masculine. This current situation, from a spiritual plane, has suggested that humans are out of sync and this disharmony is being reflected back to us. In essence then, both masculine and feminine energies require spiritual healing (not material healing) which will make us whole again. Wholeness, which is emphasized in all major wisdom traditions is, “the ability to balance, integrate, and unite all the divided and fragmented parts of oneself” (Bhat & Sisodia, 2016, p. 24). Thus, from a spiritual perspective, it is not our identity or basic needs or the need to leave a legacy behind that needs to be satisfied, but our own internal energies that need to be in balance which are both feminine and masculine. When these energies become harmonious, peace can ensue. One way to bring balance is through meditation which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

Returning to the material plane, peace, I have argued has been defined in relation to violence – that is the absence of direct violence and structural violence – will yield positive peace which, as noted earlier by Galtung (1969) is a “positively defined condition...which is an egalitarian distribution of power and resources” (p. 183). Based on this definition, serious efforts have been taken to yield the outcome of positive peace. To learn how effective these efforts have been, let us look at how the factors that drive peace have been identified and measured.

### ***Measuring Peace***

Measuring and assessing peace has been challenging, particularly given the different standpoints and approaches of each of the theoretical frameworks. Nonetheless, one aspect of measuring peace that seems to be common and broadly used is measuring peace in relation to violence. The Global Peace Index (GPI) has been the “world’s leading measure of global peacefulness” since 2008 (*Global Peace Index 2025*, 2025, p. 2). The GPI measures the state of peace worldwide using three domains: the level of societal safety and security; the extent of ongoing domestic and international conflict; and the degree of militarization (*Global Peace Index 2024*, 2024). In 2023, a new measure - global military capability - was introduced which “incorporates military sophistication, technology, and battle readiness into a single measure” (*Global Peace Index 2024*, 2024, p. 2). The three domains are further categorized into two major indicators, negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace has been defined as the absence of violence or the fear of violence and positive peace has been defined as the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies (*Global peace index 2022*, 2022). These factors are then taken into account using the multiplier effect (an economic concept) to determine the economic impact of violence which is then expressed as the percentage of a nation’s GDP expenditure on violence (*Global peace index 2017*, 2017). Put another way, a nation’s level of peace is determined based on the percentage of its gross domestic product (GDP) expenditure on violence.

The 2025 GPI report indicated that the economic cost of violence in 2024 for the ten most peaceful countries averaged 2.6% of their GDP compared to the ten least peaceful countries which averaged 27.8% of their GDP (*Global Peace Index 2025*, 2025). The 2024 GPI Report has stated that “the average level of global peacefulness [has] deteriorated by 0.56 per cent” (*Global Peace Index 2024*, 2024, p. 2). At a first glance this percentage might appear to be insignificant;

however, the trend over the past 16 years has been that the world has gradually been becoming less peaceful, based on the criteria for measurement and assessment of peace used by the Institute for Economics and Peace. According to the GPI 2024 report, there are more conflicts in the world now than there have been since the end of the Second World War; and fewer conflicts have been resolved, whether it be through military action or via peace agreements (*Global Peace Index 2024*, 2024).

Economically speaking, 13.5% (US\$19.1 trillion in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms) of the world's economic activity was spent on violence in 2023 compared to 12.6% (US\$14.3 trillion) in 2016 (*Global Peace Index 2017*, 2017; *Global Peace Index 2024*, 2024). PPP refers to a currency conversion rate that aims to equalize currencies among nations. For example, GDP figures are measured using PPP values. The global economic impact of violence has been defined as the “expenditure and economic effect related to containing, preventing and dealing with the consequences of violence” (*Global Peace Index 2024*, 2024, p.39). A country realizes a peace dividend when it avoids the economic impact of violence (*Global Peace Index 2024*, 2024). In other words, if or when a country reduces its spending on defense, the difference can be used for other expenditures. The impact of global spending on violence, according to the GPI, is “economic disruptions...by reducing the propensity to invest and consume...by divert[ing] public and private resources away from more productive activities” (*Global Peace Index 2024*, 2024, p. 39).

The Institute for Economics and Peace has developed an approach to systemically inform policies to build positive peace. Positive peace includes aspects such as “good governance, equitable resource distribution, and social cohesion” (*Global Peace Index 2024*, 2024, p. 64). There are two aspects that stand out from the GPI's assessment of peace. The first, the focus on

expenditure and impact of violence have implied that the less spent on violence means the world is more peaceful; however, there is not a direct correlation between the two. A peace dividend is not the same as the level of peace a country may be experiencing. The second aspect that stands out from the GPI are the factors for positive peace align with the neoliberal peacebuilding paradigm (i.e. statebuilding). In sum, the GPI is an economic measure of peace which determines peacefulness based on a nation's GDP expenditure on violence. This measure reinforces the normative narrative of violence and reinforces colonial ideology; and arguably is not an accurate indication of global peace. If anything, this formula measures the level of negative peace, globally.

In sum, I have argued that PACS has been entangled in violence based on how peace has been framed and defined (as the absence of violence); as well as the manner peace has been measured and assessed. First, I raised the point that even though some PACS scholars have asserted that violence is preventable, there seems to have been efforts made to squelch this view and instead promote the narrative that violence is evitable. Englander's (1997) and Boles and Miotto's (2003) synopsis of a broad range of research querying into the effect of biological and psychological factors, exposure to violence in media, the consumption of substances and the influence of the environmental and social contexts on violent behaviour have indicated that none of these variables are solely responsible for violent behaviour. In fact, their findings have indicated that a combination of some factors may increase the risk of violent behaviour, however, these factors could not be generalizable because not all people exposed to the same variables have exhibited violence behaviour.

My second point is Simmons' (2011) illustration of how identity, generativity and unmet basic needs have informed conflict theory. Drawing from a few scholars, Simmons' synopsis has

depicted how a colonial notion of violence has been upheld. The combination of Erikson's (1963) generative theory and Burton's (1990) identity theory could explain the cause of violent behavior (Simmons, 2011). According to this theory identity crisis at stage five of development and/or failure to leave a legacy behind (stage seven) could spur violent behavior. Readiness to uncritically accept this theory reinforces knowledge-confirming paradigms which simultaneously reinforces a colonial narrative of violent behavior. Lastly, the GPI reports have illustrated that the notions of negative and positive peace are now widely acceptable ways to frame peace. The reports have also highlighted how peace has been measured economically in relation to violence.

These three points support my claim that PACS is entangled in violence. I am not saying that PACS is overtly supporting violence, however I am making the claim that PACS has placed a certain level of emphasis on violence (as a way to understand peace). Hence, the discipline has inadvertently upheld the colonial narrative of violence. Thus, two characteristics of colonial ideology in PACS are Othering and an entanglement in violence. The third is an external focus on peacebuilding.

### **External Focus on Peacebuilding**

I have made an assertion that PACS' ontological and epistemological underpinnings are grounded in a colonial ideology. To support this claim, I have pointed out that PACS' theories have been Othering and are entangled in violence, arguing that both attributes are characteristic of colonial ideology. A third attribute that is characteristic of colonial ideology is an external focus on peacebuilding. This means that from a theoretical perspective, PACS has placed attention on addressing external factors which are believed to be the root causes of conflicts. Absent from the external narrative of peace is the notion of inner peace (which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four). There are two main arguments that I will present to support my

assertion that there is an external focus on peacebuilding. The first argument is that an emphasis has been placed on building and enhancing structures that stems from the (neo)liberal version of peace. The second argument, which is closely linked to the first, is the use of violence as a satisfier.

### ***Focus on Structures***

Chandler (2017), among other PACS scholars, has critiqued international peacebuilding, having claimed that the outcome has been a twenty-year crisis. This outcome has been the result of applying ideologically liberal mechanisms such as constitutionalism, market freedoms, democracy and rule of law to post-conflict zones (with the assumptions that these were foundational in peacebuilding). Mac Ginty (2008) has coined the term *IKEA peacebuilding*, referring to the liberal peacebuilding universal approach of one-size-fits-all. As has already been discussed in greater detail in Chapter One, the universal approach to peacebuilding has been equated to statebuilding (using Western states' structures as the model). According to Ashwani (2013a), the most dominant way of understanding and approaching problems in all aspects of life has been to focus on the outer or the structural aspect of a problem. This is problematic, he has claimed, as the psychological aspect has been largely ignored – and it is this aspect, Ashwani (2013a) has suggested, that carries the most weight in helping us to understand how we interact with the world. I have discussed in Chapter One that conflict management differs from Conflict Resolution in that the latter has made an effort to incorporate the social and psychological factors of conflict in analysis and peacebuilding. From this added insight, needs-based identity theory developed and emerged. This theory has placed an emphasis on identity (which is an external characteristic of being) and on basic needs. These needs are acceptance needs (recognition of communal identity), access needs (participation in society), and security needs (physical

security) (Azar, 1990). Azar (1990) has made the claim that the denial or insufficient access to these fundamental basic needs is what induces a conflict. My argument is that these fundamental needs, as put forward by Azar, can be categorized as external or material elements. Like structures, the elements that define the needs are tangible and therefore they can be measured and/or evaluated. That is, in line with Galtung's (1969) concept of positive peace where he has claimed that social justice is a defined condition; the needs as put forward by Azar are defined conditions – recognition of communal identity, participation in society; and physical security. It is precisely these tangible attributes/defined conditions that distinguish the external from the internal. Even when the psychological component is factored in, as we saw with Erikson's eight states of development; there has still been an emphasis placed on the external. Erikson has argued that an identity crisis can be attributed to the cause of conflict, as well as generativity, where leaving a legacy behind is important. And, if left unrealized, this too can be a cause of conflict. Granted that both of Erikson's assumptions are grounded in psychology, however, as he has framed both identity and needs as aspects that must be realized externally. As such, I argue that these aspects have an external focus. Absent from Azar's and Erikson's theories is that notion that spiritually fulfillment could be viewed as a basic need.

Hoewel (2019) has asserted that human development theory (such as Erikson's) that has been prominent in International Development is technocratic, instrumentalist, one-dimensional, positivist, and has dismissed the spiritual dimension of what it means to be human. Hoewel (2019) has pointed out that the spiritual aspect of human activities has been viewed as subjective and not measurable. He has contended that international development has lacked orientation and meaning and thereby he has advocated for a spiritual component. At the same time, he has also very carefully pointed out that the spiritual is not an "add on" to existing models. A spiritual

component to international development must “[promote] a vision and practice which can guide actors toward a meaningful end” (Hoevel, 2019, p. 252). In other words, Hoevel has implied that relying only on external means to bring peace is insufficient without a spiritual component.

The psychological aspect that Ashwani (2013a) has referred to encompasses a deeper consciousness which is internal and not tangible. It is known to the individual but cannot be measured using external or tangible units of measurement. Ashwani (2013a) holds a strong conviction that consciousness is at the core of human existence, as such, he has clearly stated that “it is imperative that any fundamental change begins at the level of consciousness rather than structures” (p. 2). Ashwani (2013a) also believes that it is the very structures – political, economical, social and religious – through psychological conditioning which have maintained the narrative of the Other that is responsible for racial conflicts (identity conflicts). He has taken this point one step further, having claimed that the very structures have been created through and from our consciousness, and therefore, this is where we must look for the solution. Both Hoevel (2019) and Ashwani (2013a) have brought to our attention that the focus solely on structures to address inequities and inequalities is not enough – emphasizing that fundamental change begins with the individual and from within.

In sum, an external focus on peacebuilding approaches has paid attention to building societal structures – political, economical and social – assuming that these structures will lead to peace; however, they have not. Considering these limitations, the psychological and social aspects (which were absent) have been addressed using human development theories; however, these too have fallen short of delivering positive peace. Some scholars such as Hovel (2019) and Ashwani (2013a) have pointed out that the limitations of human development theories have been an omission of the need for spiritual cultivation – which requires an inner focus.

### *Violence As a Satisfier*

According to Max-Neef et al. (1991), all fundamental human needs are weighted the same; however, they have also claimed that each “economic, social and political system adopts different methods for the satisfaction” (p. 18) of these needs. They have also stated that needs can be satisfied within three contexts: (a) with regard to oneself, (b) with regard to the social group, and (c) with regard the environment. Max-Neef (2010) has suggested that there has been an evolution of the fundamental human needs which have evolved and moved at the pace of evolution. The following seven needs - subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, creation, leisure – he believes have always existed. However, he has claimed that identity and freedom came much later; and transcendence, he has predicted will eventually be added to the list. All needs, Max-Neef (2010) has argued must be satisfied. Satisfiers can be exogenous or endogenous. Exogenous satisfiers have been imposed or institutionalized by civil society. Endogenous satisfiers have been generated at the grassroots level. According to Max-Neef (2010), there are five types of satisfiers: (1) violators or destroyers, (2) pseudo-satisfiers, (3) inhibiting satisfiers, (4) singular satisfiers, and (5) synergic satisfiers. To give an example of how Max-Neef has conceptualized these needs and satisfiers, let us take protection (a need), which can potentially be satisfied by national security doctrine. This satisfier is an example of a violator or destroyer as it simultaneously inhibits the need for subsistence, identity, affection, understanding, participation, and freedom (Max-Neef, 2010). On the other end of the spectrum are synergic satisfiers, which can stimulate needs satisfaction. So, for example, let us look at protection again. Under this category, this need can be satisfied by democratic trade unions and the other needs that would be stimulated are understanding, participation and identity (Max-Neef, 2010). Max-Neef (2010) has created a complex table categorizing these needs and

satisfiers. While I do not necessarily agree with some of his categories and analysis, what I have taken from what he has proposed is that needs must be satisfied and there are various ways to do so, which varies from culture to culture. Keeping this in mind, let us now turn to Chopra's (2005) take on satisfying needs.

Chopra (2005) has asserted that adventure, power and expansion are values in life which need to be satisfied. In his discussion on what produces satisfaction, he has categorized violence as materialistic, and like all things materialistic, violence can bring about satisfaction. From Chopra's perspective, acts of violence have served as satisfiers, and he has suggested that replacing material satisfaction with a spiritual satisfaction that comes from an expanded consciousness is more powerful and adventurous than those now being satisfied by acts of violence. Chopra's take on violence is enlightening. Instead of viewing violence as a means to an end (peace), Chopra has viewed violent acts as bringing satisfaction. Similarly, the act of purchasing in capitalist-driven societies bring satisfaction, not the actual item(s) purchased. That is, materialistic accumulations bring temporary satisfaction. Equating violence as material is astute and profound and opens the space to counter violence from a new perspective. Max-Neef et al. (1991) have made the claim that "cultural change is the consequence of dropping traditional satisfiers for the purpose of adopting new or different ones" (p.18); as such it may be argued that through a cultural shift, we are able to move from the dominance of material satisfiers (traditional satisfiers) towards the pull of spiritual satisfiers (new satisfiers). Within a PACS context, if acts of violence (physical and structural) which provide material satisfaction can be replaced with a spiritual satisfaction, a "new" kind of peace is possible. The terms and distinction between negative and positive peace would no longer be necessary because instead of starting

from a place of violence to find peace, we can start from a place of *ahimsa* or non-violence. (The notion of ahimsa will be elaborated on in Chapter Four.)

To sum up Chapter Two, my principal argument is that PACS' theoretical foundations rest in colonial ideology. Thus, it can be argued that PACS holds a colonial narrative of peace and absent from this ideology is a spiritual understanding of peace which will be presented in detail in Parts Two and Three of this dissertation. I have argued that what is characteristic of this ontological lens has been its reliance of Othering, an entanglement in violence and an external focus on peacebuilding. Othering has been a colonial phenomenon where Western culture, values, and beliefs have been used as the standard by which to compare and measure non-Western values, beliefs and cultures. This phenomenon has been reflected in PACS's theories, which have aimed to restructure political, economical and social elements in the name of peace. One reason for not achieving positive and sustained peace from this perspective, I have argued, is because Othering is divisive.

The entanglement in of violence is also prominent in peacebuilding theories. Violence, itself, as a phenomenon, is quite complex. There are some who believe that violence is preventable, while others hold the view that violence is inescapable and that it is only the degree of violence that can change. Nonetheless, I have argued that in PACS violence has become entangled through conflict analysis which identifies the root cause of conflict either from a physical violence lens or a structural violence lens. Measures have been taken to understand the roots of violence itself – biological, psychological, etc. – but there have not been any specific attributes which can be solely responsible for violent behaviour. It is my belief that a colonial legacy has normalized violence. As Galtung (1969) has claims that peace has two sides – the absence of personal violence and the absence of structural violence. His concept of peace has been developed and adopted by the GPI which assesses and measures peace based on how much

is spent on violence. That is, the level of peace a nation experiences is in relation to the nation's GDP expenditure on violence. The lower the percentage of GDP spent on violence, the more peaceful the nation is. I believe that this is an obscure way to measure peace and its reliability remains questionable. Measuring and evaluating peace – a daunting task – ought to be done on its own criteria rather than in relation to violence. Independent of the GPI, PACS also upholds a notion of peace that is determined in relation to violence; hence my argument that violence is entangled in PACS theories.

The third characteristic of a colonial ontological lens that is present in PACS is the external focus of peacebuilding in theory and practice. I have looked at this from two angles. The first angle was that there has been a focus to build and create political, economical and social structures which are modeled from Western ideals of state. From this perspective, it has been assumed that peace can be achieved via these external structures. The second angle can be captured in the notion of using violence as a material satisfier. This might seem like an unusual way to categorize violence, but Chopra has been convincing. As stated earlier, Chopra (2005) has made the claim that acts of violence bring satisfaction; and he has classified acts of violence as materialistic. Agreeing that things that are material such as houses, cars, clothing, money, etc. are found externally, we know that the acquisition of such material possessions bring satisfaction (albeit temporary). It might not be so far-fetched to see how violence, as an act, can be materialistic. In other words, the act itself is what brings satisfaction. And the act is an external entity. While it is not explicit that violence is a material satisfier, it is undisputable that it is an external factor that drives conflict. However, I believe that conceptualizing violence as a material satisfier provides us with an opportunity to examine the matter internally from a place of consciousness, as I will elaborate on in Part Two.

Summing up Part One, PACS, as a discipline, having emerged from International Relations, has aimed to teach for peace (Bajaj, 2015). Today, PACS aims to promote social justice and create sustainable peace (Byrne et al., 2020). The discipline has evolved over the past six or so decades with respect to its theoretical perspectives. That is, the theoretical assumptions have been revised and adjusted to improve and reach the outcome of positive and sustainable peace. To this end, PACS has seen four major overarching theoretical approaches and has recently embarked on a fifth. These are conflict management; conflict resolution; liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding; liberal-local hybridity; and critical and emancipatory peacebuilding. There are also sub-theories which have served to enhance and inform the overarching theoretical frameworks. One such sub-theory is Needs-based Identity Theory. From a Needs-based Identity Theory perspective, social conflict can erupt when one or more identity groups perceive that opportunities to have their needs met are thwarted by an/other identity group(s). Some PACS scholars have posited that identity has been staged to incite conflict, as there is evidence to support the claim that conflicts do not start on the basis of identity alone (Wolff, 2007). Nonetheless, there has been much effort invested into understanding and attributing identity as a root cause of conflict. Despite the evolution of PACS theories, positive peace has yet to be realized. One of my key arguments in this dissertation is that the reason that positive peace has not yet been realized is that the ontological lens in which PACS is grounded has not changed. In other words, the theories have changed but the major and underlying assumptions of what brings peace have not changed.

I have argued that PACS' ontology is a colonial one. I have identified three elements which I believe are colonial characteristics, common in all peacebuilding theories. These elements are Othering, an entanglement in violence and an external focus on peacebuilding. Othering has been used to demarcate the West from all that is non-Western. It is a tool that has been used by the West as the standard of measurement, holding the West's hegemonic positionality. This

positionality has been constantly shifting which means that the criteria for measurement has remained elusive to those attempting to reach this goal. Othering is complex and layered. I provided an example of how Western feminism, which has its own merit for some Western women, can be used to Other non-Western women in peacebuilding. In other words, Western feminism is the standard for feminism and is often imposed on non-Western women. This is problematic primarily because if we are all women, a true feminist lens would support what women from all cultures are doing for peace. This is an example of how Othering is divisive, even though there is an attempt to bring peace through feminism.

The second element that characterizes colonial ideology in peacebuilding is the role that violence has played. My main argument is that if we want to understand peace, we must know peace for what it is rather than what it is not. Peace has been divided into two types – negative and positive peace. The definition of each lies in relation to violence. Negative peace is the absence of physical violence and positive peace is the absence of structural violence. Violence, from a colonial lens, is viewed as inevitable. There have been many theories proposed, and research conducted to get to the bottom of understanding the root causes of violent behaviour, but nothing conclusive has been determined. I believe that because the colonial apparatus has functioned on violence, its legacy has left violence so ingrained, it is normative. The notion of non-violence has also entered PACS scholarship, although it does not have strong grounding. It has been viewed from a Western lens and as such is considered to be a tactic by some scholars. (The essence of non-violence will be delved into in Chapter Four.) The prominence of violence as normative has also been noted in the Global Peace Index (GPI), which has adopted the concepts of negative and positive peace when measuring and evaluating peace. An economic factor is also taken into account where a nation's level of peace is measured by the percentage of GDP spent on violence. Thus, the general narrative of violence in PACS is one that I believe is grounded in a colonial ontological lens and this narrative has dominated both scholarship and

practice. At the same time, change is possible as there is another school of thought which holds the conviction that violence is altogether avoidable.

The third element that is characteristic of colonial ideology in PACS is the external focus on peacebuilding. From this lens, peace is conceptualized as something that can be built or engineered, and it places a focus on external or material/physical entities (e.g. political and economical systems) that need to emerge for peace to ensue. This notion of peace has ignored, dismissed and/or minimized the importance of an internal satisfaction – which is more fulfilling than an external satisfaction. Inner peace is grounded in a spiritual ontological lens and sees peace as holistic and starting from within the individual. From an inner peace perspective, what is happening on the inside will extend outwards, resulting in a more peaceful world.

Mahatma Ghandi has made the claim that, “there is no way to peace,” and has expressed with certainty that “Peace is the Way” (as cited in Chopra, 2005, p. 7). I believe that the colonial narrative of peace is an example of what the-way-to-peace means. To illustrate the distinction and subtleness between *the-way-to-peace* and *peace-is-the-way*, it is best approached from their respective ontological differences. In this section, I have illustrated that PACS rests on a colonial foundation, arguing that the discipline’s theories and practice replicate and sustain this worldview. A colonial and imperialistic milieu has serious implications for the discipline, its scholars and its practitioners (Rubenstein, 2011). That is, without a factual and an introspective understanding of a colonial history and its psychological impact, those of us who are asking “How are we advancing peace?” are in danger of replicating the very thing they are aiming to get rid of (i.e. violence). Hence, as PACS continues its journey to improve the discipline theoretically, I believe that another ontological lens to understand and frame peace is necessary.

**Part Two**  
**Peace-is-the-way**

*I pray for all of us I pray for all of us, oppressor and friend,  
That together we can succeed in building a better world through human understanding and love,  
And in doing so we may reduce the pain and suffering of all (His Holiness, the Dalai Lama)*

## Part Two: Peace-is-the-way

*Peace-is-the-way* is a different way of conceptualizing peace from *the-way-to-peace*. As discussed in Part One, *the-way-to-peace* has divisive attributes, is entangled in violence and prioritizes an external focus on peacebuilding. These elements characterize a colonial view of peace; a perspective that is most prominent in the neoliberal approach to peacebuilding. At the same time, it ought to be noted that these elements are also present in conflict management, conflict resolution and liberal-local hybridity theoretical approaches to peace, and potentially in the critical and emancipatory approach as well. I have argued in Part One that *the-way-to-peace* has not yielded positive peace and sustainable peace that that perhaps the reason for this shortfall can be found in PACS' ontological underpinnings. What distinguishes *peace-is-the-way* from *the-way-to-peace* is the spiritual principles of peace that underpin the former. As has been put forward by Hanh (2017), true peace work requires a spiritual dimension to practice peace. In terms of conflict, Ashwani (2013) has pointed out that we must look into the heart of that which is “fundamentally rooted in conflicted human consciousness” (as cited in, Acharya, 2022, p. 4). In Part Two, I expand on this very understanding of peace and conflict – one that is internal and spiritual. I begin by providing definitions of the terms *religion* and *spirituality*, as these are key terms. Of particular interest is the distinction between religion and spirituality.

In Chapter Three, I present a literature review on the scholarship on spirituality in PACS which establishes a baseline of where PACS currently sits in regard to including a spiritual component in the discipline. In Chapter Four, I delve into core characteristics of *peace-is-the-way*. These are nonduality, ahimsa and inner peace. Next, I explain what is meant by the insight of peace, which is a different ontological lens for understanding peace than the colonial understanding of peace discussed in Part One. Lastly, I create a Spiritually-based Framework for

Peace comparing the-way-to-peace and peace-is-the-way. illustrating how they differ. This framework also offers a guideline for those who might be interested in learning more and exploring a spiritual notion of peace in PACS.

## **Religion and Spirituality**

*Religion and spirituality* are very broad terms, and like *peace*, they mean different things to different people, within and across cultures. To gain some insight into what it means to be spiritual, I position spirituality alongside religion. A distinction is often made between religion and spirituality for various reasons; however, both are connected. Why? We are inherently spiritual and we must accept, or at the very least acknowledge, that we are all spiritual beings. In other words, spirit *is* (Ergas, 2016). Religion is an integral part of humanity. According to Matyók and Flaherty (2014), “God and religion have a *de facto* presence in the world” (p. 1), meaning that these entities are always present; thus, ignoring them or dismissing the influence they have on us, would be remiss in any discussion of the spiritual aspect of being human. What exactly then, is the distinction between religion and spirituality?

Religion can be viewed as a thought system (Chopra, 2024; Don Miguel Ruiz & Emrys, 2018; Don Miguel Ruiz, 2016). Examples of thought systems are economics, science, philosophy, etc. Thought systems essentially have provided information on what to think and how to behave and are the basis for socialization or what Ruiz and Emrys (2018) believe to be domestication/social conditioning. Religious thought systems can be viewed as confining because worshippers must follow specific rituals and practices; hence the argument that adherence to the prescriptive characteristic of religion can hinder spiritual growth and development. Spirituality differs from religion by its non-prescriptive characteristic, as it offers one the opportunity to embark on a journey of self-discovery, asking questions and allowing the

answers to reveal themselves through a higher consciousness. Put another way, religion can be viewed as restrictive and spirituality as expansive.

Religion is used/can be used as an instrument to help us understand what it means to be spiritual as well as provide guidance on how to get in touch with our spiritual Selves. Religion is not necessarily the only pathway to retrieve and /or cultivate and attune our spiritual Selves. Spiritual ways of knowing include “intuitive knowing, profound revelations, and deep sense of inter-connection and oneness” (Lin et al., 2016, p. xi), which can be fostered by other means than through religious ones alone. Our spiritual Self can be cultivated with specific religious doctrines, by combining religious and non-religious practices or with non-religious practices and beliefs (Jones & Georgakopoulos, 2009).

The frequent coalescence of the terms religion and spirituality makes it difficult to make a distinction between the two. However, religion seems to be more easily understood compared to the term spiritual. As noted previously, religion can be viewed as a prescriptive thought system which can be potentially confining. This very confinement is one reason that North Americans have been shying away from identifying as religious and instead identifying themselves as “spiritual but not religious” (Hunt, 2025, p. 14). Palmer (2003) has pointed out that spirituality has several definitions – some being compelling while others being dangerous. He has defined spirituality as “the eternal human yearning to be connected with something larger than our own egos” (Palmer, 2003, p. 337). According to Anzaldúa (2015) spirituality is a “different kind and way of knowing. It aims to expand perception; to become conscious, even in sleep; to become aware of the interconnections between all things by attaining a grand perspective” (as cited in, Bickel, 2025, p. 152). Foucault (2005) has defined spirituality as "the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary

transformations on himself [*sic*] in order to have access to the truth” (as cited in Low, 2024, p. 541). Low (2024) has pointed out that spirituality, from Foucault’s perspective, is a search for truth through practice as opposed to finding truth cognitively or through predefined beliefs. Foucault’s definition of spirituality, Low (2024) has claimed, is unique in that spirituality does not have to be defined in relation to, or alongside religion.

Amidst the growing interest in spirituality, the term “secular spirituality” has begun to gain popularity. According to Singh and Patra (2025), secular spirituality is not theologically based – although, some of the concepts are in line with those of the major world religions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism (plus other religions of India), Buddhism, Daoism, etc.). Secular spirituality is an understanding that there is something larger than oneself and that there is an interconnectedness and a oneness with all (Singh & Patra, 2025). Grunwald (2025) has approached “defining” spirituality using a spectrum ranging from secular to non-secular as it pertains to Buddhism within a North American context. At the secular end of Grunwald’s (2025) spectrum is McMindfulness, McBody, McBuddhism (all three abbreviated as Mc) are watered-down, superficial notions of secular spirituality.

Grunwald’s classification of Mc is not unique. Others have also been critical of the commodification and appropriation of mindfulness in various sectors such as education, business, prisons and even the U.S. military; as well as an array of self-help books and mobile apps promising exceptional health benefits and stress reduction (Jesse, 2021; Purser & Loy, 2013, July 1; Purser, 2019). In fact, Purser and Loy (2013, July 1) have pointed out that the mindfulness movement has shifted the burden onto the individual framing stress as a personal problem. Mindfulness, often branded as “Buddhist-inspired” has been separated from its origins in Buddhism and is “being refashioned into a banal, therapeutic, self-help technique” that

actually serve to reinforce the “unwholesome roots of greed, ill will and delusion” rather than awaken individuals to the toxic environments they find themselves ensconced (Purser & Loy, 2013, July 1, para 6).

Grunwald’s four categories of spirituality can help us to understand what spirituality is not - thereby shedding some light or perhaps bringing some clarity on what it could be. The four points on the spectrum are (a) McM mindfulness, McBody, McBuddhism (Mc), (b) Secular Mindfulness and Buddhism (SMB), (c) Participatory Embodied Spirituality (PES), and (d) Ecology of Buddhist Modernities (EBM) (Grunwald, 2025). Next, Grunwald (2025) has looked at six different criteria by which to critique and analyze each of the four aspects on the spectrum. These are: (a) Self-perceptions, (b) Body Conceptions, (c) Spiritualities, (d) Conceptions of Mindfulness, (e) Social and Ecological Engagement, (f) Soteriological Goal(s)/Spiritual Ultimate(s) Space. Each criterion has more than one example, elaborating on and setting a clear distinction among each point on the spectrum. By way of example, I have chosen three criteria and one or two examples from each to illustrate Grunwald’s framing of spirituality in Table 1. Grunwald’s (2025) categorization of spirituality that ranges from secular to nonsecular is timely, particularly as the Buddhist teaching of mindfulness has been coopted, appropriated and misused in contemporary Western sectors. This very condition makes it even more tricky to understand what is meant by spirituality.

**Table 1***Spirituality Spectrum, excerpt from Grunwald (2025)*

	<b>Conceptions of Mindfulness</b>	<b>Social and Ecological Engagement</b>	<b>Soteriological Goal(s)/Spiritual Ultimate(s) Space</b>
<b>McMindfulness, McBody, McBuddhism</b>	Breathing technique that calms the chatter mind/coping tool	Self-centredness evokes less motivation to engage in social injustice and ecological dilemmas	Turn insecure self and body conceptions into secure self and body perceptions
<b>Secular Mindfulness and Buddhism</b>	Mechanism (mindfulness is an effort to focus and pay attention, on purpose to the present moment non-judgementally)	Indifferent (neutral) engagement on a need basis	Healthy human that feels well and happy
<b>Participatory Embodied Spirituality</b>	Process (surrender into present moment experience; effortless awareness)	Participation in minimising the impacts from social injustices, ecological, educational, and political crisis that harm people and other organisms	Co-create spiritualities that bring forth purpose and meaning
<b>Ecology of Buddhist Modernities</b>	Mindfulness (Skt. smṛti; “that which is remembered) - Meditation (Skt. bhavana; to cultivate, bringing into being)	Engaged Buddhism (social, ecological, political, educational engagement) to reduce harm and suffering for all sentient beings	Compassionate life, wellbeing for oneself and all sentient beings

Nonetheless, the distinction between religion and spirituality, as well as the relationship between the two is important to include in the discussion that a spiritual ontological lens is relevant in PACS. Particularly that religion, more so than spirituality in general, has been playing a role in PACS. Religious peacebuilding programs have provided space to break negative stereotypes, humanize the other, advocate for justice and human rights, and support nonviolence resistance (Abu-Nimer, 2013). Religion has endured, can maintain a trajectory toward peace, is reconciliatory, and has kept the moral alive (Byrne et al., 2020). These are all good reasons to argue in favour of the role of religion and, as such the spiritual component of being human, to have a more central and visible role in PACS. Furthermore, even though religious hostilities have been increasing, the world is becoming more religious. For example, over 84% of the global population has reported having a religious affiliation (Byrne et al., 2020, p. 496) and 79% of the world's population affirm their belief in God (Matyók & Flaherty, 2014). The relationship between religion and spirituality is a complex one. Both are essential to the human experience and as such, the role of these two entities must not be ignored, minimized or dismissed in PACS. I have placed an emphasis on the spiritual aspect of being human, as I understand it to be more expansive and inclusive of all religious systems. From this broader lens, I believe that a spiritual ontological lens in PACS can provide ways to view and understand peace that have not yet been included in the discipline.

It ought to be noted that I am writing primarily as a “Westerner.” This means that my worldview has been shaped primarily by Western scholarship, ways of knowing and being. At the same time, my own religious upbringing, having being raised in a multi-faith household (Hinduism and Islam) and later being drawn to Buddhism - are all factors that have influenced and shaped this very academic work. My personal beliefs on religion and spirituality hold both

conscious and unconscious biases which I bring to this work. To this end, I write from the perspective and experience of a woman with brown skin who has had to navigate structural barriers in Canada and whose reprieve from said barriers were found via spiritual path – and other times a religious one. At the same time, my frame of reference has positioned me or perhaps compelled me to write with a specific audience in mind - the very one I face in my day-to-day experiences. In other words, I hope that this work will provide the opportunity for those who uphold and perpetuate colonial systems to see themselves as a part of it and not to view themselves as separate non-complacent to it. This is a sensitive and delicate matter. Not every reader will have the desire to come to terms with their complacency. It is not a judgment. It is a truth. For those who wish to understand and make peace with their complacency, then a spiritual route offers (not justifies) such an opportunity. As such, the emphasis I have placed on the spiritual is due to its resonance with me; and the residence I believe it will have on those who wish to explore this path.

### Chapter 3: Spirituality and PACS

In this chapter, I provide a literature review of spirituality in PACS. The most prominent of the current literature in PACS has not captured a spiritual element in the discipline, which has implied that there is no scholarship in the discipline on the topic. However, this is misleading as there have been a few scholars who have ventured into the spiritual aspect of PACS. As the term spirituality is very broad and can mean different things to different people, I felt it too broad a scope as a search term. Instead, I used “inner peace” to search for literature relating to spirituality, because – as the discussion of this chapter will make clear – I am interested in exploring spirituality in the sense of “inner peace” and its relationship to PACS. This interest is based on my conviction that inner peace is key to attaining world peace. The connection between spirituality and inner peace is that the cultivation of inner peace requires spiritual engagement at some level. This spiritual engagement is individual and internal and cannot be measured or assessed using external criteria. That is, through spiritual practice, each individual could recognize and know when they are in a state of inner peace and when they are not. The idea that inner peace is directly correlated to outer peace is not new and as such I was curious to learn the extent to which the notion of inner peace has been explored in PACS.

The notion of inner peace has, for the most part, been absent from the PACS literature. A review of Peace and Conflict Studies journals has showed that on occasion there has been some references to inner peace, however the notion has not often been prioritized. A search of 19 PACS journals referencing inner peace, resulted in 14 articles sourced from the following journals: *Peace and Conflict* (Online), *Peace and Conflict Studies*, *Journal for Peace and Justice Studies* and *Peace Research*. The depth and scope to which inner peace was discussed in these articles ranged from peripheral (mostly) to more in depth in some cases. In addition to the

journal articles, I also reviewed the following PACS textbooks: *The Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution* (Ingrid et al., 2008), *Routledge Companion to Peace and Conflict Studies* (Byrne, Matyók, et al., 2020), *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies* (Richmond & Visoka, 2022), *Peacebuilding in Language Education: Innovations in Theory and Practice* (Oxford & Gregersen, 2021), Senehi, J., Scott, I. M., Byrne, S., & Matyók, T. G. (2022). *Routledge handbook of peacebuilding and ethnic conflict*. Routledge. (Senehi et al., 2022), and Mac Ginty, R. (2024). *Routledge handbook of peacebuilding* (2nd ed.). Taylor & Francis Group. (Mac Ginty, 2024) for any discussions on inner peace. A summary and analysis of my findings will follow.

Within the spiritual literature, there is often the reference to “self” and “Self.” I distinguish between self (lower-case s) and Self (upper case S) as outer and inner, respectively. The self that is outwardly focussed is concerned mostly with the material world – for example with its image. This image could be physical (how do I look?), status (regarding socio-economic class) or wanting to present particular characteristics (i.e. a nice person, a strong person, etc.). Along the lines of the image with the self is our fixed identities – that is gender, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, to list a few. These very fixed identities and our attachment to said identities and their narratives can be found at the level of the self, where the ego also dwells. It is this ego self that is primarily concerned with the external and material world and seeks out to satisfy and please its demands.

The Self (with an upper-case S) is the Self that is within. It is the Self that is our consciousness. The one that can easily be suppressed by the external self when we are not attentive. Hence, the encouragement for meditative practices to help us to get in touch with the Self which guides us spiritually, as opposed to being coerced by the external, material-driven

self. This is not to say that having material wants is wrong. However, it is the heavy reliance on the self to inform us that is problematic. What is more beneficial is a stronger reliance on the Self to guide us. The Self, coming from a spiritual place, encourages us to ask the questions – is what we are thinking, saying and doing causing harm? Some of the authors in the forthcoming literature review have written about self and Self and I believe that the distinction I have presented above is representative of their perspectives. However, some authors have not necessarily made the distinction using lower-case and upper-case “s,” nonetheless, I believe that the meaning can be easily gleaned from the literature.

### **Textbooks**

*The Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution* (Ingrid et al., 2008) mentioned “inner peace” twice in Johan Galtung’s chapter to the volume. Galtung’s (2008) use of inner peace was vague, at best, as he provided no context, definition, merit or deficiencies of the concept.

In the *Routledge Companion to Peace and Conflict Studies* (Byrne et al., 2020), the term “inner peace” appeared once in Standish’s (2020) chapter entitled *Critical Peace Education and Yogic Peace Education*. Inner peace was referenced in the context of a list of key Western peace education “voices,” specifically Ian Harris’ work (Standish, 2020). According to Harris (2013), peace education must be attentive to inner peace as well as social and environmental justice (as cited in Standish, 2020). Standish (2020) herself has viewed peace education from a place of violence, meaning that from her perspective, the goal of peace education is to raise awareness of violence and then aim to eradicate it through education. Standish (2020) has also pointed out that peace education has been critiqued for being too much of everything and therefore being nothing. As a result, there has been a number of responses from those who identify themselves to be peace educators to set a clear definition (or attempt to) of peace education (Standish, 2020).

There is no one definition of peace education, however, according to Standish (2020) the purpose of peace education has been to recognize, address, prevent, and transform with the “goal to connect why and what we learn to how and in which way we then think, feel, and live” (p. 359). In other words, the goal is to recognize violence and transform it until there is no longer any violence (Standish, 2020).

Standish (2020) has also brought to our attention the notion of critical peace education (CPE) and yogic peace education (YPE). The former, she has asserted, emerged as a critique of neo-liberal peace education practices and now aims to take on an emancipatory component (Standish, 2020). From a CPE lens, education and educators are viewed as agents of social change, seeking to dismantle discriminatory violence through consciousness raising and challenging narratives of exclusion and fundamentalism (Standish, 2020). YPE is a form of personal peacebuilding (Standish, 2020) where the individual recognizes their own personal inner conflicts and through a series of exercises can transform themselves into “instruments of wellness, nonviolence and peace” (Standish, 2020, p. 366). According to Standish (2020), CPE and YPE can be combined and used in education as a means towards nonviolence transformation.

In the book *Peacebuilding in Language Education: Innovations in Theory and Practice* (Oxford & Gregersen, 2021), there were three chapters that spoke to inner peace. Each of the three chapters were primarily focused on the role of peacebuilding in education, and particularly the role of inner peace. In the first chapter, *Call for Peace*, Rebecca L. Oxford (2021), set out to categorize peace into six dimensions: interpersonal peace, intergroup peace, intercultural peace, international peace, ecological peace, and inner peace. This is pictorially represented with the latter at the centre surrounded by the other five dimensions (Rebecca L. Oxford, 2021). The

authors have grounded their work in the theoretical foundations of PACS and have applied the concepts of peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding in developing “the language of peace approach” (Rebecca L. Oxford, 2021, p. 17) which they have claimed can be applied in educational settings. According to these authors, the depth and scope of peace is enormous and therefore the categorization of the six dimensions have provided different strands which has made it easier to have conversations about peace and teaching about and for peace (Rebecca L. Oxford, 2021).

In the second chapter, Laura Mahalingappa et al. (2021) have focussed on peace and social justice pedagogies and the notion of inner peace. Inner peace is referenced twice; however, it was peripheral to their contribution. In the third chapter by Barbeito and Centeno (2021), inner peace was a central theme to the article, however only as the notion pertained to the emotional well-being of pre-service teachers who were training to be language teachers. The notion of inner peace that the authors focussed on was based on positive psychology. That is, inner peace was seen as a tool to regulate emotions. The goal was to reduce stress, anxiety and fears pre-services teachers might have to face (Barbeito & Centeno, 2021).

*The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies* (Richmond & Visoka, 2022), the *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding and Ethnic Conflict* (Senehi et al., 2022), the *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding* (Mac Ginty, 2024), and *Creating the Third Force: Indigenous Processes of Peacemaking* (Tuso & Flaherty, 2016), do not mention “inner peace” at all.

## **Journals**

In the journal *Peace and Conflict* (Online), which started in 1995 and is still in publication, only one article mentioned inner peace (Perpiñan, 2000). The second journal, *Peace*

*and Conflict Studies*, also in publication since 1995, has published ten articles containing the phrase “inner peace.” In some cases, the phrase was used to refer to an idea or ideology, however, in others, there was a bit more depth and discussion (Boulding, 2002; Gan, 2019; His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2001; Jones & Georgakopoulos, 2009; Mok, 2022; Reagan, 2023; Ryan, 2010; Smoker & Groff, 1996). The third journal, *Peace Research* from the Canadian Peace Research Institute began publication 1969, has published two articles on the topic of inner peace (Paige, 1996; Redekop, 2014). The final periodical, *Journal for Peace and Justice Studies* began publishing in 1988, with only one article on inner peace (Urban, 2019). A summary of each of the above articles follows; along with a discussion of the journal articles with a focused contribution to the notion of inner peace for PACS.

In her article, *The Reign of Peace*, Perpiñan (2000) focused on the possibility for peace to reign as opposed to the dominance of war and violence that has persevered. She held the belief that there have been signs of hope for peace. By way of example, Perpiñan (2000) has noted that survivors of exploitation have used inner peace as a healing mechanism, which she has viewed as hopeful. However, she did not apply the notion of inner peace to broader humanity, thereby engaging with inner peace only peripherally.

One of Boulding’s (2002) major contribution to PACS has been the envisioning of a peaceful world and strategies which could be employed to bring this forward. Based on this vision, she has written about her engagement with prisoners and what they have shared with respect to what a peaceful world would look like as well as their commitment to contributing to this goal (Boulding, 2002). Although not that the forefront of her work, one of the themes that emerged from her work with the prisoners was the need to find inner peace (Boulding, 2002). The concept of inner peace, however, was not elaborated on in this article

Groff and Smoker (1996) have queried into how religions can contribute to world peace via inner and outer peace by examining the foundations of various spiritual and religious traditions. To do so, they have organized their ideas into four sections: (a) exoteric/outer and esoteric/inner aspects of religions; (b) further explorations of exoteric/outer and esoteric/inner aspects religion and culture; (c) inner and outer aspects of peace, the cultures of peace, and non violence (paralleling esoteric and exoteric aspects of religion); and (d) an agenda for the future of peace research – based on the need to focus on both inner and outer aspects of peace. Groff and Smoker (1996) have also categorized religions into three groups. The first, mystical spiritual traditions, are based on “direct inner spiritual experiences” (p. 60). The second, organized religions and beliefs, are those which are socialized and cultural. The third, fundamentalism or extremism, refer to those which have claimed their religion to be superior (also socialized).

Groff and Smoker (1996) have pointed out that one of the key differences between exoteric and esoteric religions is that with the former believers are required to learn about practices and beliefs compared to the latter, where believers must *unlearn* or clear the mind of external interference - a task that is usually accomplished through meditation. Groff and Smoker (1996) have emphasized that esoteric religions hold the conviction that inner peace is foundational or a prerequisite in attaining outer peace. They have also pointed out that from a scientific lens, there have been new insights suggesting that linear perspectives have limitations (Groff & Smoker, 1996). The emergence of quantum physics has bought a new perspective to understanding the world more holistically rather than linearly and fragmented (Groff & Smoker, 1996). Groff and Smoker (1996) have claimed that a “dynamic, independent, whole systems worldview (of the mystic or scientific) can contribute to a global culture of peace with a

fundamental shift from a win-lose to a win-win way of thinking” (p.71). In other words, they believe that a holistic approach is a critical component in creating world peace.

Groff and Smoker (1996) have used Sorokin’s (1933) theory of socio-cultural evolution to counter any arguments that may claim a balance of the exoteric and esoteric perspectives is an unrealistic societal/cultural goal. According to Sorokin (1933), a cultural mentality can be sensate, ideational and/or idealistic (as cited in Groff & Smoker, 1996). An *active sensate* society/culture bases its reality primarily on the physical/material world and relies on the truth of the senses, with the material world providing the bases for everything. An *ascetic/ideational* society/culture bases its reality heavily on the spiritual, where faith is the only truth and where the material world is seen as an illusion and the knowledge of inner self, including inner peace is central. An idealistic society/culture balances the active/sensate and ascetic/ideational and relies on the truth of reason. According to Sorokin (1933), in Greece during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, and in Europe around the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, there existed idealistic cultures (as cited in Groff & Smoker, 1996). Based on the existence of these Idealistic periods, Groff and Smoker (1996) are convinced that a peaceful world is a possibility for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To note, Sorokin (1933) has stated that Western civilization from the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE and onward has been experiencing the active sensate reality. He has predicted that there will be a move towards an ideational or idealistic reality once again; however, during this transition, there will be chaos, turmoil and catharsis before the new reality emerges.

Smoker and Groff’s (1996) contribution has placed inner peace as one of the central aspects in creating a culture of peace. They have pointed out the difficulties and nuances of defining both peace and culture, as well as a “culture of peace” (Smoker & Groff, 1996). Nonetheless, they have ascertained that there has been an evolution of peace within the Western

peace research paradigm (starting after WWII), which can be categorized into the following six schools of thought: (a) peace as absence of war; (b) peace as balance of forces in the international system; (c) peace as negative peace (no war) and positive peace (no structural violence); (d) feminist peace - macro and micro levels of peace; (e) holistic Gaia-peace - peace with the environment; (f) holistic inner and outer peace (Smoker & Groff, 1996). Smoker and Groff (1996) have contended that the possibility exists to establish a culture of peace within each of the aforementioned categories by employing three strategies. The first has stressed the importance of creating a global culture of peace. The second has emphasized a bottom-up approach of paying attention to our own communities and transforming them into local cultures of peace. The third strategy has combined local and global peace initiatives to create conditions for a culture of peace to manifest (Smoker & Groff, 1996).

Smoker and Groff (1996) have extended their discussion to include the notion of non-violence and how this concept has been interpreted in each of the aforementioned six categories. They have made the distinction between non-violence, which is a spiritual and philosophical way of life, and non-violent action. They have ascertained that Martin Luther King, Henry David Thoreau and Ghandhi are examples of the former, and according to Smoker and Groff (1996), the last of the six concepts of peace (holistic inner and outer peace) is also about non-violence in the spiritual sense. Non-violent action, on the other hand, takes on different expressions in each of the first five concepts of peace (Smoker & Groff, 1996). For example, in the first category – peace as absence of war – “nuclear deterrence is an example of nonviolent action” (Smoker & Groff, 1996, p. 13). In other words, having nuclear weapons, which serves as a threat, could potentially stop an opponent from starting a conflict. Smoker and Groff (1996) have also discussed Ghandhi’s view of non-violence, which they have pointed out is not passive. The

primary teaching from Ghandhi has been to “avoid the pitfall of reducing [one’s] opponent to an "enemy," thereby dehumanizing them and allowing violence to occur” (Smoker & Groff, 1996, p. 18). These authors have also strongly asserted that Ghandhi’s use of non-violence is an excellent example of how conflict can be resolved and justice can be served. They have contended that Ghandhi’s strategy is a relevant and necessary strategy to adopt at present (in 1996, at the time of writing). In addition, they have argued in favour of reframing negative language into positive language such as “peace (positive), not war (negative); social and political justice (positive), not injustice (negative); economic wellbeing (positive), not poverty (negative); and ecological balance (positive), not decay (negative)” (Smoker & Groff, 1996, p. 30).

It is important to note that Smoker and Groff’s articles were published in 1996 and still has relevance to today’s circumstances pertaining to Peace and Conflict Studies as a discipline and practice. Smoker and Groff’s (1996) have called for incorporating holistic peace processes that include inner and outer peace strategies; but almost 30 years later, their plea have not been heeded. Lastly, also noteworthy from Smoker and Groff’s contribution is their insight of the importance to shift from negative to positive language. It is only now that PACS is just barely starting to scratch the surface on this matter by acknowledging some scholars who advocate for rejecting deficit theorizing paradigms and for a shift towards abundance and assets. This article, although somewhat dated, is critically relevant to today’s PACS. The authors have been thorough and highlight specific areas where the discipline can make a difference in transforming into cultures of peace.

Reagan’s (2023) work has brought to the forefront the complexities and disparities that comes with defining “peace.” Reagan (2023) has pointed out that there has been assumed definitions and understandings of peace which he has asserted is problematic. The problem arises

when these different assumed definitions and understandings impact practice in the field – which they inevitably do, as theory informs practice (Reagan, 2023). These various definitions then result in activities in the field, which ultimately may not be improving or creating peace at all (Reagan, 2023). In order to resolve this pervasive issue (multiple and various assumptions of what peace is) and an ontological one at that, Reagan (2023) has argued in favour of developing a scientific definition of peace, a standardization, which can then be used as a tool and common starting point for PACS academics and practitioners alike (Reagan, 2023). Although inner peace is not central to his work, Reagan (2023) has briefly explored the notion which he has viewed as an intrapersonal experience. His interest and focus have been on how the brain’s hemispheres operate in attaining inner peace and he has pondered how this can be measured and evaluated (Reagan, 2023). He is very logical and sequential in his discussion and analysis, as well as very scientific. While he has made some interesting observations, he has not brought us any closer to the connection of inner peace as it relates to outer peace. Reagan (2023) has indeed been accurate in his observation that PACS lacks a coherent definition of peace. However, Reagan’s recommendation that there ought to be a scientific standardized framework to access and evaluate peace begs the question by whose standards peace will be measured. Lastly, Reagan (2023) has argued that even if an inclusive tool were to be developed, using a cognitive-based tool to measure that which is esoteric is inherently problematic.

Mok’s (2022) study has highlighted the input from participants who were involved in a conflict to share their views on art as a possible peacebuilding tool. It is relevant to note that Mok’s participants all held a Confucian perception on peace (Mok, 2022); as such they have indicated love to be a critical component towards contributing to positive peace (Mok, 2022). Love, the participants believed, led to compassion of others and self, which is a path towards

inner peace (Mok, 2022). The participants had also shared that the cultivation of inner peace is important to the development for one's moral character and ethics. The importance of inner peace seemed to have been a sub-theme of Mok's (2022) study, however, Mok did not venture into any further discussions as to what this could mean for the conflict referred to in his study or for PACS in general.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama (2001) has noted that the progress of science and technology has provided many material benefits; however, he has also pointed out that the most serious problems lie in the most industrialized countries where these material benefits are abundant. He has made an appeal for a balance of the material and spiritual. His Holiness has also emphasized the necessity for age-old humanitarian values such as compassion, which he has declared is foundational in attaining world peace (His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2001). Lastly, according to His Holiness (2001), all humans seek happiness, which is a combination of inner peace, economic development and world peace – all of which would be achievable through developing a sense of universal responsibility.

Gan (2019) has asserted that there is a correlation between the Inner Self and its impact on the outer world. Specific to global peace, Gan has made the claim that we have an inner force which can directly influence the outcome of a global peace, in some capacity or another. Gan (2019) has very aptly engaged the reader in a discussion of the human condition, pointing out that on one hand, we are able to conceptualize our unity with the universe and feel our love towards all it encompasses; yet on the other hand, unable to take necessary action towards the betterment of those who are suffering. Gan (2019) has also ventured in the direction of the mystical. According to Gan (2019), mystical experiences are those which are extraordinary and draws us to act on behalf of, and in favour of the greater good, not resting on personal gain or

satisfaction. A mystical peace “is a product of spiritual training that is both mental as well as bodily” adding, that this experience is also “incomparable and difficult to define” (Gan, 2019, p. 11). However, he has also pointed out that not all of us have such experiences, which is a challenge in PACS. For example, those who are sitting at negotiation tables brokering peace accords hold the potential to apply some of the virtues of a mystical peace (which can potentially lead to a sustained peace). However, the very people at the negotiation tables lack mystical trainings and therefore are unable to use this technique (Gan, 2019). Gan (2019) has pointed out that mystics have made contributions to peace via various avenues; thereby holding the potential to inspire others and serve to instill a culture of peace. Gan’s article is very profound. He has engaged the reader with what it is to be human. Despite an unexplained attraction to violence, he has argued that humans are more oriented towards peace. Although he did not use the language of “inner peace” explicitly, I have inferred that this is implied, thus this article centres inner peace and holds relevance to this review.

Aumeerally et al. (2022) conducted a study in Mauritius, a generally peaceful society. Participants were queried as to what they believed made their country a peaceful one. Using Galtung’s definition of negative and positive peace, it could be argued that Mauritius is in a state of negative peace, based on the participants’ feedback. In other words, while there have been few incidents of physical violence on the island; politics, economic precarity and racism have hindered an ideally peaceful society from being realized (Aumeerally et al., 2022). With respect to inner peace, one participant said that inner peace is key to attaining peace with others (Aumeerally et al., 2022). However, the authors did not elaborate on the possibility of the significance of inner peace in cultivating peace within the Mauritian context or globally.

Jones and Georgakopoulos (2009) have pointed out that religious and spiritual alternatives have not been an integral part of mediation practices. They believe that this absence is negligent, particularly for those who are religious or spiritual, as these individuals might have more confidence being guided by religious or spiritual principles. Jones and Georgakopoulos (2009) have differentiated between spirituality and religion. Religion is defined as a “formal structure aligned with one’s adherence to beliefs and practices of a religious institution’s theology and rituals” (Zinnbauer et al., 1997, as cited in Jones & Georgakopoulos, 2009, p. 12). Spirituality is distinguished from religion as it “goes beyond the practice of a specific doctrine or faith...[and] may transcend one’s involvement in organized religion” (Jones & Georgakopoulos, 2009, p. 12). Spirituality is “the awareness of one’s connectedness to self, others, nature, the universe or a higher power” (Jones & Georgakopoulos, 2009, p. 12). At the same time, Jones and Georgakopoulos (2009) have also noted that spirituality and religion are intertwined as both can operate as guides for our conduct. They have contended that a spiritual inquiry in conflict resolution can foster harmony and compassion, serve to remove the ego, as well as selfish behaviours and attitudes. Although they have advocated for a faith-based or spiritual-based approach to mediation, Jones and Georgakopoulos (2009) have acknowledged that these approaches may not be suitable for all cases. They have asserted that it is the mediator’s responsibility to determine, on a case-by-case basis, if or when a faith-based or spiritual-based approach is appropriate. Central to Jones and Georgakopoulos’s (2009) contribution is their contention that it is necessary to include a spiritual option in conflict management approaches – specifically in mediation.

Ryan (2010) has speculated on what factors can be attributed to the slow peace process in the Northern Ireland conflict. From this context, he has put forward two strategies for

consideration that could help in speeding up the process. Inner peace is mentioned only once in this article and as such, the concept has no specific relevance to the central argument of the paper. However, Ryan's view of the concept is noteworthy. He has presented inner peace as being an attainable goal, which he has compared to the arduous task of "creating a peaceful and democratic multicultural society" (Ryan, 2010, p. 72), referring to the intractable conflict in Northern Ireland. Ryan's comparison appears to suggest that he does not see a link between inner peace and outer peace.

Redekop's (2014) article has focussed on how to resolve our inner conflict. He had made the observation that inner conflict is rarely addressed in PACS and has emphasized the necessity to do so. He has asserted that intrapersonal peace is essential and foundational to attain peace in international, intergroup and interpersonal conflicts (Redekop, 2014). Redekop (2014) has provided a very pragmatic recommendation to resolve inner conflict. He has recommended using the existing conflict resolution tools which have been applied to intergroup and interpersonal conflicts to solve intrapersonal conflict (Redekop, 2014).

To get to the root of inner conflict, he has stated that first, we must understand the interpersonal as being in relationship with the Self. He has defined intrapersonal peace as a peaceful relationship with oneself. The dynamics of an intrapersonal conflict are interactions with various aspects of Self. In other words, the dynamics of an intrapersonal relationship is not singular (as might be assumed) but is dual or multiple. From this perspective, Redekop (2014) has argued, an intrapersonal conflict is viewed as parallel to an intergroup or interpersonal conflict. He has claimed that the principles of conflict resolution in intergroup and interpersonal conflict yield peaceful relations with others. These principles, he has argued, can be applicable to intrapersonal conflict, thus yielding peace with the Self. However, in order to apply these

principles, he has argued, one must be conscious of any inner conflict that one is experiencing. Two strategies, he has suggested, that will help in recognizing inner conflict are to become more self-aware and to actively listen to ourselves. Redekop (2014) has stated that once we are able to hear our inner dialogue, we can then enter into negotiations with ourselves. Redekop (2014) has suggested that basic needs theory, when applied to ourselves, might provide some insight as to where our inner conflict has come from. In other words, he has attributed unmet basic needs to the cause of inner conflict. However, in order to resolve the inner conflict, he has recommended applying interest-based negotiations to ourselves. This is a technique which has been used to resolve intergroup and interpersonal conflicts where the objective is to find common ground between/among disputing parties (Redekop, 2014).

Paige (1996) has queried whether a non-killing society is possible. He has argued that despite the level of global violence, there has been substantial evidence to suggest that non-violence and non-killing is possible. He has provided a number of examples for consideration, which include the following: humans are non-killing by nature (referring to the fact that most humans do not kill other humans); humans have a spiritual heritage towards non-killing (via religion); there is no scientific evidence to prove that humans are killers; there are also non-killing public policies and social institutions (spiritual, political, economical, educational, security, training, and problem-solving). According to Paige (1996), there has also been historical non-killing precedents established, including political leaders, generals, and war resisters, who have upheld their values and beliefs on non-violence. Paige (1996) has concluded that a non-killing society is indeed possible. While he did not speak specifically to inner peace, I believe it can be inferred that he holds the conviction that humans are inherently peaceful and that we tend to avoid killing and violence in general. Paige's points are solid and ought to be taken seriously.

Such convictions can prompt a spiritual inquiry into questions such as why PACS theories have been primarily focused on conflict and violence in order to get to peace rather than prioritizing peaceful narratives, given that humans are more prone to peace than violence.

Urban's (2019) paper is not strictly centred around the notion of inner peace, however she has pointed out that the three Abrahamic religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - have posited that to be at peace with ourselves, we must be at peace with God which means understanding our relationship with and to God. She has provided an overview of the Abrahamic religions and has made the claim that what is common among them is the same spiritual ancestor, Abraham. According to Urban (2019), although distinctly different religions, there are similarities in each of the three Creation narratives. What they have in common are monotheism and how to live one's life. Each of the three faiths have clearly stated that one must live and conduct oneself by living divinely (Urban, 2019). The notion of inner peace, although not central to Urban's paper, is briefly touched upon. Inner peace in Judaism, Christianity and Islam foster three aspects - self-discovery and empowerment and the validation of others (Urban, 2019). However, it remains up to the individual to take the responsibility to develop these aspects (Urban, 2019).

### **Baseline for Spirituality in PACS**

This literature review has focussed specifically on the occurrence of the role of inner peace in PACS. Based on the review, inner peace is sometimes on the periphery of the peacebuilding literature, seldom has a central role, and for the most part is not mentioned at all. Nonetheless, it is evident that the notion of inner peace is not an entirely new concept to PACS. The contributions from Groff and Smoker in 1996, almost 30 years ago is evidence that the notion of inner peace has relevance to the discipline. Both of Groff and Smoker's articles were

thorough and provided a solid case for the importance of the role of inner peace in peacebuilding. However, since their publication, almost 30 years ago, very little has been contributed to the discipline academically which places inner peace as central or having an important role in creating a sustainable and global peace. One possible reason for this could be that the notion of inner peace itself focuses on peace and not on the root causes of conflict; and therefore, outside the boundaries of current PACS theories, so to speak.

Inner peace, in most of the PACS literature I have reviewed, has not been prioritized; and when the notion had been given somewhat of a priority, it had still been centred around conflict. For example, Aumeerally et al. (2022), Jones and Georgakopoulos (2009), Redekop (2014), Reagan (2023), and Standish (2020) have all written from a conflict-based lens. In other words, their starting point has not been peace. Instead, inner peace has been framed as another strategy (perhaps viewed as a tactic?) to counter external conflict. The nuance here is that the spiritual component of peacebuilding has not yet been given serious consideration as a theoretical possibility, let alone being integrated as a sound theoretical underpinning. Thus, to some extent, it is not surprising that the authors have situated the notion of inner peace as strategies and activities in relation to conflict, as the discipline does not yet have a solid theoretical foundation to support the centrality of inner peace. That is, if PACS scholars and practitioners would like to ground their work in a spiritual framework, there is no space in the discipline to do so. They are constrained to situate their work within the existing theoretical frameworks.

Furthermore, for Boulding (2002), Mok (2022), Perpiñan (2000), Ryan (2010), and Urban (2019), the notion of peace has been at the outer edges of the periphery. For example, in Mok's work, inner peace was mentioned by one of the participants in the study as being important; however, it was not elaborated upon. The authors of this group have mentioned inner

peace in passing, so to speak, but the concept of inner peace was not delved into. It can be argued that both groups of authors (the periphery and outer edges of the periphery) fall into Sorokin's (1933) category of active sensate reality. That is, the physical and material have been the dominant truths and reality, and therefore they can only operate from within this paradigm. Redekop's recommendations are a good starting point, however, they are grounded in a conflict-oriented lens as opposed to a peace lens. Eliminating or learning how to manage inner conflict is certainly an excellent strategy to bring some peace of mind. However, Redekop seems to be assuming that inner conflict is due to unmet needs. Ultimately, it is our thoughts that are led by the ego that bring disharmony and a subsequent barrier to inner peace. Therefore, it is the art of letting go that we ultimately need to be practising.

Summing up Chapter Three, there seems to be a slight interest or perhaps a mild curiosity in PACS towards a spiritual perspective, which appears to be slowly emerging but has not yet taken up any momentum. This is evident in the articles written by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (2001), Gan (2019), Groff and Smoker (1996), Paige (1996) and Smoker and Groff (1996), who all see the role of inner peace as central in peacebuilding. The chapters in the textbooks, which are more recent publications, are also an indication that there is a curiosity toward inner peace within PACS, particularly on the topic Peace Education and Yogic Peace Education. However, such curiosities can become stifled if there is no spiritual framework from which one can ground their work. Hence, I argue in favour of the necessity to include a spiritual aspect as part of the peacebuilding narrative by way of a spiritual theoretical foundation in PACS. This literature review has established a baseline for PACS with regards to a spiritual theoretical framework. The noted absence of any such framework is cause enough and an invitation to explore what a

spiritual ontological lens to peace could look like and entails (Chapter 4) and how it can be applied to the discipline (Part Three).

#### **Chapter 4: Characteristics of Peace-is-the-way**

In this Chapter, I delve into the ontological underpinnings of a spiritual notion of peace. Drawing from Buddhist and Yogic teachings and worldviews, I present three elements which I believe characterize the notion of peace-is-the-way. These are nonduality, ahimsa and inner peace. In addition, and most importantly, I draw from my own experiences. Had it not been for my experiences, I would only have a “theoretical” understanding of what a spiritual notion of peace entails. The essence of a spiritual peace is one which begins with the individual and starts from within the individual. A spiritual peace relies on each of us to trust in ourselves – in our consciousness. In Chapter Two, I have argued that a colonial notion of peace – the-way-to-peace – Others (is divisive), is entangled in violence, and focuses on the external. I have also made the claim that a spiritual notion of peace – peace-is-the-way – is an another way of understanding peace. The three elements of a spiritual notion of peace - nonduality, ahimsa and inner peace - are avenues which can be explored to give us some insight into what a spiritual ontological lens of peace looks like. Even though I draw from Buddhist and Yogic teachings to contextualize and sustain my points, prerequisite knowledge of these teachings is not required to understand and/or experience spiritual peace.

#### **Nonduality**

His Holiness the Dalai Lama (2006), a Buddhist monk, has held a strong conviction in favour of a universal approach to peace. Initially, his conviction might seem unsound particularly when the neoliberal theoretical framework and practices have been critiqued for its universal, one-size-fits-all approach to peacebuilding. However, the Dalai Lama’s belief is grounded in a

different ontological perspective. It comes from the standpoint of universal responsibility or a deep concern for all (His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2006). The Dalai Lama's notion of peace is grounded in a Buddhist ontology and rests in the belief that all humans desire a happy life. This notion of peace is not rooted in the binaries of positive and negative peace, nor does it give any attention to the delineations among peacebuilding, peacemaking and peacekeeping - as is prominent in PACS literature and practice. The Dalai Lama's universal perception of peace is grounded in nonduality.

Nonduality is an example of a way of knowing, but perhaps more so, a way of being in the world. In simple terms, nonduality refers to the notion that we are not separate from reality but are one with it (Gandhi, 1924, as cited in Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). The basic principle of nonduality is to recognize the unity and interconnectedness of all. There are several worldviews and wisdom traditions that adhere to the principle of nonduality, which are predominantly Eastern, globally speaking. For example, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, “nondual knowledge (*advaya-jñāna*) transcends the subject-object bifurcation that governs all conventional states of consciousness and engenders a distinctive type of awareness that no longer requires an object of consciousness” (Buswell & Lopez, 2013, pp. 66-67). In Wōnbulgyo Buddhism, “adherents seek to recognize the fundamental nonduality of, and unity of, all things in existence and thus master the ability to act with utter impartiality and selflessness in all their interactions with the world and society” (Buswell & Lopez, 2013, p. 710). In the Xinxin ming tradition, nonduality can be attained by the “cultivation of detachment, especially from words and thoughts” (Buswell & Lopez, 2013, p. 1862).

Loy (2019) has also provided some insights on nonduality. At its core, Loy (2019) has posited, the term nonduality refers “exclusively to the nonduality of (more narrowly) seer and

seen, (more broadly) subject and object” (Loy, 2019, p. xxiv). At the same time, he has pointed out that these are not the only meanings of the term (Loy, 2019). Nonduality is the experience where seer and seen, subject and object are no longer separate but have dissolved into oneness (Loy, 2019). Loy (2019) has pointed out that for many different Eastern traditions, nonduality is central - ontologically speaking - however, the various traditions are not consistent in how they describe the experience. In fact, the underlying purpose of Loy’s work has been to learn what lies at the core of the nonduality principle of the three major nondualist traditions - Buddhism, Vedanta, Taoism. His comprehensive exploration is by far too in depth for the purposes of this dissertation – which is serving as an introduction to nonduality – however, Loy (2019) has made some salient points which are to be duly noted.

For example, Loy (2019) has made the distinction between duality and nonduality systems. In particular, he has pointed out that Western philosophical systems are dualistic and Eastern ways of knowing are grounded in nondualistic systems. From an Eastern lens the seer and the seen are one of the same. From a Western lens, however, he has asserted that “conceptual knowledge is dualistic in at least two senses” (Loy, 2019, p. xix). “It is knowledge *about* something, which a subject *has*; and such knowledge must discriminate one thing from another in order to assert some *attribute* about some *thing*” (Loy, 2019, p. xix). Loy (2019) has also noted that as Western philosophical schools of thought are grounded in duality, the notion of nonduality can be difficult to grasp and express, both linguistically and culturally. Furthermore, the experience itself, which is “subjective” (and I recognize the use of the word subjective here is troublesome – and exemplifies my own conditioning in duality), impossible to conceptualize using Western philosophical insights, and which by its own accord does not require proof in Eastern traditions (where nonduality is accepted as it is) - have all been reasons enough for the

West to have largely ignored and dismissed nonduality experiences viewing them as invalid and not having enough scientific rigor (Loy 2019). Thus, “the argument for nonduality [has been] reduced to the experience of nonduality—either our own or that of someone else whose testimony we may be inclined to accept” (Loy, 2029, p. xxi). Loy (2019) has gone so far as to say that the Western mindset in duality has been so ingrained, that the praxis to take a leap of faith into the realm of nonduality is too great a risk. Interestingly, Eastern viewpoints do not ignore the notion of duality. There is a recognition that we all exist primarily from the perspective of duality – which is viewed as a limited, perhaps an insufficient and unfulfilling existence. The nondualistic experience, on the other hand, is viewed as “veridical and superior to the dualistic mode we usually take for granted” (Loy, 2019, p. xvii). Despite the reluctance and perhaps, arguably the incapability of Western schools of thought to altogether grasp and accept nonduality for what it is, some Westerners have been gravitating towards the teachings because as Loy (2019) has put it, “they bear at least the promise of fruits which we Westerners lack yet still crave” (p. xvii). In sum, both Western philosophy and Eastern Wisdom traditions have acknowledged the metaphysical which encompasses the notions of duality and nonduality. However, the West developed its philosophy in duality and the East, its beliefs grounded in nonduality. Perhaps, the duality of the East and West is, in the grander scheme of things, the very nonduality that we ought to be conscious of!

Loy (2019) has identified three aspects of nonduality – perception, action and thinking. The act of perception is complex and influenced by many factors. There is the perceiver, perceived, and the act of perception. Nondual perception refers to experiencing the bare percept which is possible through meditation. In the dualistic experience of action, there is the agent, the action, and the goal of the action. Nondual action, on the other hand, is characterized by the

absence of a distinct agent performing the action; and the action is performed without attachment to outcomes. As such, one wholly is the action – paradoxically referred to as “action of nonaction” (Loy, 2019, p. xxv). Nonduality thinking dissolves the separation between thinker and thought. Thoughts do not require a thinker to logically link the thoughts; instead, thoughts are believed to be spontaneous and creative. In other words, thoughts arise and pass on their own accord. Loy’s (2019) presentation helps us to obtain a clearer picture of what nonduality might mean. While he has separated perception, action and thinking, Loy (2019) has also made it very clear that the three are superimposed upon each other. Put another way, the perceiver, the perceived, and the act of perception; the agent, the action, and the goal of the action; the thinker and the thoughts are all dissolved into one.

The concept of nonduality has been beautifully illustrated in the following short story that encapsulates the essence of oneness, perfect harmony, and the natural sweetness of life (Koppala, 2018).

King Janaka, a ruler of acclaimed wisdom, saw perfect harmony in everything, though living amidst thick of activities. One day a person named Sukabrahman visited the court of Janaka seeking spiritual advice. King Janaka questioned thus: “What did you see on the way?” Sukabrahman answered, “I saw, houses made of sugar, streets made of sugar and animals made of sugar. As I approached, I saw your palace made of sugar and as I stand in front of you here, I see you made of sugar and me also made of sugar!” King Janaka laughed and said, “There is nothing more that you should be knowing. You are a wise person. You are a ripe soul and you do not need any teaching. You are an epitome of true wisdom and knowledge” (Koppala, 2018).

With respect to PACS, I believe that nonduality permits us to relinquish our notions of the Other and see from the heart with compassion and love. It requires trust, credence and faith in the essence of its wisdom. This might be a difficult concept to grasp because it requires putting complete trust into something that is intangible – the metaphysical. Nonetheless, I do believe that the concept itself is manageable to grasp, however the challenge lies in the extent to which one is

willingness to put it into practice. As has been pointed out by Loy (2019), it is an experience. A concept of peace that is grounded in the ontological underpinnings of nonduality carries a different meaning than the concept of peace which currently exists in PACS. Reagan (2023) has made the claim that PACS has no ontological stance as scholars and practitioners cannot agree on what peace is – a position that has resulted in individuals working divergently, at cross-purposes, infighting over resources; and researchers pursuing conflicting goals, all under the banner of peace. Reagan (2023) has also asserted that “peace studies must reject *assumed* stability within the ontology of peace and acknowledge that the concept requires serious and rigorous investigation,” to harmonize, substantiate, and fortify global peace efforts (Reagan, 2023, p. 3). Reagan’s points are well-taken. PACS is fragmented and in silos when it comes to having a clear understanding of what peace is – which arguably is also grounded in dualistic ideologies. I believe that this makes it difficult to create peace. One question to ask is: If we do not know what peace is experientially, then how can we take action to create peace? Nonetheless, one holistic – and perhaps universal way of understanding peace - is by way of nonduality.

### **Ahimsa (Non-violence)**

The teachings of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali are found in the 8-fold path. These are the Yamas, Niyamas, Asana (postures), Pranayama (breath control), Pratyahara (sense withdrawal), Dharama (concentration), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (state of unity) (Adele, 2009). The Yamas and Niyamas are guidelines on how to live a yogic life, and these are the first two tenets of the 8-fold path. The Yamas are nonviolence, truthfulness, nonstealing, nonexcess, and nonpossessiveness. The Niyamas are purity, contentment, self-discipline, self-study and surrender (Adele, 2009). Ahimsa or nonviolence is so highly valued and regarded that it stands at the core and foundation of all Yogic philosophy and practice (Adele, 2009). The concept of

ahimsa can sometimes be misunderstood in a Western context; as when simplified, it means abstaining from physically harming others. This is only partially true. The teaching also includes verbal and emotional harm as well. Furthermore, what the practice of ahimsa is bidding us to do is to start with ourselves. That is, we must go within, observe our thoughts and be kind and honest with ourselves. When we have conflict within ourselves, we are not in harmony, and we are therefore being harmful with ourselves. This is very subtle. Often unaware of it, many of us compete for many things such as material possessions, jobs and even for other humans. Granted, capitalist societies have set up these competitions so that they have now become normative. We have become so competitive, that we even compete with ourselves – a very subtle behaviour. This very self-competition is harmful. To exemplify this, I share a personal experience.

One day, while swimming, I recognized how I had been unknowingly competing with myself. By the time I had become aware of my inner competition, I had had a swimming routine for months, which I had been committed to. My routine was as follows - I would swim two warm-up lengths, 40 lengths together (one kilometre) and then two cool-down lengths. I had determined ahead of time which strokes I would use, and how much time it should take to complete the routine. I would usually try to beat my time from the previous day's swim. My "reward" after my swimming routine had been to relax in the sauna/steam room.

On this particular day, I had almost completed my swimming routine, when I became aware that I had started to feel cold and tired and more so, I had had a pressing urge to go to the bathroom. I had felt this way before and when this occurred, I would usually push through until the end of the routine, as there would usually only be about 10 minutes left. However, on this day, I decided to stop. Upon reflection, I realized that I was being harmful with myself on many counts. First, I had been feeling cold, and my body was giving me the message to stop, which I

did not. Secondly, even though I had the need to go to the bathroom, I had been forcing my bladder to suppress its natural functions. And finally, I had been feeling tired but was pushing myself to finish a self-imposed number of lengths. That is, physically and psychologically, I was being harmful to myself. The combination of these factors made the swim less enjoyable and less pleasurable. In fact, just my *thought* that my *reward* was the steam room *after* the swim is an indication itself that the swimming was work; thereby taking away the pleasure and joy of it.

In this scenario, I was, on many counts, not at ease with myself and thus not in harmony; as I had literally been in competition with myself. This is very subtle. I had created an entire narrative about my swimming routine, setting standards to measure myself by and then felt poorly when I did not achieve a self-imposed goal. What has astounded me is that this had been going on for *years*, and I had not been aware of how this had been impacting me psychologically. This means as I had been unconsciously competing with myself, I had been mentally scolding myself for not performing to the standards I had set. Inner criticism can then create emotional reactions and responses such as agitation, anger and unsettledness.

The example of my swimming routine depicts how it is possible to go about being unconsciously agitated. Other examples that could create inner agitation are a disagreement with someone which we are playing back in our head; or perhaps we are reminded of an unpleasant childhood experience and are replaying it as well. Thoughts are rapid and fleeting and when we are not aware of the emotions that the thoughts are drawing out, we can behave or respond in the present moment with the very emotion that the thought has elicited – and be completely unaware of it! What is happening inside is projected outward. When we go about our daily lives with this level of inner agitation, we are not practicing *ahimsa*. Let us look at another example of how this can play out.

Let us say that on a particular day after my swim (unaware that I am agitated that I did not accomplish my goal), I go to the store. In the store, a fellow shopper accidentally bumps into my shopping cart with theirs. Because I am agitated, I might think to myself: why don't they watch where they are going. I might even say it out loud. However, if I had not been agitated, my response would more likely have been: It's no problem/These things happen. I might have even made a joke and said something like: they need to get traffic lights in here. Back to my irritated response, the fellow shopper then is likely to be annoyed if I say to them: Watch where you're going. And therefore, I have spread my negativity, thereby potentially causing harm to someone else. This is the opposite of ahimsa. As such, my behaviour, which is in response to my thoughts (which I am unaware of) is not contributing to peace. In the words of Hanh (2017), if we want peace, we have to *be* peace. *Peace is a practice*, not a hope.

The teaching of ahimsa, when applied, tells us that the starting point for the practice of peace begins with us. This is a different narrative from the approach in PACS that defines peace as the absence of violence. The principle behind ahimsa is to conduct ourselves – all aspects of being human – from a place of do-no-harm. This is very nuanced. The absence of violence is very different from operating under conducting ourselves with the intention of doing no harm to ourselves and others. The spiritual aspect of this teaching is that we can be one with the very consciousness which is overarching and always present. If we accept that humans are inherently peaceful, as put forward by Paige (1996), then it might not be that difficult to get in touch with that nugget that dwells within us. Simply and beautifully said, “imagine that a deeply profound ocean of calm exists in you that is not affected by any turbulence” (Chopra, 2003, p. 206). The practice of ahimsa can teach us to love ourselves. Self-love brings personal transformation (Hay,1984). Self-love means going beyond an egoic sense of self (e.g. self image) and seeing

ourselves are we truly are recognizing and knowing our true essence (Tolle,2005) (This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five). Self-love leads to an outward transformation. If we love ourselves, how can we possibly harm others?

### *A Western Perspective of Nonviolence*

Burrowes (1996) has taken a different view on nonviolence, compared to the notion of ahimsa, which is noteworthy. He has differentiated between Mahatma Gandhi's concept of nonviolence and Gene Sharpe's nonviolent action. According to Burrowes (1996), both nonviolence and nonviolent action are umbrella terms used to describe a range of methods for dealing with conflict (Burrowes, 1996). The shared principle between the two, is that violence against humans should not be used (Burrowes, 1996). Burrowes (1996) has categorized nonviolence into four approaches - pragmatic, principled, reformist and revolutionary. The first, pragmatic nonviolence, views conflict as a relationship between antagonists with incompatible interests where the goal is to defeat the opponent and use suffering (short of physical injury) if necessary (Burrowes, 1996). Second, is principled nonviolence where the opponent is viewed as a partner in struggle and the goal is to satisfy the needs of all beings (Burrowes, 1996). Practitioners from this category take an ethical stance and view this as a way of life (Burrowes, 1996). Reformist nonviolence is the third category, identifying elite policies as the cause of social problems. The aim is to reform by using short to medium term campaigns to change policies (Burrowes, 1996). Lastly, revolutionary nonviolence is grounded in the belief that there is a need for fundamental structural change and campaigns are conducted with long term revolutionary strategies (Burrowes, 1996).

Nonviolent action, on the other hand, is a technique to address conflict (Sharp (2012)). Nonviolent action has been categorized into three groups. The first is nonviolent protests and

persuasion – for example, demonstrations, protest meetings, etc. The second category is noncooperation which is socially driven – for example strikes and boycotts. The third group is nonviolent intervention, and examples include blockages and fasting (Sharp, 2012). Burrowes (1996) comparison of nonviolence and nonviolent action drew him to conclude that the perfect nonviolence strategy is not possible. As such, he has made the claim that life is a choice between violent and less violent as opposed to a choice between violence and no violence (Burrowes, 1996). Burrowes’ scholarship is worth mentioning because he has presented a perspective that depicts a Western view of nonviolence. Conflict analysts, like Burrowes and Sharp, have viewed nonviolence as secular and as a tactic (McIntosh & Carmichael, 2019). That is, they have taken a very subtle and profound concept (nonviolence) - which from an Eastern lens is ahimsa and encapsulates a way of being – and has dissected it into unrecognizable bits. It is from this perspective that Burrowes has concluded that the only option is to be less violent - which is disturbing as it implies a justification of violence. I believe that from Burrowes’ ontological lens, violence is inevitable therefore he has been unable to view the notion of nonviolence as viable.

Nonviolence at its “deepest and most effective level... is the means by which violence is itself absorbed by transcendent love” (Wink, 2000, as cited in McIntosh & Carmichael, 2019, p. 306). Interestingly, the United Nations has declared October 2 as the International Day of Non-violence. According to the UN’s website, this date was chosen in commemoration of Mahatma Gandhi (his birthday), as a “pioneer of the philosophy and strategy of non-violence” (United Nations, n.d., para 1). Despite the UN’s acknowledgement of Gandhi’s role in bringing nonviolence to the forefront of global peace, it is Gene Sharp’s version of nonviolence that is used as the definition of nonviolence on the organization’s website. I believe this is an example of global structural violence – simultaneously acknowledging and dismissing Gandhi’s

contribution; replacing it and prioritizing Sharpe's version of nonviolence which is grounded in Western ideology. Returning to Loy's (2019) remarks, Western schools of thought are grounded in dualism and therefore the Western version of nonviolence reflects such ideology as exemplified in Burrowes' and Sharpe's take on nonviolence. One can only wonder, if the UN, a global organization that advocates for social justice is culpable in upholding structural violence – where does this leave humanity?

### **Inner Peace**

Many years ago, when I first encountered the idea of inner peace, it sounded altruistic. I have intentionally used the word "idea" in the previous sentence because that was how I received it then. At the time, I believed that inner peace was not accessible to me. I did not believe that I was "spiritual enough" to even try it, even though my curiosity had been aroused. I was also somewhat afraid of what would happen. I was so accustomed to not being at peace that even the idea of being totally at peace was quite foreign and frightening. I understand now that such responses are not unusual and had come from social conditioning, the ego, and attachment to suffering. What is amazing about inner peace is that you do not have to make claims to be religious and/or spiritual beliefs and practices to experience it. It is something that is always available, anywhere and anytime. You do not need any special equipment (e.g. weights or mat), or clothing, or a dedicated space (e.g. gym or special room). You just need to be with yourself. You can find inner peace walking, running, driving, eating, washing the dishes, cooking, cleaning, etc. You can find it at home, at work, at a party, at a concert; at the gym, with your partner, your children, your family, your friends, your neighbours and "strangers."

Inner peace is a state of being. Inner peace is grounded in the notions of impermanence, interconnectedness and the present moment (Chopra, 2005; Hanh, 2017; His Holiness the Dalai

Lama, 2001, 2008; Inada, 1988). As humans, we all have the same potential to develop inner peace and achieve happiness because we are all equal (His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2001). Happiness, the Dalai Lama (2001) has attested, is innate and it is our purpose in life to experience happiness. To be happy, we need to have a positive mental attitude and a positive mental attitude brings inner strength and confidence which brings inner peace (His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2001).

Qomariyyah and Saifuddin (2022) have offered three perspectives on inner peace. First, they have contended that inner peace is “an emotional state in which an individual has no burden and feels happiness” (Mujib & Mudzakir, 2002, as cited in Qomariyyah & Saifuddin, 2022, pp. 2-3). Secondly, Qomariyyah and Saifuddin (2022) have stated that inner peace is a condition that could also mean a peaceful soul, which is achieved when an individual overcomes their problems. And thirdly, they have claimed that inner peace can also be understood as “a mental disposition free from negative thoughts and emotions with internal strength, stability, and peace regardless of adverse external conditions” (Dalai Lama, 2012, as cited in Qomariyyah & Saifuddin, 2022, p. 3). Inner peace is achieved through meditation (Liu et al., 2015; Qomariyyah & Saifuddin, 2022).

Hanh (2017) has contended that if we want peace, we have to be peace. Peace is a practice that is attainable in *every moment* (Hanh, 2017). True peace work requires a spiritual dimension of the practice of peace (Hanh, 2017). Both Hanh and His Holiness the Dalai Lama have concurred that world peace is only possible from the individual (Hanh, 1995). The fundamental basis for peace are love, compassion, and altruism – qualities, once developed in an individual, creates peace and harmony within; and are subsequently expanded and extended to the family, community and the world (His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1995, as cited in Hanh,

1995). His Holiness the Dalai Lama has acknowledged that even though individual internal transformation is difficult, it is the only way to bring about world peace (Hanh, 1995). Through meditation - a spiritual practice - inner peace can be cultivated.

The perspective that cultivating inner peace at an individual level is essential to manifest positive peace is absent altogether in PACS. This should not be surprising, considering that the different theoretical PACS frameworks have focussed primarily on external aspects that need to be addressed in order for peace to ensue (e.g. the universal formula for peacebuilding). I believe that one reason why PACS has not yet explored the notion of inner peace is because the discipline has been grounded in one ontological and epistemological lens which centralizes external notions of peace. Furthermore, the concept of positive peace and inner peace are distinctly different. The notion of positive peace, which to my understanding is the best that PACS hopes for, does not encapsulate the essence of an inner peace perspective. To clarify, the goal of positive peace is social justice. This is not to say that from an inner peace lens, equity and social justice are ignored or dismissed. What the teachings of inner peace is saying is that we must first find peace within ourselves and then approach our work towards equity and social justice through love, compassion and service. Let us look at this matter from another angle.

His Holiness, the Dalai Lama (2001) has stated that we are all equal, meaning that we all have the capability for anything - including cultivating inner peace. From a PACS lens, to use Galtung's (1967) perspective – social justice (positive peace) is possible when there is an egalitarian distribution of resources and power. From Galtung's point of view, we are not equal until there is an equitable distribution of resources and power – which is a very different from the Dalai Lama's perspective, which is that we are all equal from the onset. Inner peace allows us to see that we are all equal (from the quantum domain); and so from this domain equal resources

and power – which are in the physical domain is not what will make us equal. In light of this comparison, I am not convinced that an equitable distribution on resources and power is an assurance that peace will ensue because it is only on the physical plane. In other words, the perspective that inner peace cultivated at an individual is essential to manifesting positive peace is absent altogether in PACS because inner peace and positive peace are operating on two completely different planes. There are three domains of existence, which will be elaborated on after the following section (the Insight of Peace).

### **The Insight of Peace**

In a survey conducted with PACS graduate students, Flaherty et al. (2017) found that the students each held a different vision and understanding of peace. In addition, the students were not initially able to articulate their vision of peace; instead, they were only able to describe peace as the absence of a particular type of violence, e.g., stopping a civil war, gender violence (Flaherty et al., 2017). Flaherty et al. (2017) have also observed that PACS graduate students were often left feeling helpless and overwhelmed by the daunting and seemingly impossible task of peacebuilding. The students' responses from the above survey are not surprising but they are worrisome. It is not surprising because the students have only been exposed to one version of understanding peace: peace as the absence of violence (both direct and structural). From that lens, it is indeed daunting to be faced with the challenge of eradicating violence altogether, particularly when there is a narrative that promotes violence as normative. As a student in the PACS program, I recall during my coursework, feeling the same way. And on more than one occasion, I debated with myself whether or not I should withdraw from the program. The decision to complete the program came through my own meditative inquiry where I asked for

spiritual guidance. Once I accepted that this was my path, I referred back to this inner trust when doubts arose.

When it comes to conceptualizing a peaceful world, I believe that it can be a particularly daunting task. On one hand, this sense of apprehension could be attributed to the belief that a peaceful world might just not be possible – a narrative that has created widespread apathy. On the other hand, it is possible that we are unable to create a peaceful world because the ideal conditions do not yet exist for it to manifest. Former US President Barak Obama has stated that we do have the ideas and the capabilities to make the world a better place, but what is lacking are the resources to do so (Obama, 2019). Assuming that we have the ideas, capabilities and the resources to create a peaceful world, the task of putting it all into action remains a challenging one. To shed some light on how it could be possible to address such an enormous task, let us look at a concept put forward by Buddhist monk, Thich Nat Hanh.

In his teachings, Hanh (2017) has discussed the distinction between *notion* and *insight* and has used a match and a flame to exemplify this teaching. He has stated that as soon as the flame manifests, it begins to consume the match. He has discussed this within the context of teaching about impermanence stating that what we need is the flame, not the match to understand impermanence. The match represents the notion, and the flame represents the insight. He has affirmed that we must use of the notion of impermanence to get the insight of impermanence. What he means by this is that the mere notion of impermanence is not sufficient. That is knowing that nothing is permanent is one thing however, how we choose to live or act based on the notion of impermanence is the *insight* of impermanence. For example, if I am angry at someone because they said something that was hurtful, I may want to punish that person by saying something more hurtful in return. However, if I stop and contemplate impermanence, I will realize that we will

both die one day and that saying something hurtful is harmful. This *insight* would then lead me to make the decision to act with love and kindness (Hanh, 2017).

Using Hanh's analogy of the match and the flame, what if we were to conceptualize negative and positive peace (the-way-to-peace) as notions of peace? They are notions that can create types of peace; however, these two elements are not the *insight of peace*. The notions of peace – negative and positive peace – are the match; they are ways to understand that peace is possible, however what we need is peace itself. We need *the insight of peace*; we need the flame. The insight of peace is *being peace*. That is, we need to know peace from within. This is the flame. According to Hanh (2017), humans have “developed from *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens*, and now we have a chance to become *homo conscious* – a mindful, awakened species” that will learn to walk in peace and freedom (p. 110). How do we get there? The sustained peace that we have been striving for already exists, within us, as a tiny acorn is already a giant oak tree. That is, in the nonlocal domain, possibilities are limitless and everything exists whether we can see it with our “human eye” (Chopra, 2003).

### **Three Domains of Existence**

The nonlocal domain refers to one of three levels of existence (Chopra, 2003). The other two levels are the physical domain and the quantum domain (Chopra, 2003). The physical domain, the first level of existence, is the physical or material world. It is three dimensional, experienced through the senses, time is linear (there is a beginning, a middle and an end); thus, everything is impermanent (Chopra, 2003). It is the level we are most familiar with. The second level of existence, the quantum domain is experienced through information and energy and cannot be perceived by our senses (Chopra, 2003). For example, our thoughts, mind and ego cannot be experienced through the senses, but we know they are there (Chopra, 2003). At the

quantum level, physical objects (including humans) are clusters of energy floating around in a larger pool of energy, which Chopra refers to an energy soup (Chopra, 2003). These clusters of energy are constantly bumping into each other, whereby bits of energy are gathered, and bits are left behind. At the same time, our own energy cluster is mixing with the collective energy (energy soup). As everything from the physical world is a manifestation of the information and energy of the quantum world, the physical/material world is a subset of the quantum world. This interconnectedness means that there are no boundaries between the two states of existence. Put another way, at the quantum level, we are all connected (Chopra, 2003). Most of the time we are not sensitive to this energy, however, one example of awareness of the collective energy is walking into a room and feeling the tension in the room (Chopra, 2003). Another example is going into a shrine or holy place and feeling an immediate sense of peace (Chopra, 2003). Even though we cannot experience these energies via the five senses, we know that they are there - just like the mind and our thoughts. The mind is information and a field of energy; and therefore, so is every idea we have (Chopra, 2003). This begs the question: Where does the mind come from (Chopra, 2003)?

The third level of existence is the nonlocal domain. It can also be referred to as the virtual domain, the spiritual domain, or the field of potential (Chopra, 2003). It is in the nonlocal domain where consciousness resides. According to Chopra (2003), pure potential exists in this domain. It is the organizing force behind everything, creating and orchestrating every activity. Communication at this level transcends time, space and distance – meaning it is instantaneous. To illustrate how communication operates at the nonlocal level, Chopra (2003) has provided an example of an experiment which demonstrated how *intentions* can affect biological responses even before actions are taken. Cleve Baxter, a scientist, has been conducting experiments on

white blood cells using a specific instrument to electromagnetically measure the activity of the cells in test tubes (Chopra, 2003). One day, he had isolated some of his own white blood cells in his lab and had the spontaneous idea to inflict a small cut on his hand to see if the cells in the test tube would respond. He went to look for a sterile lancet, however, before he could inflict the wound, his instrument began to record electromagnetically intense activity among his white blood cells in the test tube. In other words, his isolated white blood cells, had reacted to his *intention* to inflict a wound. Other evidence of nonlocal communication can be found in nature. For example, a flock of birds flying together when one bird suddenly changes direction and the entire flock all instantly move with the flow, without crashing into each other. Another similar example is a school of fish, with literally hundreds of fish, which move around the sea all in sync. These examples are indications of a communication that occurs at the level of the nonlocal domain.

The three domains of existence – physical, quantum and nonlocal – are interconnected. Everything starts in the nonlocal domain, passes through the quantum and then manifests physically. This is a simplified way to summarize the interrelationship among the three domains as it is not a linear relationship – it is a nondual relationship. Quantum physicists and metaphysical scientists have done a tremendous amount of work in this regard, but it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to expand on the notion much further. What is important to understand is that from this perspective, the world that we now exist in did not come about by accident. It was built by our collective consciousness – meaning that it began in the nonlocal domain; and together we created what we currently experience in the physical domain (Chopra, 2005). From this perspective, a new world or perhaps a different world from the one we are now experiencing, is possible through a shift in consciousness.

Is it possible then for us to use the *insight of peace* to create this new world where we reside from the place of inner peace? Chopra (2005) has used the analogy of a human being born to exemplify how a new world can be manifested. He has explained that an embryo starts in the mother's womb as a loose blob of cells which become increasingly complex to the point that it has no other choice but to be born (this is also occurring at the nonlocal domain). This is a goal that nature always had in mind, but it is impossible to be born until there is sufficient order and power inside the embryo for it to become independent. Social orders follow the same pattern before birth (Chopra, 2005). The reason, according to Chopra (2005), that we have not seen a new world yet is because it is not yet ready to be born. He has claimed that until the building blocks become stronger, such a world will not be ready, similar to an embryo that cannot be born until it is ready or will not survive if it is born too prematurely (Chopra, 2005).

This begs the question, what are the conditions that must be present for the new world to be born? What are the building blocks? And should we even try? If there are current hinderances preventing the new world from manifesting, one could take an apathetic stance and assume that it will just happen “naturally” or in its own time. However, I believe that similar to preparing for the birth of a human, we must create and nurture the conditions both internally and externally for its survival. With a human embryo, if the conditions in the mother’s womb are not suitable, the embryo will abort itself. Thus, the mother takes great care to nurture the child she is carrying – eating well, exercising, resting, etc. As parents prepare for the birth of a child, great efforts are also made in preparing the home to welcome the child and to ensure that it will be in a safe and nurturing environment. In the same manner, we must prepare for the new world of peace. Using the insight of peace, this means we must nurture ourselves spiritually so that we can be at peace. We must also develop cognitively, physically and emotionally. In other words, we must have

balance in order to move from chaotic to consciousness bringing the energies from the domains of existence in alignment and thereby creating the potential for manifesting our wishes into reality. In sum, we can use the insight of peace to be peaceful within which will extend outwards. However, this needs to be cultivated at an individual level but also at a societal level. For peace to occur at a societal level, a shift in perspective is required – a shift that moves us beyond the physical domain and into the quantum and nonlocal domains. One tool that has been used to convey a shift in culture is the Cultural Proficiency Continuum.

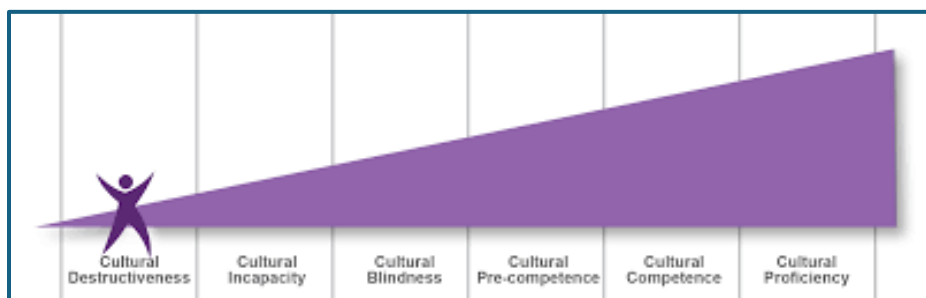
### **A Spiritually-based Framework for Peace**

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum has been applied in the field of education to support educational equity. The Continuum is a “conceptual framework for assessing personal and organizational progress and providing common language to describe both healthy and dysfunctional events and policies” (Nuri-Robbins et al., n.d., p. 3). The Continuum is often depicted linearly, as shown in Figure 1, illustrating that there are incremental changes or phases to reach the desired goal (although this is somewhat misleading). Table 2 expands the linear representation of the Continuum articulating the attitudes that prevent cultural proficiency from being realized, as well as the attitudes necessary for attaining cultural proficiency. The first three aspects on the Continuum: (a) cultural destructiveness; (b) cultural incapacity; and (c) cultural blindness refer to a reactive state that is destructive because from this state diversity is tolerated, mandated, viewed as a problem, and focuses on equality. The remaining three aspects on the Continuum: (a) cultural pre-competence; (b) cultural competence; (c) cultural proficiency - reframe the first three aspects, articulating the necessity to be proactive (as opposed to reactive) and views transformation and equity as collective goals to be attained (Lindsey et al., 2009; Nuri-Robbins et al., n.d.). When using this tool, for example in an educational context, it is

expected that educators will “align their values and educational philosophies with their daily practices” corresponding to transformation for desired equity (Nuri-Robbins et al., n.d., p.2). It is important to note that because the Cultural Proficiency Continuum is often presented linearly, as depicted in Figure 1, it gives the illusion that each aspect of the continuum is a phase to pass through. However, this is not a linear endeavour. It is way more complex and layered. For example, at an organizational level, it is possible to be operating at different levels of the Continuum simultaneously. For instance, in one area – hiring practices – an organisation could be culturally competent but, in another area, – policies – could be culturally blind. It must also be taken into account that it is the individuals who make up the organisation, and each person will also be at different points on the Continuum simultaneously as well. The Cultural Proficiency Continuum has been used to assess the current level of cultural proficiency within an organization as well as the individuals within said organization.

**Figure 1**

*Linear representation of the Cultural Proficiency Continuum*



**Table 2***The Cultural Proficiency Continuum (based on Nuri-Robbins et al., n.d.)*

<b>Cultural Proficiency Continuum</b>	
<b>Reactive</b>	<b>Tolerance for Mandated Equality</b>
1) Cultural Destructiveness	a) Focuses on “them” being problems
2) Cultural Incapacity	b) Prevent, mitigate, avoid cultural dissonance and conflict
3) Cultural Blindness	c) Tolerates, excludes, separates
	d) Stakeholders expect or help others assimilate
	e) Diversity is a problem to be solved
	f) Information added to existing policies and procedures
<b>Proactive</b>	<b>Transformation for Desired Equity</b>
4) Cultural Pre-competence	a) Manage, leverage, facilitate conflict
5) Cultural Competence	b) Focuses on “us” and “our practices”
6) Cultural Proficiency	c) Stakeholders adapt to meet needs of others
	d) Esteems, respects, includes
	e) Existing policies, procedures, practices examined and adapted to changing environment
	f) Diversity and inclusion are goals to be attained

The Continuum works in conjunction with five essential elements. Each of the five elements articulate the roles and duties of both individual and administration/organization to help achieve their cultural proficiency goal. The five essential elements are: (a) assess culture; (b) value diversity; (c) manage the dynamics of difference; (d) adapt to diversity; (e) institutionalize cultural knowledge (Nuri-Robbins et al., n.d.) as shown in Table 4. The five elements are further developed with specific tasks and activities that will assist in achieving cultural proficiency (Lindsey et al., 2009). I did not include these tasks and activities as I felt it was beyond the scope of this section to go to that level of detail. Using the Cultural Proficiency Continuum as a template, I have developed a Spiritually-based Framework for Peace with six aspects (Table 3) and a list of the Essential Elements (Table 4).

The Spiritually-based Framework for Peace, like the Cultural Proficiency Continuum has six aspects – the first three: (a) Othering; (b) entanglements in violence; and, (c) external focus – which represent the colonial narrative of peace - the-way-to-peace. The last three aspects (d) nonduality; (e) ahimsa; and (f) internal focus depict the elements that represent the spiritual narrative of peace - peace-is-the-way. The Essential Elements for-peace-is-the-way are: (a) assess PACS/peacebuilding; (b) value a spiritual ontology of peace; (c) accept different ways of knowing, understanding, experiencing and living peace; (d) regard Self, consciousness and other non-cognitive ways of knowing; (e) incorporate and foster spiritual development in the program/institution (not an add on).

**Table 3**

*The Spiritually-based Framework for Peace*

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<b>A Spiritually-Based Framework for Peace</b>	
<b>Colonial</b>	<b>The-Way-to-Peace</b>
1) Othering	a) Divisive, tolerates, excludes, separates
2) Entanglements in Violence	b) Violence is inevitable
3) External	c) Focuses on “them” being problems
	d) Stakeholders expect or help others assimilate
	e) Peace is a problem to be solved
	f) Linear
	g) Operates only on the physical domain

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<b>Spiritual</b>	<b>Peace-is-the-way</b>
4) Nonduality	a) Harmonizes, esteems, respects, includes
5) Ahimsa	b) Focuses on “us” and “our practices”
6) Internal focus	c) Stakeholders adapt to meet needs of others
	d) Live a life of nonviolence
	e) Peace is a practice/consciousness
	f) Holistic
	g) Operates on physical, quantum and nonlocal domains

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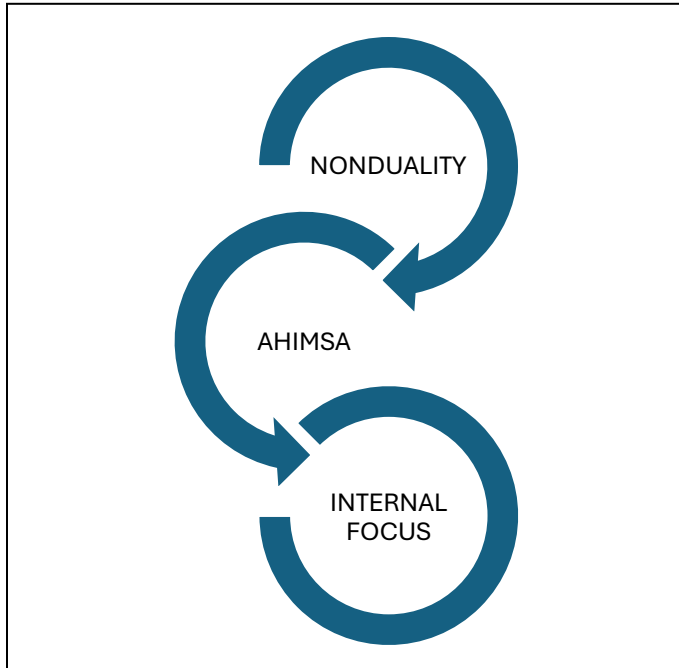
**Table 4***Essential Elements Cultural Proficiency and Spiritually-based Framework for Peace*

<b>Essential Elements</b>	
<b>Cultural Proficiency</b>	<b>Spiritually-based Framework for Peace</b>
Assess culture	Assess PACS/peacebuilding
Value diversity	Value a spiritual ontology of peace
Manage the diversity of difference	Accept different ways of knowing, understanding, experiencing and living peace
Adapt to diversity	Regard Self, consciousness and other non-cognitive ways of knowing
Institutionalize cultural knowledge	Incorporate and foster spiritual development in the program/institution (not an add on)

The Spiritually-based Framework for Peace (Table 3) and the accompanying Essential Elements (Table 4) are one way to help conceptualize the difference between the-way-to-peace to peace-is-the-way. Table 3 summarizes the difference between the concepts the-way-to-peace and peace-is-the-way. I have also added Figure 2, which depicts peace-is-the-way as a holistic approach and not a linear one.

**Figure 2**

*Holistic representation Peace-is-the-way*



The-way-to-peace, I have argued is a colonial view of framing and understanding peace. Its focus has been primarily on attaining negative peace and positive peace which is the absence of physical violence and structural violence, respectively. Peace-is-the-way is a spiritual view of framing and understanding peace. Its focus is to attain peace by being peaceful at the individual level. Peace from this lens is not the absence of violence but peace as peace is (as opposed to what it is not). Returning to the analogy of the match and the flame, negative and positive peace are notions of peace (the match), and the insight of peace (the flame) is practice of peace (inner peace). If we now bring Chopra's three domains of existence into the mix, it becomes possible to see how we can manifest world peace. Starting from our meditation and cultivation of inner peace (which begin in the nonlocal domain); and subsequently our collective consciousness meet and meld in the quantum domain, as we experience nonduality (our interconnectedness). This

information and energy are then manifested in the physical domain through our practice of ahimsa, subsequently creating a peaceful world!

The Spiritually-based Framework for Peace has not yet been fully developed; however, I believe that this conceptualization can be applied in PACS; similar to how the Cultural Proficiency Continuum and Essential Elements have been applied in Education. The Spiritually-based Framework for Peace can also be developed and applied in Education where the focus can be on the spiritual development of the child. The Cultural Proficiency Continuum and the Spiritually-based Framework for Peace are examples of tools for cultural transformation. For PACS, a spiritually-based framework for peace might seem unconventional and unwonted; however, I believe it has merit in the discipline, and it will be a matter of time before we can see its impact. As Cormier et al. (2010) have pointed out, “all interventions make an impact though they are hard to see when looking at the big picture—until eventually a tipping point is reached, and the momentum for change becomes more powerful than the pull of history” (p. 52). In other words, I believe that it is just a matter of time before we see a peaceful world.

In closing, I return to the survey referred to earlier where the students had great difficulty articulating what peace was unless it was in relation to the absence of violence. In addition, they found the idea of peacebuilding daunting and overwhelming. This is no surprise, as the version of peace that they have been familiar with is on the physical domain. That is, peace meant ending physical and structural violence, which would indeed seem insurmountable. I believe that if the students had been provided with a vision of peace that came from a spiritual ontological lens, as I have offered, the task of creating a peaceful world becomes much less daunting – and dare I say – inevitable. The spiritual lens that I presented allows us to clearly see what our part is (cultivate

inner peace and practice ahimsa). It puts the onus on us and we are accountable to ourselves, not to external factors – this itself is motivating and exhilarating.

To sum up Part Two, I have provided evidence that spirituality in PACS is not an entirely new idea. The literature review has illustrated that in the past there has been some interest and curiosity, however, it has never been pursued to the point that it has a secure place in the discipline. It is my belief that any efforts to develop a spiritual component in the discipline has been overshadowed by the neoliberal agenda, as well as a colonial understanding of what peace is and ought to be. Nonetheless, there appears to be a newly developing interest in how some aspects of spirituality might have a role in peacebuilding; as exemplified by emerging scholarship in Yogic peace education. Although I believe that this emerging interest is still framed within a colonial ontological understanding of peacebuilding; I have argued that the absence of a spiritual theoretical framework in PACS has limited or hindered those who might want to truly explore the role of spirituality in PACS using a spiritual ontological lens.

In Chapter Four, I discussed in detail the concept of peace-is-the-way making the distinction between the-way-to-peace and peace-is-the-way. I have made the claim in Chapter Two that the current dominant notion of peace in PACS can be conceptualized as the-way-to-peace which I have argued is Othering, entangled in violence and externally-focussed. I have asserted that this perspective can be divisive; views violence as inevitable; and believes peace is a problem which can be solved externally/materially. The-way-to-peace is also characterized as colonial, linear and missing a spiritual element. Peace-is-the-way, on the other hand, places emphasis on the spiritual. Peace-is-the-way is characterized by the notion of nonduality, ahimsa and an internal focus. This understanding of peace harmonizes; places an emphasis on living a life of nonviolence; views peace as a conscious practice; and, is holistic in its approach. Having

made the distinction between the-way-to-peace and peace-is-the-way, I then offered a spiritually-based framework for peace that can be applied in PACS.

Drawing from the Cultural Proficiency Continuum, I created a Spiritually-based Framework for Peace (Table 3) which has provided an overview of the-way-to-peace and peace-is-the-way. This framework is a guideline that helps us to see if we are hindering peace or advancing peace. When we combine the aspects of advancing peace – nonduality, ahimsa and internal focus with the Essential Elements (Table 4): (a) assess PACS/peacebuilding; (b) value a spiritual ontology of peace; (c) accept different ways of knowing, understanding, experiencing and living peace; (d) regard self, consciousness and other non-cognitive ways of knowing; (e) incorporate and foster spiritual development in the program/institution; we are met with a spiritually-based peace that can be put into practice or actionable items which can create, foster and nurture a culture of peace. I believe that this Spiritually-based Framework for Peace is a starting point for peace-is-the-way. Peace-is-the-way invites us to live our lives from a place of ahimsa, encourages the practice of inner peace and teaches us that to understand peace and to know peace, we have to be peace. Once we know peace, we can manifest World Peace.

### **Part Three**

#### **Applying a Spiritual Ontological Lens in PACS**

*Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit,  
The sun does not shine on itself; flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves,  
Living for others is a rule of nature.  
We are all born to help each other.  
No matter how difficult it is, life is good when you are happy,  
But much better when others are happy because of you (Original author unknown).*

### **Part Three: Applying a Spiritual Ontological Lens in PACS**

In PACS, a spiritual notion of peace has not yet been fully explored, thus one of the main arguments of this dissertation has been to make a case to include a spiritual ontological lens in the discipline. Even though there have been some scholars (e.g., Redekop) and practitioners (e.g., Standish) who have acknowledged that inner peace, mediation, yoga and other teachings grounded in spiritual knowledges have some merit, there has not been a consistent or committed undertaking from PACS scholars and practitioners to place these teachings at the forefront of or integrated them in current theory and practice. As a result of this absence, there is currently no space in the discipline from where a scholar or practitioner can ground their work from a spiritual theoretical lens. PACS, as a discipline, has prided itself as having strong interdisciplinary elements, drawing from other disciplines such as, Anthropology, Economics, Education, Psychology and Sociology, to list a few (Mac Ginty, 2013, 2024); however, when it has come to drawing from a spiritual lens or non-cognitive ways of knowing, PACS has been inattentive. In fact, contemplative research is beginning to emerge in the Humanities, particularly in disciplines where “it is essential to have a deep understanding of what it means to be human” (Staden, 2025, p. 225); and arguably, PACS is one such discipline. There also appears to be a growing interest in experimental designs which hold a mindful focus (Lundh, 2025). PACS scholars have acknowledged that there needs to be change and the emergence of critical and emancipatory peacebuilding as a new theoretical framework is evidence of PACS’ willingness to change and move forward. However, PACS must move beyond the current systems of thought. Current systems of thought are limiting and prevent us from expanding not only our views but our consciousness as well (Chopra, 2024; Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). The systems to which PACS has been tied reinforce “us and them” narratives as well as the narrative of separateness. This is the

opposite of unity and interconnectedness. Contemplative research practices place an emphasis on the subjective experience, empathy, and intuition and “culminate in virtues such as respect, gentleness, intimacy, participation, vulnerability, transformation, and insight” (Staden, 2025, p. 225). If PACS is truly willing to operate from a critical and emancipatory framework, then by the discipline’s definition of what this entails, incorporating and centralizing such elements in PACS ought to go without heavy scrutiny. Such a move from PACS would indicate the willingness and acceptance of a true ontological shift in the discipline.

In Part One of this dissertation, I have illustrated how PACS, as a discipline, is at an impasse, so to speak, with respect to its theoretical assumptions, as practice based on the discipline’s theories have not been able to yield a positive or a sustainable peace. I have asserted that it is not just the theories that need adjusting but rather the ontological lens which inform the theories is what needs to be examined. I have subsequently pointed out that there is an absence of a spiritual element in PACS’ ontological underpinnings, and therefore an absence of a spiritual component in the disciplines overarching theories – which could possibly account for why practice has failed to bring positive peace. In Part Two, I presented another way of conceptualizing peace using a spiritual lens, asserting that a peaceful world is possible if we adapt the notion peace-is-the-way. Peace-is-the-way rests in the notions of nonduality, ahimsa and an internal focus. These three aspects place an emphasis on our interconnectedness, nonviolence and inner peace. I also developed a spiritually-based framework for PACS to help conceptualize what peace-is-the-way looks like. This will be expanded upon in Part Three.

Part Three of this dissertation will focus on the application of a spiritual ontological lens in PACS. To begin, in Chapter 5, I expand on the notion of identity and attachment from a Buddhist perspective to illustrate how we can understand why and how the colonial framing of

identity and identity politics is limiting and harmful. I point out that when we are able to see and connect with ourselves from within, colonial narratives of identity will no longer hold us hostage. In Chapter Six, I elaborate on the importance of understanding and being explicit about our own ontological lens using conceptual frameworks as we engage in research. For conducting peace research, what is needed is a spiritual paradigm and I provide one example of what this can look like and how it can be applied in PACS.

## **Chapter 5: Turning Inward - Meditation**

In Chapter Four I have provided an overview of what a spiritual notion of peace encompasses. I also provided a comparison between a colonial ontological notion of peace and a spiritual ontological notion of peace. I will now endeavour to bring more depth to what this means in a PACS context by examining and comparing identity from both the colonial lens and the spiritual lens. As such, in Chapter Five, I will explain how the Buddhist notion of attachment can be applied and understood from the perspective of an attachment to an identity. I point out that attachment is a response to meeting a need. I compare this to acts of violence, which, as discussed earlier, are also responses to meeting a need. Thus, I attribute attachment to identity as a material satisfier, which is essentially a response to meeting a need. Material satisfiers mask our deepest need, which is to be happy. I concur with many spiritual teachers that the path to happiness is to look within, and meditation is one practice that we can incorporate in our lives to bring a state of happiness. Meditation leads us to our true selves, and once we learn who we are, then we can let go of material satisfiers and can connect with our deeper consciousness. Material satisfiers are externally-based and bring temporary happiness. This is a false sense of happiness. It is not a state of being therefore we can become trapped in a cycle of constantly seeking out happiness through material satisfiers. When the material satisfier is violence, it is clear to see how destructive this can become. However, when we can connect to our true selves, we learn that happiness comes from within. This insight, in turn, leads us to being in a state of happiness (which is constant as opposed to temporary or fleeting). From this place, we are no longer reliant on external/material satisfiers (i.e. violence) – which ultimately leads to peace. I close Chapter Five with a practical exercise which can help us to learn who we are.

## **Identity Narratives**

Needs-based identity theory has been used as an “organizing concept to ... analyze conflicts between groups at a variety of levels including religious, linguistic and ethnic, and partisan, to name a few” (Rothbart & Korostelina, 2007, as cited in Simmons, 2011, p. 117). The basic premise of this theory is that “identity and threats to identity play a fundamental role in how groups see and understand themselves in conflict and in the emergence, escalation, sustenance, intractability, and transformation of conflict” (Fisher, 2020, p. 265). Rothman (2020), writing about ethnic conflicts (identity conflicts), has pointed out that it is only individuals who have agency, not groups. Groups are not actors or beings, therefore groups cannot act; as such, “claim[ing] that a group can act and portraying group ‘actions’ is misleading” (Rothman, 2020, pp. 247-248). Rothman (2020) has also pointed out that the nature of group conflicts has been under-studied; albeit a difficult task to undertake. However, Rothman’s (2020) main argument has been to point out that the elements of intra-group conflicts (which are conflicts between or among individuals who identify with one group) have been applied to inter-group conflicts - a practice, he has claimed, that is an ontological pitfall. Rothman’s points are all well-taken. He has clearly articulated an issue which has served to weaken current narratives in PACS that have proclaimed a strong understanding of identity conflicts as well as strategies on how to manage them. I contend that it is the Western notions of identity (which are colonial and are the current dominant identity narratives) combined with an attachment to various aspects of said identity that is problematic.

Chopra (2024) has argued that the conceptualization of identity, as we know it and understand it and as it currently stands, is false. We (as humans) have been claiming identity on many aspects – gender, religion, sexuality, language, age, class, to list a few. The concept of

intersectionality is now widely used to describe the interplay of various identity markers. However, what is often absent from the analysis of these distinctions of identities is how these different aspects have served to fragment us – not only as societies but as individuals. In fact, it can be argued that peacebuilding activities, in attempts to create group harmony, has created more division, segregation and separatism. Intersectionality has rendered people as collections, enabling academics to form and expand knowledge using these categories (Paul, 2015). By way of example, let us look at the newly popular acronym - BIPOC. The term *BIPOC* refers to Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour - as one group. The use of this acronym automatically sets up a bifurcation between BIPOC and Whites which indirectly and subtly reinforces Othering by lumping the majority of the world's peoples into a single grouping, while Whites stand alone. Furthermore, who are “people of colour?” What does that even mean? Lee et al. (2021) have pointed out that theorizing about group identities based on harm caused by different forms of oppression (BIPOC is one such example) is out-dated. To counter this narrative, they have asserted that emphasis ought to be placed on the “intrinsic power, wisdom, and strength that the GM [Global Majority has] draw[n] upon as methods of survival and healing” (Lee et al., 2021, pp. 1-2). Lee et al. (2021) are advocating for strength-based theorizing (as opposed to deficit-theorizing as discussed in Chapter Two); and their point is well-taken. However, their conception of identity is still within a colonial narrative. To reconceptualize current notions of identity (in general and for application in PACS), we must first come to understand the notion of attachment.

### **Attachment**

Understanding attachment is a very delicate and subtle matter. It begins with the belief that all humans desire a happy life, regardless of religious and/or spiritual beliefs (His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2006). Often, we seek out happiness from external conditions, chasing things

such as money, power and sensual pleasures (Hanh, 2017). These things are never truly satisfying, yet we crave them (Hanh, 2017; Rinpoche, 2024). We crave them in the hope of filling the hollowness within ourselves (Hanh, 2017; Rinpoche, 2024), and attachment and clinging are the causes of human suffering (Chopra, 2024; Don Miguel Ruiz & Emrys, 2018; Don Miguel Ruiz, 2016; Hanh, 2017; His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2001; Rinpoche, 2024). That is, we cling and attach to external entities because we believe they will bring happiness. An external entity can be an object, an idea or a belief.

Chopra (2024) has made the claim that the cause of human suffering has stemmed from a false sense of identity. This suffering rests in five categories – not knowing reality; grasping and clinging; recoiling; identifying with the conditioned ego mind; and fear of death (Chopra, 2024). Staying with this line of thinking, we can see how attachment and clinging to particular beliefs can lead to conflict. For example, when you become attached to an object, idea or belief and make it a part of who you are or who you think you are (i.e. your identity), your vision becomes obscure (Ruiz, 2016). In this state of unclarity, instead of seeing the “humanity of the person who does not agree with you, you only see the personification of an idea you stand against” (Ruiz, 2016, p. 22). In other words, we can become deeply attached to an object, idea or belief, identifying with it so strongly that anything which contrasts or opposes that identity can become an object of conflict. Thus, it is not the identity that we are attached to, but more so the narrative of said identity. Furthermore, it is the *attachment to the narrative* that can lead to conflict and potentially to violence, i.e., identifying with the conditioned ego mind.

What is at the root of these attachments? Why is it so important for us to cling to particular beliefs, ideas and objects so tightly, that we (humans) are willing to inflict harm and kill/destroy (this include human, animals, the environment) in order to preserve these beliefs,

ideas and objects? Is it to win? Does “winning” bring satisfaction? And does the satisfaction gained from a victory quell the hollowness/void we feel inside? I believe that winning does bring a level of satisfaction that fulfills the inner void; however, this is a temporary fulfillment. As such, it is not long before we seek out ways of satisfying the void again. As has already been presented in Chapter Two, Chopra (2005) has categorized violence as having materialistic qualities, positing that violence can bring about satisfaction. He has recommended replacing material satisfaction with a spiritual satisfaction. A spiritual satisfaction, Chopra (2005) has claimed, is more powerful and adventurous than those being satisfied by acts of violence. How do we get there? How can we detach from these objects, ideas and beliefs that hold us hostage and find the humanity in those we have perceived to be adversaries? We have to learn who we truly are. When we learn who we truly are, we then recognize and accept that the false sense of identities we have been attached to are not us. These identities, and more so, the narratives regarding those identities, no longer define us because we come to realize that we are much more than that. Once we come to understand that we are not defined by these identities and narratives of these identities, we can then relinquish the need to protect them. As has already been noted, identity theory states that efforts to protect our identities can lead to conflict and violence; however, it is possible for the “necessity” to protect our (false) sense of identities (which stems from attachment) to become obsolete when we see ourselves as we truly are. When this happens, peace can ensue.

### **Connecting with our True Selves**

Ruiz and Emrys (2018) have asserted that to know who we are, we must ask ourselves three fundamental questions: Who am I? What is real? How do I express love? However, in order to get to these answers, we must first learn what we are not, what is not real and what is not love

(Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). Ruiz and Emrys (2018) have pointed out that we have been conditioned through the process of domestication to be who we are not, living in a false reality and with a misunderstood version of love. Domestication is the indoctrination and imposition of a set of beliefs (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). Ruiz and Emrys (2018) have asserted that we have been governed by rules of family, community, city, state, nation and ultimately our own rules that we have imposed upon ourselves. In other words, through a series of conditioning, we have learnt to put ourselves in a box based on what we *think is* or *believe to be* acceptable and desired ideology, attitude and behaviour. Subsequently, a Self who identifies with their domesticated narrative is created and sustained. This Self is constrained and confined, and unbeknownst to us, our agency also becomes stifled in the domestication process.

Ruiz and Emrys (2018) have pointed out that “[o]ur minds and bodies are meant to be allies in the quest for a better relationship with life,” however our domestication [has] desert[ed] us from cultivating this relationship (p. 52). Thus, the Self which has been created through domestication is not who we are; as such, we have been disconnecting from who we really are (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). Thus, to learn who we are requires a lot of culling. According to Ruiz and Emrys (2018), the most effective strategy to learn who we are is to learn how the mind functions. To do so, we must turn our gaze inwards and use three tools that are always available to us – attention, memory, and imagination (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018).

The first tool, attention, brings us into the present moment, halting us from “sleepwalking” through life (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018, p. 38). Attention helps us to look, listen and observe without judgement (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). Memory, the second tool, is an impression of reality, but it is not the truth (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). To exemplify what this means, Ruiz and Emrys (2018) have pointed out that siblings who share the same experience can each have a

different memory or impression of the very experience. This impression is not the truth, yet we have come to rely on our memory (the past), believing it to be the truth. The truth, however, lies in the present moment. According to Chopra (2005), our memory is in the nonlocal domain. That is, it does not exist in the physical or quantum domains – and it is not until we call it up, that it arises. The third tool, imagination, is so powerful that just by imagining something it can be felt in our bodies (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). We can use our imagination to work in our favour by imagining beautiful and amazing experiences we have never tried to imagine (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). The three tools – attention, memory, and imagination – can serve us in learning how the mind functions; aiding us to calm the chaos and find peace (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). When we have this awareness, we can then learn to challenge our stories, which are often in the past. We can let go of those false narratives and identities as we centre our selves in the present moment, which is where the truth resides (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018).

In coming to understand who we are, we must also learn to discern what is real and what is not real (Ruiz and Emrys, 2018). Reality differs for everyone as we each hold a personal narrative of what we think is real; and we have come to believe that this reality is fixed. However, reality is not fixed (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). Reality is “experienc[ing] events from the perspective of life itself” (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018, p. 99), not from the confines of our assumptions and beliefs. Thus, to know what is real, we must question our beliefs and assumptions; and doubt ourselves so that our sense of reality will start shifting (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). As we learn to see ourselves as energy, we will be able to accept that we are always transforming. The key characteristic of life is transformation (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). If we are attentive to it, we will notice that we are constantly changing and transforming. Reality then is not fixed, it is constantly shifting and transforming. Life is the only truth (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018; Sadhguru, 2024). Put

another way, life, truth and reality are all in the present moment. This is reality. By recognizing what is not real, we bring ourselves closer to our True Selves, as we can now relinquish our false assumptions and beliefs and see ourselves to be pure consciousness.

The third fundamental question that Ruiz and Emrys (2018) have posed is: How do I love? They have made the claim that we must learn what love is not to know what love is. Ruiz and Emrys (2018) have asserted that our current understanding of love is skewed because we have been taught to love with conditions. This is a serious problem for humanity because we have been taught to distrust “life’s infinite source” (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018, p. 136). What is love? Love is the sum of all emotions. It is an energy that has no beginning, no end, no limits, no conditions and no agenda (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). When we love unconditionally, we are generous in love and need nothing in return. As love is life’s energy, we are exhilarated to be alive. Love is its own justification. And, like life, like truth - love needs no proof to exist (Ruiz & Emrys, 2018). Who then, ought to be the recipient of our unconditional love? We are. According to Ruiz and Emrys (2018), the relationship we have with our bodies impacts all relationships; therefore, by loving ourselves unconditionally, we can heal the biggest divisions in the world.

Ruiz and Emrys’ (2018) three fundamental questions - Who am I? What is real? What is love? - are one path to help us understand and connect to our True Selves. When we are connected to our True Selves, we listen to our bodies, we use our minds as allies and love unconditionally. This extracts us out of our suffering; (and more so, our attachment to our suffering); not knowing reality; grasping and clinging; recoiling; identifying with the conditioned ego mind; and fear of death (Chopra, 2024).

When we find harmony within ourselves, we can come to know what inner peace is. When we find inner peace, we can then forego our attachments to socially-constructed identities and

narratives (domestication) (Singh, 2023). I believe that when we are truly able to relinquish the narratives regarding our identities – for example the ones that tell us we are marginalised, oppressed, vulnerable, etc. – we are no longer attached to the suffering it brings and find peace within ourselves.

Chapter Five has provided us with the opportunity to understand how identity and attachment has been theorized from a colonial perspective and how the same two aspects can be understood from a spiritual lens. I have illustrated how attachment to the narratives of identity can instigate (and have been used as a tool to instigate) conflict. However, by adhering to the principles of nonduality, we are invited to see the humanity in the so-called Other. And when we can love ourselves unconditionally, we act with love towards the Other. We know that the Other, like us, desires to be happy and wishes to be extracted from their turbulence of suffering; as such we would refrain from causing harm (the insight of peace). In fact, when we engage in life in the present moment, in reality, there is no Other. However, to get to that level of understanding, we must first be at peace with ourselves. When we start with ourselves, we recognize and acknowledge how we might be culpable in creating conflict. What are we attached and clinging to? What happens when we let go? This self-interrogation and practice are both necessary. After that, we must become love. When we become love, the void within that we seek to fill is filled, and we no longer seek out attachment to external beliefs, ideas and objects to validate our sense of being. When we can let go of these attachments, our identity is never threatened – as peace will always be within us.

One of my core beliefs, which align with Buddhist teachings, is that when we are peaceful inside, this extends outwards and brings peace to the world. By detaching from object, ideas and beliefs (external entities), we can then turn inwards, using meditation as a tool. From

here, we can start to see who we really are. The teaching here is that when we see who we really are, we no longer have the need to hold on/cling to external entities to define us or to defend our attachments to false identities to bring us satisfaction. When we let go of the external elements, what we find waiting for us from this internal place is inner peace. Once cultivated, inner peace is the reflected outwards. Put another way, our starting point comes from a place of peace, not from a place of conflict and violence. Starting from a place of peace encapsulates the essence of the concept peace-is-the-way. Peace-is-the-way might be a new perspective for some to understand peace; thus, it is important to now take a closer look at how it can be applied in PACS.

## **Chapter 6: A Spiritual Theoretical Framework Centred in Nonduality**

In Chapter Six, I provide a spiritual theoretical framework that can be applied in PACS. I have made the claim that PACS is grounded in a colonial ontological perspective of peace. From this perspective, positive peace - the absence of physical and structural violence - (and the goal of PACS) has remained illusive. I have argued that positive peace has remained out of reach because it is a colonial version of peace which is divisive, entangled in violence and externally focused. I then pointed out that absent from the colonial narrative of peace is a spiritual element which I have argued is an important factor to include in PACS. Even though PACS, over the past six decades, has been consistently redeveloping its theoretical assumptions, hoping that positive peace will emerge; the discipline has yet to question its ontological assumptions regarding positive peace. Some PACS scholars have asserted that the discipline needs to examine its ontological foundations. It is from this specific critique that has given rise to this dissertation. Thus, in this chapter, I delve into the meaning of ontology and epistemology and their importance in peace research. I also provided a spiritual conceptual framework and a spiritual theoretical framework which can serve as a guideline for those in PACS who wish to centre their work from a spiritual lens.

### **Ontology**

Paradigms are ways of viewing the world; and at the same time, they are ways of not viewing the world (Feilzer, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Kuhn, 1962, as cited in Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), paradigms are “deeply embedded in the socialization of adherents and practitioners; they tell us what is important, legitimate, and reasonable; they are also normative, telling the practitioner what to do” (as cited in Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016, p. 235). Brantmeier and Brantmeier (2016) have also pointed out that the

normative nature of paradigms has resulted in fundamental beliefs, perspectives, and worldviews often going unquestioned. Another way of understanding paradigms is to view them as belief systems. From a research perspective, the following five elements – ontology, epistemology, methodology, axiology and teleology – are framed within various paradigmatic systems (e.g. positivist, postpositivist) (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016).

Ontology asks the question: What is the nature of reality? Epistemology asks: What makes for knowledge of reality? Methodology refers to how knowledge is acquired and accumulated. Axiology poses the question: How should we act in acquiring, accumulating, and applying knowledge? And teleology queries: To what end should we apply knowledge? (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). Different belief systems have different approaches to inquiry, which determines how research is steered. For example, religion and science each hold different ontologies regarding human creation. Some religions have theorized that the world and humans were created by a God while some scientific theories have declared that the world has been created by a Big Bang. In attempts to find their respective Truths (How creation came to be?), how each party pursues this undertaking will differ based on their respective ontological perspective. Thus, a researcher from a religious ontological perspective may set out to prove that God exists while a researcher from a scientific ontological perspective may set out to prove that there was a Big Bang.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) have pointed out that ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions; which in turn, give rise to methodological considerations; and these, then, give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011). Their claim has illustrated how elements of a belief system do not stand in isolation but are very much interconnected. Adding to this discourse, Habermas (1987) and Carspecken

(1996) have pointed out that there are different types of Truth claims – empirical truth claims, normative truth claims and subjective truth claims (as cited in Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). As such, ontology, epistemology, methodology, axiology and teleology validate their respective Truth claim paradigms (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016).

By way of example, let us look at how Margaret Kovach, an Indigenous woman from Turtle Island (North and Central America) has declared her ontological beliefs and values. Kovach centres herself and her research in the knowledge system of her tribal group - Nêhiyaw (Plains Cree). She has pointed out that while there is an interconnectedness between tribal knowledge systems and a pan-Indigenous knowledge system, there is also a distinction to be made. For example, from a pan-Indigenous lens, theoretical positioning is important. This positioning has a basis in critical theory with a decolonising aim and a commitment to praxis and social justice for Indigenous Peoples (Kovach, 2021). On the other hand, Indigenous research which flows from tribal paradigms must follow broad ethical considerations, which includes a research methodology that is in harmony with Indigenous values, and these values encompass community accountability, benefits for the community, as well as the researcher serving as an ally and making a commitment to do-no-harm (Kovach, 2021). Within an Indigenous research framework that utilises a methodology based on Nêhiyaw epistemology, a relational element is essential (Kovach, 2021). Kovach (2021) has stated that it should be assumed that Nêhiyaw knowledges are nested and created and re-created within the context of relationships with other living beings (Kovach, 2021). Kovach's example has illustrated how her truth claim is relational to both pan-Indigenous and tribal knowledge systems.

According to Moon and Blackman (2014), each discipline has embedded principles and assumptions. They have presented two strong arguments for why it is important for researchers

to be aware of their discipline's underpinnings. In their first argument, they have pointed out that by overlooking the principles of one's disciplinary base and the embedded assumptions, the integrity and validity of research design could be compromised. In their second argument, they have highlighted the importance to recognize and understand the principles of other disciplines, as failing to do so will result in a limited and/or distorted interpretation of the research outcomes. In other words, the knowledge of the "principles of one's disciplinary base and the embedded assumptions is a prerequisite for all researchers and highly desirable when interpreting research from other disciplines" (Moon & Black, 2014, p. 1168). This awareness may not necessarily present an objective or neutral point of view; as it is not possible to be truly objective or neutral is not possible (Holmes, 2020). However, being explicit regarding one's discipline's embedded principles and assumptions gives the reader a clearer picture of the author's truth claim perspective.

When a discipline's embedded principles and assumptions are taken for granted and remain unchallenged, they stand to perpetuate knowledge-confirming paradigms - exemplifying what Walker (2005) calls cognitive imperialism. Walker (2005) have noted that even though the Western discipline of conflict resolution has been predated by Indigenous conflict transformation models by centuries, "Indigenous methods of conflict transformation [have been] marginalized within the Western discipline of conflict resolution" (p. 546). Tuso and Flaherty (2016) and Walker (2005) have also pointed out that while Western scientists and practitioners have claimed to recognize Indigenous worldviews, they have continued to consider these perspectives as "primitive or superstitious and in need of development through Western scientific approaches" (Walker, 2005, p. 531). In other words, cognitive imperialism occurs when a Western worldview

(ontological lens) is prioritized and used as the standard by which to measure, judge and assess other ontological perspectives.

In PACS, like other disciplines, scholars, researchers and practitioners must also be aware of the discipline's ontological assumptions and their personal assumptions as well. I believe that many PACS scholars and practitioners hold Western ideologies and understanding of peace – which I have argued is a colonial one. Research informs theory, and theory and practice relate to each other (Kriesberg, 2020; Reagan, 2023); and as Kriesberg (2020) has noted, theory and practice in PACS have been confounded. He has also pointed out that PACS has drawn on theories from multiple sources and diverse disciplines (e.g. feminism, economics, constructivism), which has resulted in “an amalgam of ideas that are not fully synthesized [and lacking in] empirical evidence of their constructive contributions” (Kriesberg, 2020, p. 36). What all this points to, in essence, is that PACS does not have a solid or consistent framework for peace research despite notable efforts to establish one. This state of affairs could be due to the discipline's entanglements with other disciplines, as noted above, as well as its own failure to clearly state its ontological stance. Thus, it is both timely and necessary for PACS to explicitly declare its ontological underpinnings.

### **Epistemology and Conceptual Frameworks**

Epistemology, simply put, is the theory of knowledge. According to Oxford (2016), the questions “what is known, how do we find wisdom, and how do we know what we know” (p. 206) are epistemological questions about methodology, scope, and validity. In Kovach's (2021) words, “epistemology includes beliefs held about knowledge, where it comes from, and whom it involves” (p. 46). Buendía (2003) has pointed out that Western higher education has privileged European epistemological thought which, according to Kovach (2021), has served to establish

Western epistemology as a normative standard within research. However, there are different types of knowledges which are gleaned from various sources, and, as such researchers ought to be aware of which knowledges they privilege. One way to help researchers to be more explicit regarding which knowledges they privilege, is for them to use a conceptual framework.

Kovach (2009) has pointed out the importance of using conceptual frameworks as a tool for researchers to illustrate how their methods are aligned to their respective epistemological standpoints. Conceptual frameworks can highlight privileged epistemologies and subsequently serve to mitigate conflicting views, which in Kovach's case, is between Western and Indigenous worldviews (Kovach, 2009). Kovach, as well as other Indigenous researchers, such as Shawn Wilson, Michael Hart, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, have all emphasized the necessity for the researcher to be forthcoming with respect to their epistemological underpinnings as a critical first task in the research process. Establishing one's epistemological groundings provides guidance for the researcher throughout the entire research process (Kovach, 2009, 2021).

Kovach's conceptual framework. consists of six elements: (a) researcher preparation; (b) research preparation; (c) decolonizing and ethics; (d) gathering knowledge; (e) making meaning; and (f) giving back. These six elements are visually represented in a circle where Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihtamowin epistemology is centred (Kovach, 2021, p. 52). As noted, Kovach (2021) has distinguished between researcher preparation and research preparation, however, she has also made it clear that these two elements are a part of the research process and cannot be isolated from each other. Kovach (2021) has stated that in preparing for research, the researcher must go to their centre (internal) and connect with their inner knowing to make choices grounded from their own experiences. She has pointed out that even though this practice is not new to Western research, it is less emphasized in comparison to those following a tribal paradigm (Kovach,

2021). In contrast to a conceptual framework, Western research paradigms tend to place an emphasis on positionality/position-taking as a strategy to provide the reader with some insight of the researcher's perspectives. However, there are limitations with this strategy, which I discuss next.

### ***Position-taking***

In general, it is not uncommon practice in Western research paradigms for the researcher to declare aspects of their identity such as race, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, etc. These are indicators with built-in assumptions of particular values and beliefs that the researcher is likely to hold as a result of these fixed identities (Holmes, 2020). At the same time, Holmes (2020) has pointed out that researchers can also make assumptions about participants' perspectives and values based on their fixed identities. As such, he has cautioned researchers to be aware of their (mis)perceptions to avoid pigeonholing participants (Holmes, 2020). Smith (2012) has also emphasized that a researcher's declaration of their fixed identities is insufficient and lacks a "critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which [inform] research practices" (Smith, 2012, p. 21). Therefore, researchers must take time to figure out how they are paradigmatically and philosophically positioned and be aware of how this positioning might influence their research (Holmes, 2020). Thus, to be more expansive, Indigenous and spiritual research paradigms both place an emphasis on a reflective approach in the research process. A reflective approach, according to Kovach (2021), provides a more textured and potentially explicit description of the researcher's epistemological lens. To be reflective means that throughout the research – from inception to dissemination - the researcher must always intentionally, consciously and repeatedly be questioning what is influencing their perceptions, conceptions, and responses (both internally and externally (Kovach, 2021). This act

of self-locating is “cogent practice for analysing power differentials in society and a strategic action for furthering social justice” (Kovach, 2021, p. 142).

### ***Researcher Preparation***

The act of position-taking requires flexible cognitive and emotional ability as well as the suspension all judgment (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). This act is figuratively referred to as “emptying your boat” in order to create space so you can fill your mind with new information/knowledge (Li, 2010, as cited in Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016, p. 250). For Zen students, it is your original mind, or beginner’s mind - open and ready for anything (Roshi, 1970, as cited in Miller, 2016). Reflexivity is considered vital to the research process in spiritual research paradigms as this process grounds the researcher throughout the research – starting with preparations (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016; Kovach, 2021).

In the researcher preparation process, inner knowledge encompasses locating oneself “physically,” epistemologically, and truthfully to both our personal and our academic motivations for engaging in the research (Kovach, 2009, p. 50). Kovach (2009) has highlighted the essentiality of inward knowing in Nêhiyâw epistemology emphasizing the personal work the researcher must engage in by calling upon both the inner and outer worlds for guidance. For example, dreams, ceremonies and prayers are examples of loci where inner knowledge can be accessed (Kovach, 2009). Furthermore, she has asserted that the uniqueness of drawing from such experiences means that they cannot be universalized (Kovach, 2009).

A spiritual research paradigm, similar to Nêhiyâw epistemology, also places an emphasis on, and highly values inner knowing (Ergas, 2016). From a spiritual lens, knowledge that has been acquired from the noncognitive and nonrational domains such as insight, gut feeling and intuition are real (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). As a starting point then, the researcher must

be willing to engage in using these knowledges for themselves as well as participate in their own spiritual growth and development, which is a part of the research process (Lin et al., 2016b). Approaching research from this lens is to be engaged in contemplative inquiry. Bai et.al (2025). In other words, both Kovach (2009) and Bai et. al (2005) are placing an emphasis on the importance of the inner work that is required by the researcher - not only before engaging in the research process but throughout and after as well. Both Kovach (2021) and Wilson (2008) speak of research as ceremony. This practice is also shared by Bai et.al (2025) who have made the distinction between *doing* and *being*. That is, doing a contemplative activity is not the same as being contemplative. By way of example, Bai et.al have stated that sitting in lotus pose and having an agitated mind is doing – that is going through the motion or a performative action of mindfulness. What is of utter importance is the *how* which is informed by how we feel and sense our consciousness (Bai et.al, 2025).

From a spiritual paradigm, engaging in research requires inner work, first and foremost, from the researcher. As many of us are not conscious of our educational and cultural conditioning of separability and Othering, we are likely to replicate such patterns in research inquiries and practices. In fact, we might even believe that we are engaging in acts of decolonization yet be actively engaging in perpetuating and sustaining the very thing we are attempting to get rid of. Inner work provides the opportunity for us to reflect on our ways of being and doing (Bai et.al, 2025). As we work through our biases and conditioning, we are then able to improve interpersonal relationships which ultimately transform into action in the world – actions that can lead to positive change (Bai et.al, 2025).

### ***Research preparation***

Research preparation refers to the researcher carefully considering who will be requested to participate in the study in addition to the best way to collect, analyze, and present the data (Kovach, 2021). From Kovach's (2021) perspective and experience, it is important that both researcher preparation and research preparation align with the researcher's epistemology as well as being directly relational to the researcher herself. Similarly, Wilson (2008) has shared his account of his research experience and the conscious choices he has made as he engaged in his academic work, which entailed describing an Indigenous research paradigm and how it fit in relation to his own beliefs and his academic interests (Wilson, 2008). Both Kovach (2021) and Wilson (2008) have emphasized the importance of assessing the potential impact of the *process* of their research as it relates to the researcher and their epistemological values. Put another way, the researcher must be deliberate in aligning their values and beliefs to historical, political, and social contexts as well as the subject matter/literature. Without this alignment, a researcher may continue to uphold colonial structures, narratives, paradigms and privileged knowledges without even being aware of it. To illustrate how this is possible, let us look at the following example.

Buendía (2003) has used the structure of narratives as an example to illustrate how subtly some knowledges have been privileged. He has argued that the structure of narratives is “dialogically interconnected to researchers’ conceptual systems” (Buendía, 2003, p. 57). The very conceptual systems have shaped the way narrative structure in academia expects reporting to follow on specific social phenomena (Buendía, 2003). Buendía (2003) has written in the context of racism, exemplifying how narrative structures written on this social phenomenon have permitted White social scientists to write themselves out of the social phenomenon. That is, it has allowed them to exclude themselves from having any role in upholding racism.

Buendía's astute observation regarding narrative structures, Kovach's and Wilson's assertions of the importance of aligning values and beliefs to historical, political, and social contexts are very relevant to the PACS context as it is a phenomenon that has not been explored in any detail. The implications for this negligence are significant, particularly as I have asserted that Western narratives of peace are dominant and stem from a colonial ontological lens. This means that scholars, researchers and practitioners who are not aware their ontological and epistemological beliefs are highly likely to present data and analysis that confirm what they already know and believe to be true. As Kovach (2021) has asserted, research methodologies are historically embedded in Western thought, therefore interpretations are formulated by a Western gaze. And based on what I have already established – that a colonial peace is Othering - those scholars, researchers and practitioners favouring Western notions of conflict and peace will unknowingly uphold existing structures and systems, and at the same time can write themselves out as being culpable for the failures of conflict and peacebuilding efforts; and write themselves in as the saviours.

Given the subtleness of cognitive imperialism, as exemplified by Buendía (2003), we see the importance of using a conceptual framework and being clear about one's interpretive lens. Such strategies can diffuse the power dynamics between reader and researcher (Kovach, 2009). I believe that often, we are not consciously aware that we are engaging in a relationship with our reader through our writing. This awareness holds us accountable, to some extent, in that we must be conscious of our words. One of the Four Agreements, according to Ruiz and Mills (1997), is to be impeccable with your words. These agreements are a Toltec way of conduct. When we are impeccable with our words, we can cause no harm. Thus, as a writer, whether we are coming

from a spiritual lens in academia or not, it is good practice to be conscious of our (potential) readers and the relationship we are about to engage with them through our writing.

### **What Are Research Paradigms?**

Brantmeier and Brantmeier (2016) also share similar convictions to Kovach, Wilson, Hart, and Smith with respect to the importance of a conceptual framework as a part of the research process. Brantmeier and Brantmeier (2016) have differentiated among five inquiry research paradigms (constructivist/interpretive, critical, participatory, spiritual paradigm (blended), and spiritual paradigm (stand-alone)); and they have distinguished how ontology, epistemology, methodology, axiology and teleology for each paradigm serve to validate their respective Truths. To illustrate what they mean by this, let us compare a critical paradigm and a stand-alone spiritual paradigm. For example, the ontology of a critical paradigm assumes that the “nature of reality is historically situated and shaped by our positionality and values” (Guba & Lincoln, 2008, as cited in Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016, p. 241). The epistemology of a critical paradigm assumes that knowledge has been socially constructed by those in power, which requires change (Bernal, 2002, as cited in (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). This change means including other epistemologies; and therefore, the most suitable methodology for this paradigm is one that would incorporate a transformative component to enable change (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). The axiology of a critical paradigm requires shared power among participants. The goal is to work towards social justice (Mertens, 2010, as cited in (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). Within a critical paradigm, the teleology, or the purpose of applying the knowledge gleaned from the research is to change oppressive situations rather than merely describe the context/conditions (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016).

In contrast to a critical paradigm, the ontology of a stand-alone spiritual paradigm assumes that the “nature of reality is co-created through our interactions with all sentient beings” (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016, p. 241). The epistemology assumes that we exist in relation to each other; spiritual knowing is beyond logic and reason; and knowledge is not restricted to the cognitive domain alone (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). A spiritual paradigm is conducive to any methodology, provided that it is commensurable, the researcher is upfront about their positioning, and that non-material sources of knowing are regarded as valid data (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). The axiology of a spiritual paradigm includes all sentient beings; views all as interconnected; is open to alternative ways of guiding inquiry; and the “relationship of subjects to subjects is sacred” (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016, p. 242). The teleology of a spiritual paradigm unequivocally states that we have a responsibility to selflessly and boundlessly serve all that is living (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016).

### **What Is a Spiritual Paradigm?**

Several Indigenous scholars have been working to incorporate their respective Truths into research advocating for more holistic approaches so that we can gain more insight for understanding the world we all share (Chilisa, 2012a; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Adding to this is the work of Lin et al. (2016b), who have asserted that there is an urgency to develop a spiritual research paradigm which places an emphasis on internal knowing rather the external, i.e. physical or material, ways of knowing. The philosophical underpinning of a spiritual paradigm is for research to move beyond the normal boundaries of thinking as in most paradigmatic approaches and to incorporate our beliefs about divinity, spirituality, and the sacred (Lamb, 2016). According to Lin et al. (2016b), both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms have set out to learn more about humans and their interaction with the world.

However, the difference is that the former has operated from a logical and objective perspective and the latter has been more attentive to inner feeling. Lin et al. (2016b) have argued that even though some qualitative methodological approaches have provided the opportunity to explore the spiritual aspect of being human, they do not explicitly focus on this, hence, a spiritual research paradigm is necessary. These scholars have provided several compelling reasons for developing a spiritual research paradigm (Lin et al., 2016b); four of which follow. The first is that research which examines inward experiences is relevant and needed (Lin et al., 2016b). The second is that the domains of the sacred, the divine, and the intuitive knowing need to be explored further (Lin et al., 2016b). Third, as an embodied approach is essential, the researcher must participate in their own spiritual growth throughout the research process (Lin et al., 2016b). And fourth, the vital force that propels our lives spirituality deserves attention (Lin et al., 2016b). Lin et al. (2016b) have pointed out that a spiritual research paradigm is necessary in secular institutions as students and practitioners have spiritual experiences and questions that need to be answered. These queries cannot be fulfilled using empirical research. A vital part of human experience is informed and guided by religious practice and spiritual traditions. These experiences give meaning to the lives of billions of people. If we accept the following statement to be true - “research is a human endeavour focused on finding answers to our biggest questions (Lin et al., 2016b, p. ix); then we can fairly say that current research paradigms “fail to provide a framework for exploring [an] essential area of human experience” (Lin et al., 2016b, p. x) – that which is spiritual. For PACS, at its rawest, we are dealing with life and death – which I believe can incite existential angst. Resolving existential angst requires a personal spiritual investigation. In PACS, we need to know what is valued, good and ethical (axiology) and we need to know how new

spiritual knowledge can be applied, for example towards improving society (teleology) and a spiritual paradigm offers these opportunities.

Brantmeier and Brantmeier (2016) have provided a conceptual framework for a spiritual research paradigm grounded in the philosophical teachings of *advaita vedanta* or the concept of non-duality (See Figure 3). To reiterate, non-duality refers to the notion that we are not separate from reality but are one with it (Gandhi, 1924, as cited in Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). From this belief, we are all interconnected, which means if we hurt others, we also hurt ourselves (Gandhi, 1924, as cited in Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016).

The core of the conceptual framework that I want to propose for PACS centres peace grounded in the principle of nonduality. Intersubjectivity is the guiding principle for creating knowledge. This means that there is no distinction between researcher and participant. Instead, everyone is a collaborator in creating new knowledge. Lin et al. (2016a) have reminded us that the relationship between the researcher and the participant is an equitable and relational one. From a spiritual lens, we are all a part of a larger whole, learners of the world and striving to serve the world for the greater good for all; and as such we must respect each other as well as treat each other with trust and sincerity (Lin et al., 2016a). The participant is not an instrument and must not be viewed as a means to an end by the researcher (Lin et al., 2016a). As Bai et al. (2016) have pointed out, researchers must recognize that collaborators' realities are shaped from their own inner and outer experiences and should therefore be open and prepared to merge their collaborators' realities with their own through their inner work.

### **A Spiritual Conceptual Framework and a Spiritual Theoretical Framework for PACS**

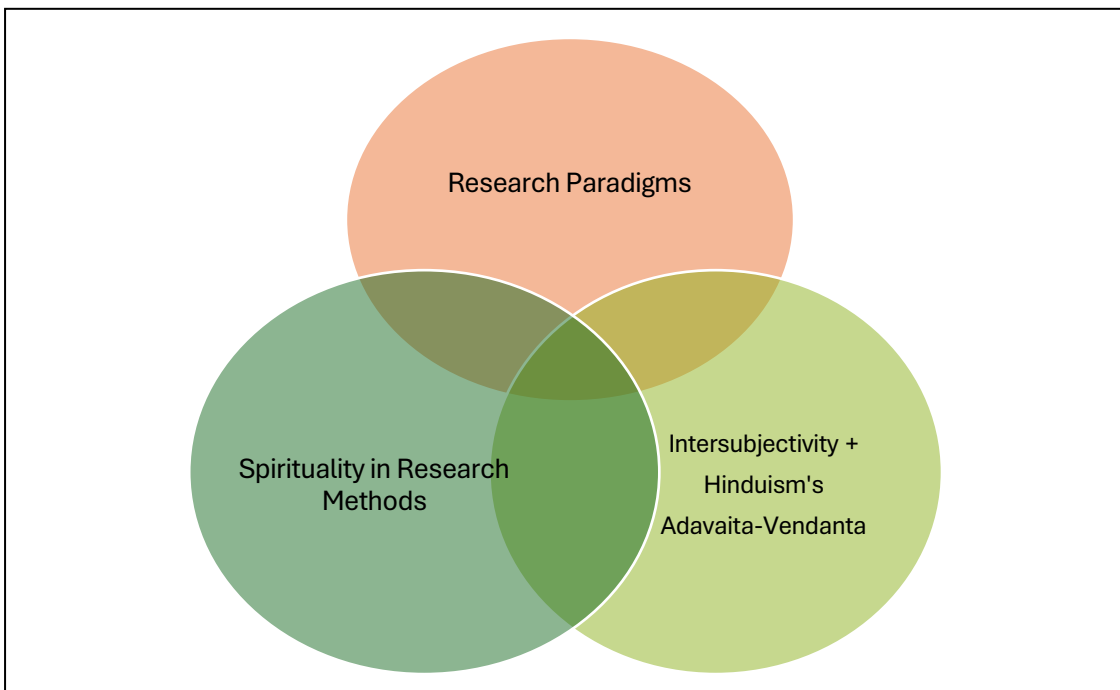
As the discussion above has illustrated, many scholars have been advocating for spiritual research paradigms and have been pointing out the necessity to incorporate a conceptual

framework as a part the research process. What can a spiritual conceptual framework specific for PACS look like? Combining Brantmeier and Brantmeier's (2016) spiritual framework, Kovach's (2021) Indigenous framework and the Vedic texts (Chopra, 2005), I have created a conceptual framework and a spiritual theoretical approach for PACS. However, let us first understand the teachings from the Vedic texts.

According to the ancient Vedic texts, there are three elements that must be present which indicate that we are living the way *of* peace – *seva*, *simran* and *satsang*. *Seva* refers to one's actions harming none and benefitting all. *Simran* refers to knowing one's true nature and purpose for being. *Satsang* refers to belonging to the community of peace and wisdom. The essence of these three elements encapsulates a self-reflective and spiritual power that can lead to transformation. These teachings also provide an alternative discourse from which to measure and understand peace. As such, for a PACS context, I have done the following. I used Brantmeier and Brantmeier's (2016) Conceptual Framework for a Spiritual Paradigm as depicted in Figure 3 and combined some elements of Kovach's conceptual framework and created the Conceptual Framework Spiritual Paradigm Centred in Nonduality for PACS (see Figure 4).

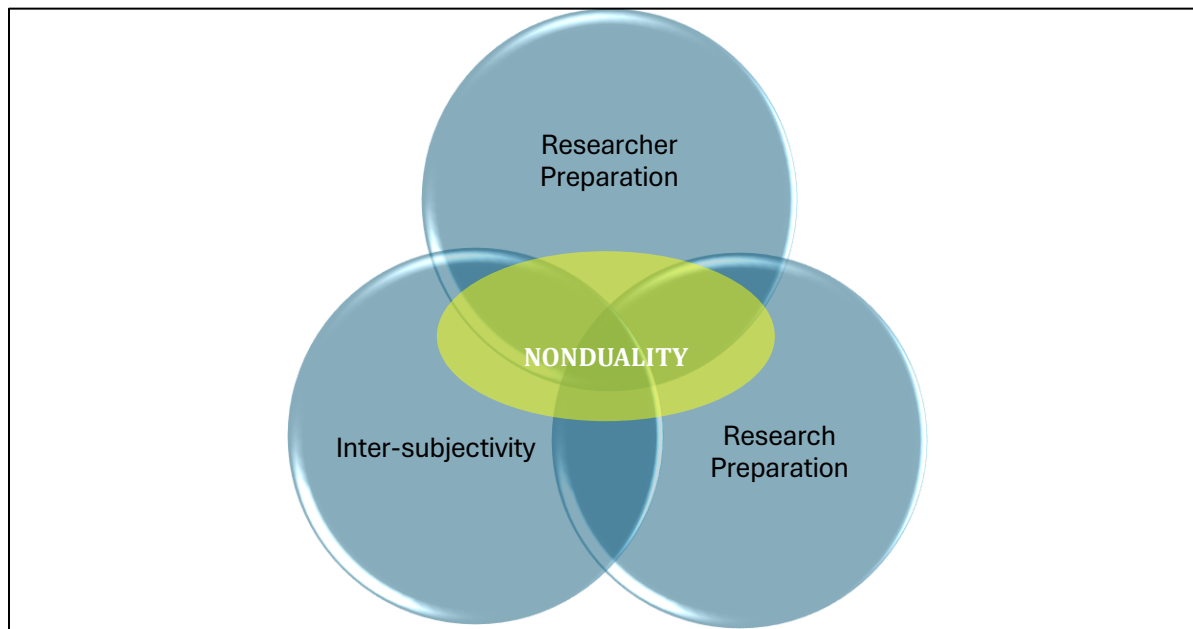
**Figure 3**

*Conceptual Framework for a Spiritual Paradigm (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016, p. 235)*



**Figure 4**

*Spiritual Conceptual Framework Centred in Nonduality (for PACS)*



To give more depth and clarity, to the Spiritual Conceptual Framework Centred in Nonduality (for PACS) and to provide more guidance to assist PACS scholars and researchers in using this framework, I have included twelve questions (see Table 5) as put forward by Brantmeier and Brantmeier (2016). These are questions that a researcher should be attentive to when engaging in a qualitative inquiry where intersubjectivity is prioritized (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). I then align the questions with the Vedic texts – seva, simrang and satsang (see Table 6). There are two reasons for this. The first is that the questions can guide the researcher during researcher preparation and research preparation. The second reason is that using seva, simrang and satsang as categories to collect and analyze data, we can see how peace is its own entity (peace-is-the-way). From this lens, peace is not the absence of violence; nor are there steps to peace. Peace is being lived out following the three ways of conduct – seva, simrang, and satsang.

**Table 5**

*Questions for Intersubjective Qualitative Inquiry* (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016, p. 252)

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**Questions for Intersubjective Qualitative Inquiry**

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1. From what paradigm are you operating as a researcher?
  2. What are the unique features of a spiritual paradigm and what does it borrow from existing paradigms?
  3. What assumptions do you have about the relationship of the researcher and participants/objects of research?
  4. How does a paradigm influence your research questions and methods?
  5. What forms of truth do you seek?
  6. What assumptions do you hold about subject-to-subject and subject-to-object relationships?
  7. What is the role of position taking and empathy in understanding emic perspectives in the qualitative inquiry process?
  8. When interviewing, where are the boundaries of self and other?
  9. Are there ethical considerations to ensure protection of research participants and adequately substantiating truth claims made in research?
  10. How do you know when you are influencing the responses or behaviours of a participant in the process of inquiry? What do you do about that?
  11. How can you practice “emptying your boat”?
-

**Table 6**

*A Spiritual Theoretical Framework for PACS*

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<b>Questions for Intersubjective Qualitative Inquiry corresponding to Simran, Seva and Satsang</b>	
<b>Simran</b> (your purpose)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. From what paradigm are you operating as a researcher?</li><li>3. What assumptions do you have about the relationship of the researcher and participants/objects of research?</li><li>4. How does a paradigm influence your research questions and methods?</li><li>5. What forms of truth do you seek?</li><li>6. What assumptions do you hold about subject-to-subject and subject-to-object relationships?</li><li>7. What is the role of position taking and empathy in understanding emic perspectives in the qualitative inquiry process?</li><li>8. When interviewing, where are the boundaries of self and other?</li><li>9. Are there ethical considerations to ensure protection of research participants and adequately substantiating truth claims made in research?</li><li>10. How do you know when you are influencing the responses or behaviours of a participant in the process of inquiry? What do you do about that?</li><li>11. How can you practice “emptying your boat”?</li></ol>
<b>Seva</b> (do no harm)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. What are the unique features of a spiritual paradigm and what does it borrow from existing paradigms?</li><li>4. How does a paradigm influence your research questions and methods?</li><li>5. What forms of truth do you seek?</li><li>7. What is the role of position taking and empathy in understanding emic perspectives in the qualitative inquiry process?</li><li>8. When interviewing, where are the boundaries of self and other?</li><li>9. Are there ethical considerations to ensure protection of research participants and adequately substantiating truth claims made in research?</li></ol>

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**Questions for Intersubjective Qualitative Inquiry corresponding to Simran, Seva and Satsang**

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**Satsang**

(living the way of peace)

2. What are the unique features of a spiritual paradigm and what does it borrow from existing paradigms?
3. What assumptions do you have about the relationship of the researcher and participants/objects of research?
4. How does a paradigm influence your research questions and methods?
5. What forms of truth do you seek?
7. What is the role of position taking and empathy in understanding emic perspectives in the qualitative inquiry process?
9. Are there ethical considerations to ensure protection of research participants and adequately substantiating truth claims made in research?
10. How do you know when you are influencing the responses or behaviours of a participant in the process of inquiry? What do you do about that?

The most important element in a spiritual framework is a deep understanding of and connection with Self. Researching from a spiritual framework involves the researcher's own inner work and self-cultivation that is nurturing (Bai et al., 2016). What emerges is a deep Self, "first as a struggling child and eventually as a sage" (Bai et al., 2016, p. 88). From a peace research perspective, a spiritual theoretical framework provides the opportunity for collaboration to co-create knowledge, unlike other theoretical frameworks which are explanatory, predictive, descriptive, or prescriptive. As these guiding questions have been framed from an ontological lens of nonduality, we are cognizant of our interconnectedness, we respect diverse ways of knowing (from both cognitive and non-cognitive domains) and we co-create reality with all sentient beings (Brantmeier & Brantmeier, 2016). Peace research grounded in a spiritual paradigm allows us to venture out of negative and positive peace narratives and explore alternate notions of peace. This does not mean that we have to agree with other perspectives of peace, however, it does mean that we ought to respect these other perspectives. Recall, the teleology of a spiritual paradigm is to have a responsibility to selflessly and boundlessly serve all that is living – and service in the case where we disagree with someone's perspective could just be to leave them alone rather than impose your own views.

For PACS, as a discipline, I assert that it is necessary to establish principles that operate from a spiritual theoretical framework. A spiritual theoretical framework that upholds the tenets of *seva*, *simran* and *satsang* encapsulates a self-reflective and spiritual power to reframe peace. Hence my assertion that PACS establish criteria based on *seva* (one's actions harming no one and benefiting all), *simran* (knowing your true nature and purpose), and *satsang* (belonging to the community of peace and wisdom), as these form a reference point from which we can get in touch with our Spirit/True Self to understand and know peace. The concept behind these three

interrelated aspects is that when we are consciously applying them to our lives, we are living the way of peace, and ultimately, this will bring satisfaction to our lives (Chopra, 2005). When we learn how to live this way, we can then teach others – eventually leading to a shift in consciousness towards inner peace, and ultimately towards world peace.

### **Conclusion: Is Peace Possible When We Are Not at Peace?**

In this conclusion, I first provide a “big picture” summary of the main ideas and arguments I have developed in the dissertation, followed by the conclusion that and how the spiritual notion of peace developed in this dissertation can stand alongside current notions of peace developed in PACS as a discipline. Finally, I come back to my personal relationship to the question of peace that has given rise to this dissertation and that has changed as part of my undertaking this work.

Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS), as a newly emerging discipline, is still considered to be in its infancy (Byrne et al., 2020; Scott, 2020a). PACS, an offshoot of International Relations (IR), emerged after World War II with the intent of preventing future wars by way of teaching for peace (Bajaj, 2015). PACS, as a discipline, today is concerned with bringing sustainable peace and social justice (Byrne et al., 2020). PACS, not unlike other disciplines, has established a number of theoretical frameworks – all of which directly inform research and practice in the field. Even though the discipline’s roots are in IR, PACS has emerged independently from IR incorporating multiple perspectives, diverse opinions, as well as an interdisciplinary lens to contribute to theories, policies and practices in the quest to understand the complexity and dynamics of violence, conflict and peacebuilding (Byrne & Senehi, 2009). There are five theoretical frameworks in PACS. These are - conflict management, conflict resolution, liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding, liberal-local hybridity; and (the most recent and newly emerging) critical and emancipatory peacebuilding. Each of these theories were developed as an offshoot of the theory preceding it. In other words, there has been consecutive theoretical development, so to speak, in PACS over the past 60 or so years. The intention behind these theoretical developments has been to address the shortcomings of the preceding theory with the hopes of getting closer to attaining positive and sustainable peace. PACS’ scholars and

practitioners, without a doubt, have been working diligently to advance the cause of peace – a noble and laudable cause. However, despite these purposeful and well-intentioned efforts, the outcomes have not always been consistently or sustainably peaceful. The purpose of this dissertation has been to ascertain, theoretically speaking, what could account for the criticism PACS has faced with respect to failing to achieve positive peace and sustainable peace (Chandler, 2017; Mac Ginty, 2006; Richmond, 2010, 2014). To get to the bottom of this, I asked the following questions: (a) What are some limitations of the current theoretical approaches to peace in PACS?; (b) How can a spiritual notion of peace address some of the limitations in the current theoretical approaches in PACS?; (c) What are the essential components of a spiritually-engaged PACS program?

To answer the first question, I examined PACS' five overarching theories from a critical lens – hoping this inquiry would shed some light on why positive peace and a sustainable peace have yet to be realized. I concluded, after this exploration, that even though PACS' theories have advanced and progressed over the past six decades in response to attaining the goal of positive peace and sustainable peace; what has not changed is the ontological lens which has been informing peace and conflict theories. Granted, some PACS scholars have already noted that the discipline ought to examine its ontological foundations, however, this task has been left unattended. I gleaned from the PACS literature review and an interrogation of PACS theories under a critical lens that the discipline's ontological foundation has remained unchanged.

I have supported my claim based on three characteristics which were common among the first four PACS theories. As already been noted, critical and emancipatory peacebuilding is just emerging, thus, it is too soon to determine if these characteristics can also be attributed to the new theory. However, I have speculated that this is highly probable given that critical and

emancipatory peacebuilding is grounded in the same ontological underpinnings as the previous four theories. I identified the three common characteristics among the four theoretical approaches in PACS as Othering, an entanglement in violence, and an external focus on peacebuilding. I have further argued that these characteristics hold colonial attributes which drew me to conclude that PACS' ontological foundations rests in a colonial narrative of peace. As I suggested, a colonial narrative of peace can be framed as the-way-to-peace. The-way-to-peace encapsulates how aspects of Othering, an entanglement of violence, and an external focus on peacebuilding - acting not as separate entities, but as a combination - have come to influence and inform peacebuilding, as it is broadly understood from a Western perspective. This very perspective is one which is central in PACS today. Thus, my answer to the question of some limitations of the current theoretical approaches to peace in PACS was that peace has only been viewed from one ontological perspective, and a colonial one at that.

In answering the second question - how a spiritual notion of peace can address some of the limitations in the current theoretical approaches in PACS - I first established what characterizes a spiritual notion of peace. I then juxtaposed a spiritual notion of peace (peace-is-the-way) alongside the colonial notion of peace (the-way-to-peace) to illustrate the difference between the two ontological perspectives. Peace-is-the-way is characterized by nonduality, ahimsa, and an internal focus. The principle of nonduality is the recognition of the unity and interconnectedness of all. Ahimsa is the notion of nonviolence. Nonviolence at its "deepest and most effective level... is the means by which violence is itself absorbed by transcendent love" (Wink, 2000, as cited in McIntosh & Carmichael, 2019, p. 306). The third characteristic of a spiritual notion of peace is an internal focus which places an emphasis on inner peace. Thich Nhat Hanh (2017) believed that if we want peace, we have to be peace. Both Hanh (2017) and

the Dalai Lama have concurred that world peace is only possible from the individual. Inner peace and ahimsa operate within the notion of nonduality. These three elements – nonduality, ahimsa and internal focus – are interconnected. They are one. Thus, a spiritual notion of peace can address some of the limitations in the current theoretical approaches in PACS by viewing peace from another ontological lens.

The essential components of a spiritually-engaged PACS program are a spiritual ontology and a spiritual conceptual framework. To establish a spiritual theoretical framework, a spiritual ontological lens is first required – as this will inform epistemology, methodology, axiology and teleology. I offered a spiritual ontology centered in nonduality, as one option. Next, I provided an example of a spiritual conceptual framework where nonduality is central to the elements of researcher preparation, research preparation and intersubjectivity (refer to Figure 4). These three elements are inter-relational and provide the opportunity for researchers to align their values to a spiritual ontological lens (or their Truth Claim) – which in this instance is nonduality. A spiritual theoretical framework can be applied to any discipline, however, without a spiritual ontological lens to ground one's work and a spiritual conceptual framework to articulate one's values and positioning; developing a spiritual theoretical framework would be a futile endeavour. For PACS, as a newly emerging discipline, the timing to incorporate a spiritual ontological lens for peace is opportune; especially considering the discipline now operating withing a critical and emancipatory theoretical framework – which in *theory* has declared that other epistemologies and ways of knowing are valued.

The most salient argument of this dissertation has been one that has emphasized the importance of incorporating other ontologies in PACS. A move like this would allow for opportunities to understand peace from other perspectives; otherwise, embedded principles and

assumptions are taken for granted and remain unchallenged. For PACS, it is crucial to understand peace from different perspectives, outside of the colonial frameworks, particularly for those who wish to approach their work from a decolonizing lens.

A spiritual notion of peace does not have to be separated from a colonial notion of peace. It is possible to use a spiritual notion of peace to decolonize the colonial notion of peace. Let us look at an example of how this can be done. A mediator trained in Western ideologies and values of conflict resolution is likely to facilitate a mediation process based on these values and perspectives. For instance, according to ripeness theory, there must be a hurting stalemate between disputing parties. When the situation has escalated to a point where neither party can see a way out, they are then squeezed or indirectly coerced into coming to the negotiation table. This pressure then forces the disputants to consider options that they would not have considered before. I believe that it is possible for a mediator to approach this very situation from a spiritual perspective. From this lens, a mediator's role is to bring disputing parties to the point where they can see the humanity in each other. When we can see the humanity in each other, we are more likely to make decisions in which we take care of each other rather than try to harm each other. I am not saying that this would be an easy task, nor would it happen quickly, however, I am saying it is possible to incorporate a spiritual lens even within a colonial context.

PACS, like most academic programs, has been placing an emphasis on cognitive-based learning. This means that how students and teachers engage in an academic setting prioritizes the cognitive domain. Absent is a spiritual domain. Thus, there is no opportunity for our spiritual development within formal educational institutions. This is most unfortunate, as it dismisses an essential aspect of what it means to be human. Each aspect of our being – cognitive, affective,

physical and spiritual – ought to be given equal attention and opportunity for development. Thus, lacking from formal education is a holistic approach.

I believe that incorporating a spiritual aspect to PACS provides an opportunity for understanding peace more holistically and for making the discipline itself more holistic. Incorporating a spiritual component goes beyond offering one-off workshops or elective courses, as such approaches are ineffective and tokenistic. Specifically, for PACS, programs would have to be willing to include and integrate a spiritual ontological perspective into their programming. As it is not possible to “assess” a student’s level of spiritual development when they enter or leave a program; the program expectation ought to be that students must come to the program prepared to engage with their work from a spiritual lens (which would be guided and fostered throughout the program). By the time the student graduates, they would understand how to apply a spiritual perspective to their work, if they so choose to. As a spiritual ontological perspective is not prescriptive; this approach is dynamic and can be tailored to an individual’s Truth Claim. If PACS were to open its doors to learning from other spiritual perspectives, the discipline could be richer and more robust, offering holistic peace approaches where the cognitive, affective, physical and spiritual are in balance and harmony.

This dissertation, like so many others, has been driven by curiosity, passion and a commitment. Peace and Conflict Studies had been a new discipline for me. I arrived excited, motivated, and ready to change the world for better. Although I had some inclination that I wanted to introduce or develop a spiritual aspect to attaining world peace, I had no idea what was ahead of me. I will now share some highlights of the past seven years – events, upon reflection, which have led me to where I am today. It was during my coursework where I began to notice my discomfort with some of the theories I had been learning about. I also experienced and

witnessed racism. These factors had me questioning the efficacy of eradicating structural violence. In fact, I found the term “structural violence” to be quite harsh when I first heard it; and it took some time to feel “comfortable” using it. Nonetheless, what I had been learning and experiencing were the many barriers which hindered the development and sustainability of positive peace. My PACS colleagues who have gone ahead of me, have worked to address issues to remove barriers, or at the very least mitigate them, so that a positive peace could emerge. For me, I found myself feeling stuck at an emotional level. I noticed my feelings of anger, frustration, and at times hopelessness. For me, this was an indication that I was not at peace. Although I did not articulate this, it was something that I was aware of and it was constantly gnawing at me. I found asking myself a question repeatedly: Can I engage in making the world more peaceful if I am not at peace? I knew the answer to the question was no. However, I needed to figure out exactly what it was that I needed to make peace with and whom I needed to make peace with. For me, this had to be a spiritual exercise, and I wanted to understand why this was so important to me.

I returned to my childhood memories, recalling the multi-faith household I was born into - a Muslim mother and a Hindu father. I grew up in Guyana, a former British colony, where - despite racial tensions - there has been religious pluralism. Significant observances from all major religions are national holidays, celebrated by all (e.g. Christmas, Eid, Diwali, etc.). It was not uncommon to find Christmas trees in the homes of Hindus and Muslims. I grew up without a specific religious identity. As a child, when I was asked what religion, I was; I would say “Hindu” because my father was Hindu - and social mores of the time dictated that a man's wife and children take on his religion (even though this had not been practiced in my home). I believed in God. I even had an image of God - a giant of a man dressed in blue. I remember

sharing this with some friends around the age of eight or nine years old and being laughed at - scolding me that God should be adorned in white. This was news to me.

When I was 13 years old, my parents immigrated to Canada, where Christianity was the dominant religion. At school, we had to recite the Lord's prayer every morning - a prayer I already knew from Guyana. However, I would soon learn that my multi-faith upbringing, which I had taken for granted was not "cool." In fact, it became clear that Islam and Hinduism were viewed as inferior to Christianity (and in some cases a guaranteed ticket to hell). As a coping mechanism, I rejected any allegiance to Islam and Hinduism, substituting this rejection with atheism. This move was still a delicate position to take; however, it was more favorable than being a Hindu or a Muslim. Later, I changed my position to spiritual-but-not-religious, claiming that I did not believe in organized religions. These different manifestations of a religious identity were indicators of trying to fit into Canadian society.

As a child, there were no distinctions made between spirituality and religion. Religion was a spiritual experience. I believe that humans need to feel a connection to a power that is greater than us. It is a part of our existential angst. Knowing that there is something greater than us helps us to make meaning in life and of life. I believe that as humans we just *know* that we do not exist in isolation of something greater or bigger than us; and despite this *sustained knowing*, there are still efforts made to ignore and stifle it. I am not sure when the need to separate spirituality and religion came about but I could probably speculate on why.

In writing this dissertation, I found it challenging to make a distinction between religion and spirituality. After much work, I have only now recognized that it was difficult to make a distinction between religion and spirituality because inherently I could not. However, since I had forced myself to identify as spiritual-but-not-religious, it was essential that I find the difference;

now that I needed to actually articulate it. I came to realize that I had been unable to recognize the colonization of my own mind on this specific matter. I believe that the use of the term *spirituality* as an identity marker had served to appeal to the socialized message that to be secular is desired. When we are secular, we learn to disconnect, to be separate, and to ignore the interconnectedness of all. Secularism strips us of an important part of what it means to be human. Writing this dissertation has been an effort to reconnect with a part of me that was being stripped away. I have separated spirituality and religion as in academia, as it is easier to digest “spirituality” and to speak of our values and beliefs from this lens, instead of religious ones. Furthermore, the Western views which make the distinction between the two, is itself a barrier to braiding spirituality and religion as one, as the nonduality of this relationship, would be lost both conceptually and culturally. Thus, this dissertation has been written with a Western audience in mind. I recognize that this is a limitation, in particular for those whose understanding of religion and spirituality is one of the same. At the same time, my multi-faith upbringing in a religiously pluralistic society has allowed me to see what is common among all, and that is to live one’s life as a “good” person – taking care of others, helping, being kind and loving, exercising compassion. I believe that these values are shared across all cultures. For me, experiencing and witnessing racism provided an opportunity to learn to overcome it via a spiritual path using the value of compassion. This put me at ease and brought about inner peace. Thus, my understanding of if “we want peace, we have to be peace” is not only cognitive; it is now something I know from my heart. In many ways, this dissertation is more than a summary of what I have learned academically (cognitively) in the past seven years. It is also a culmination of what I have learned and experienced physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I have emerged

from these experiences renewed, humbled, and more curious. I recognize and acknowledge that the completion of this dissertation is not an end, but a continuation of my life's journey.

In closing, PACS, as an academic discipline, still in its infancy, holds a strong potential to be transformative. It is a discipline that provides opportunities to be critical with a mandate to bring change. The goal to bring peace is laudable, beautiful and heartfelt. I believe that these are all factors that demonstrate that the discipline is ready to take a leap of faith where it can value and incorporate the notion of the peace is the way. I gratefully close this dissertation with a daily personal practice for cultivating peace, which I am sharing in Appendix A.

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## Appendix A

### Peace is the Way: Daily Practice

Sunday: Being for Peace

Monday: Thinking for Peace

Tuesday: Feeling for Peace

Wednesday: Speaking for Peace

Thursday: Acting for Peace

Friday: Creating for Peace

Saturday: Sharing for Peace

Our hope is that you will create peace on every level of your life. Each practice takes only a few minutes. You can be as private or outspoken as you wish. But those around you will know that you are for peace, not just thorough good intentions but by the way you conduct your life on a daily basis.

#### ***Sunday: Being for Peace***

Today, take five minutes to meditate for peace. Sit quietly with your eyes closed. Put your attention on your heart and inwardly repeat these four words: *Peace, Harmony, Laughter, Love*. Allow these words to radiate from your heart's stillness out into your body.

As you end your meditation, say to yourself, *Today I will relinquish all resentments and grievances*. Bring into your mind anyone against whom you have a grievance and let it go. Send that person your forgiveness.

#### ***Monday: Thinking for Peace***

Thinking has power when it is backed by intention. Today, introduce the intention of peace in your thoughts. Take a few moments of silence, then repeat this ancient prayer.

*Let me be loved, let me be happy, let me be peaceful.*

*Let my friends be happy, loved, and peaceful.*

*Let my perceived enemies be happy, loved, and peaceful.*

*Let all beings be happy, loved, and peaceful.*

*Let the whole world experience these things.*

If at any time during the day you are overshadowed by fear or anger, repeat these intentions. Use this prayer to get back on center.

### ***Tuesday: Feeling for Peace***

This is the day to experience the emotions of peace. The emotions of peace are compassion, understanding, and love.

Compassion is the feeling of shared suffering. When you feel someone else's suffering, there is the birth of understanding.

Understanding is the knowledge that suffering is shared by everyone. When you understand that you aren't alone in your suffering, there is the birth of love.

When there is love there is the opportunity for peace.

As you practice, observe a stranger some time during your day. Silently say to yourself, this person is just like me. Like me, this person has experienced joy and sorrow, despair and hope, fear and love. Like me, this person has people in his or her life who deeply care and love him or her. Like me, this person's life is impermanent and will one day end. This person's peace is as important as my peace. I want peace, harmony, laughter, and love in his or her life and the life of all beings.

### ***Wednesday: Speaking for Peace***

Today, the purpose of speaking is to create happiness in the listener. Have this intention: Today every word I utter will be chosen consciously. I will refrain from complaints, condemnation, and criticism.

Your practice is to do at least one of the following:

Tell someone how much you appreciate them.

Express genuine gratitude to those who have helped and loved you.

Offer healing or nurturing words to someone who needs them.

Show respect to someone whose respect you value.

If you find that you are reacting negatively to anyone, in a way that isn't peaceful, refrain from speaking and keep silent. Wait to speak until you feel centered and calm and then speak with respect.

### ***Thursday: Acting for Peace***

Today is the day to help someone in need: a child, a sick person, an older or frail person. Help can take many forms. Tell yourself, *Today I will bring a smile to a stranger's face. If someone acts in a hurtful way to me or someone else, I will respond with a gesture of loving kindness. I will send an anonymous gift to someone, however small. I will offer help without asking for gratitude or recognition.*

### ***Friday: Creating for Peace***

Today, come up with at least one creative idea to resolve a conflict, either in your personal life or your family circle or among friends. If you can, try and create an idea that applies to your community, the nation, or the whole world. You may change an old habit that isn't working, look at someone a new way, offer words you never offered before, or think of an activity that brings people together in good feeling and laughter.

Secondly, invite a family member or friend to come up with one creative idea of this kind on his or her own. Creativity feels best when you are the one thinking up the new idea or approach. Make it known that you accept and enjoy creativity. Be loose and easy. Let the ideas flow and try out anything that has appeal. The purpose here is to bond, because only when you bond with others can there be mutual trust. When you trust, there is no need for hidden hostility and suspicion — the two great enemies of peace.

### ***Saturday: Sharing for Peace***

Today, share your practice of peacemaking with two people. Give them this booklet and invite them to begin the daily practice. As more of us participate in this sharing, our practice will expand into a critical mass.

Today, joyfully celebrate your own peace consciousness with at least one other peace-conscious person. Connect either through e-mail or phone.

Share your experience of growing peace.

Share your gratitude that someone else is as serious about peace as you are.

Share your ideas for helping the world move closer to critical mass.

Do whatever you can, in small or large ways, to assist anyone who wants to become a peacemaker (Chopra, 2005).

