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Why Do Research?

Research Foundations: Debating Points

In trying to provide a foundation for doing research on conflict and conflict resolution (CR), I am struck by several tensions that take the form of controversies or debates in the literature and in academic conversations held in classes, colloquia, and informal hallway chatting. Some points of contention are discussed in the following sections.

ABSTRACT AND CONCRETE KNOWLEDGE

The distinction between abstract, or general, and concrete, or specific, knowledge is relevant to the study of conflict and CR. According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Mish et al., 2001), *abstract* as an adjective means "disassociated from any specific instance; difficult to understand; insufficiently factual; expressing a quality apart from an object; dealing with a subject in its abstract aspects; having only intrinsic form with little or no attempt at pictorial representation or narrative content." The antonym for abstract is *concrete*. As a noun, an abstraction is "the act or process of abstracting; the state of being abstracted; an abstract idea or term; absence of mind or preoccupation; abstract quality or character; an abstract composition or creation in art." As a transitive verb, to *abstract* is to "remove, separate; to consider apart from application to or association with a particular instance; to make an abstract of or summarize; to draw away the attention of; steal, purloin." Art and science are closely related by the activity of abstracting. Both include design, analysis (separating the elements), and synthesis (putting the elements together). Aspects of both art and science are present in social science and, particularly, in the field of conflict analysis and resolution (CA&R) where distinctions between basic and applied research and between scientific (or theory) and clinical (or practice) work are enthusiastically debated.

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The field of CA&R consists of both scientific and clinical activities, and both are represented on faculties in academic departments that teach conflict analysis. When faculty members talk about applying research in practice or about the use of practice for research, they often confront the issue of moving from the general to the specific (or vice versa). The “general” refers usually to knowledge obtained from large-*N* or comparative analyses of data, as discussed in Chapter 7 on comparative case studies; the “specific” usually refers to knowledge obtained about a single case, which may be an individual, group, organization, or nation, and is the focus of Chapter 6 on enhanced case and time-series analyses as well as Chapter 8 on ethnographic methods. For example, when an investigator studies the relative effects of different techniques of mediation, he or she is doing general, or abstract, scientific research. When a person attempts to understand how a particular mediator handled a case, he or she is doing specific, or clinical, analysis. The former investigation seeks generality in order to contribute to theory; the latter seeks understanding in order to contribute to a satisfactory resolution or “cure.” The tension between these approaches is due, in large part, to the difficulties in finding ways to connect them. One attempt is Kolb’s (1984) idea of a learning cycle that connects concrete experience with abstract, analytic knowing. This conceptualization has influenced attempts to bridge the gap between researchers and practitioners in CA&R (see Cheldelin, Druckman, & Fast, 2003, chap. 2). I will return to this topic in Chapter 12.

This issue has been receiving a lot of attention in the educational research literature. It has pitted a concerned group of cognitive scientists against a vocal group of educators who have been promoting an approach known as *situated learning*. The issue turns on different opinions concerning transfer of training. The cognitive scientists emphasize the transfer value of learning abstract concepts, such as mathematics or statistics (Anderson, Reder, & Simon, 1998). The situated learning group questions the transfer value of abstract concepts, claiming that effective learning takes place in work contexts and, thus, they herald the value of on-the-job or vocational training (Greeno, Smith, & Moore, 1993). The idea of understanding conflict behavior within its context is widely shared by conflict theorists. The most developed version of this assumption is the work on contingency models of conflict interventions (Fisher, 1997; Keashly & Fisher, 1996). However, an emphasis on the contextual or situational determinants of actions does not negate the importance of transferring learning from one situation to another. Contingency theorists share the view with cognitive scientists that similar processes are likely to take place in similar conflict situations. To claim that behavior is specific to situations, as I do (Druckman, 2003), is not the same as claiming that each situation is unique or even that the differences between situations are more important than their similarities. Thus, it is assumed in this book that abstract concepts are essential for understanding the way that conflicts unfold in particular settings.

Theoretical, or abstract, analyses of cases are discussed in detail in Chapters 6 and 7. Case examples are also used throughout the book as illustrations of the concepts.

Modes of reasoning may not, however, be universal. There has been a lively debate about the extent to which culture influences the way we reason, including preferences for abstractions. Nisbett, Peng, Choi, and Norenzayan (2001) found that East Asian and Western frameworks for reasoning differ substantially. In a variety of reasoning tasks, East Asians take a holistic approach. They make little use of categories and formal logic, focusing instead on relations among objects and the context in which they interact. The subjects from the United States, on the other hand, used an analytical perspective. They categorized objects by applying formal logic and rules, largely ignoring context. They looked for regular features of isolated entities. In another article, Peng and Nisbett (1999) found differences between Chinese and American students in their styles of reasoning about contradictions: The Chinese students tried to retain elements of opposing positions by seeking a middle way; the Americans tried to determine which position was correct and then rejected the other. Findings reported by Briley, Morris, and Simonson (2000) support these differences: The Hong Kong Chinese students in their study were more likely to prefer compromise solutions to problems than their American counterparts. This preference was stronger when the subjects were asked to provide reasons for their choices. These studies suggest that cultural experiences influence the way people reason. Yet despite the evident cultural differences, Atran et al. (1999) found that people can adapt to the preferred reasoning pattern of another culture, whether that pattern is holistic or analytic.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS: POSITIVISTS AND CONSTRUCTIVISTS

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and how it is acquired. Alternative epistemological foundations for research can be found in the debates involving positivist and constructivist perspectives on knowledge. Perhaps the most relevant aspect of these approaches for doing research is their difference with regard to viewpoint. Positivists generally prefer analyst or outside observer interpretations of data. Constructivists prefer interpretations given by the subjects or respondents themselves. Based on the assumption that there is a world to be discovered, positivists prefer to use the tools and techniques of science to discover it. They seek a convergence, if not a consensus, among investigators on observations made and interpretations offered. Based on the assumption that the world is understood primarily through actors' perceptions, constructivists prefer to rely on reflections, perceptions, and stated beliefs of the actors themselves. They seek divergence of observations made and interpretations offered. By attempting

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to capture the relatively unique experiences of actors, constructivists attempt to illuminate the context of experience or the idea of multiple “realities.” Both approaches are empirical. They differ on their adherence to the canons and use of tools for scientific investigation. Insights into conflict behavior have come from investigations conducted in both traditions.

The issues are drawn sharply in an earlier philosophy of science literature. The dramatic 10-minute argument between Wittgenstein and Popper, recounted by Edmonds and Eidinow (2001), captures the different viewpoints. Wittgenstein railed against causal and contextual reductionism; Popper embraced it. The key theme in Wittgenstein’s philosophy was that language and thought cannot be separated from one another or from the context in which language is used to accomplish a goal. Meaning is not derived from the thought process concurrent with a speaker’s words, but from the whole setting in which a speaker’s words are embedded. Language makes sense only when subjects and observers share a common knowledge of the context in which they interact; this is referred to as *contextual inter-subjectivity*. If this is so, then language (or thoughts) is (are) not reducible, causal, or falsifiable. For Popper, however, the opposite is the case: Thoughts and language (or deeds) are assumed to be independent of one another. This, then, is the assumptive basis for causal analysis involving the falsification of hypotheses. By the time these two philosophers met in 1946, their views on these issues had solidified, resulting in a 10-minute conversational impasse. These views strongly influenced the continuing debate between the interpretive (or constructivist) and positivist traditions of scholarship.

In psychology, a similar debate occurred between the behaviorists and phenomenologists. An exchange between Skinner and MacLeod provides an illustration. Writing in 1964 about the difference between behaviorism (positivism) and phenomenology (constructivism), the psychologist Skinner argued that

instead of concluding that man can know only his subjective experiences—that he is bound forever to his private world and that the external world is only a construct—a behavioral theory of knowledge suggests that it is the private world which, if not entirely unknowable, is at least not likely to be known well. The relations between organism and environment involved in knowing are of such a sort that the privacy of the world within the skin imposes more serious limitations on personal knowledge than on scientific accessibility. (p. 84)

He continues with a spirited defense of the importance of reinforcement contingencies for learning and suggests that “a person cannot describe or otherwise ‘know’ events occurring within his own skin as subtly and precisely as he knows events in the world at large” (p. 85).

Writing in the same collection of papers, MacLeod asserts that “the approach (of phenomenology) . . . always represents a fascination with the world of experience as it is there for us” (p. 67). He goes on to say that

I do not care for the moment whether physiognomic meanings are learned or unlearned, whether or not a baby’s smile in response to a friendly face is a product of some sort of conditioning. The fact is that there is essential components of communication which can be investigated. When we know a little more about them we may venture as psychologists into the even more entrancing fields of literature, poetry, and drama. But we had better hurry, because the electronic computer is gaining on us. (p. 71)

He adds, “what, in the old, pre-scientific days, we used to call ‘consciousness’ still can and should be studied” (p. 72). The difference of opinion between the behaviorist Skinner and the phenomenologist MacLeod turns on the issue of a proper functional unit of analysis, external or internal events. In this book, I will not take sides in this debate but, instead, argue that both units are relevant in the study of conflict. Indeed, these approaches have been unnecessarily estranged from one another as Jost and Kruglanski (2002) observe in their attempt to reconcile constructivism with experimental social psychology.

In an extreme form, referred to as *naive realism* (positivism) or *phenomenal absolutism* (constructivism), neither is tenable. When used together for informing empirical investigation, the approaches can provide a larger understanding. A number of studies in the field have benefited from a combination of behavioral and subjective data, suggesting the plausibility of a more integrated approach to doing research. For example, an investigator interested in the impact of alternative types of pre-negotiation experience on negotiating behavior can focus either on measured outcomes (type of agreement, impasse) or the bargainer’s self reports about their strategies, perceptions, and feelings during negotiation. A focus on measured outcomes facilitates comparison and strengthens the argument for generalizable results. A focus on subjective events enhances our understanding the bases for decisions or choices made by individual bargainers. Together, the two types of data can be regarded as complementary, each contributing to a larger understanding of the negotiation process. Both types of data can be collected and analyzed systematically with procedures that can be used repeatedly. These kinds of studies would move the field in the direction of the kind of reconciliation of epistemologies envisioned by Jost and Kruglanski (2002).

QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The differences between quantitative and qualitative data or approaches are another source of contention in the field, and in social science more generally.

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For many researchers, the distinction overlaps the difference between positivist and constructivist approaches to knowledge. Positivists generally prefer quantitative analysis, whereas constructivists mostly perform qualitative analyses. Although the difference is evident in work done within the frameworks of these traditions, there is nothing inherent in the epistemologies that would suggest a preference for either quantitative or qualitative analysis. Indeed, laboratory experiments have been conducted in the constructivist tradition (e.g., Gergen, 1982, 1984), and small-*n* focused comparisons have been conducted in the positivist tradition (e.g., Faure, 1994; Putnam, 1993). So, then, if epistemologies are not the central issue, what are some other reasons to prefer one or another type of data collection and analysis?

One argument made turns on the relative advantages of the approaches to provide a deeper understanding of a phenomenon. Qualitative researchers promote this advantage of their approach by arguing that nuance is missed or masked by quantification. Another argument made concerns the relative strength of the approaches for providing general (and generalizable) knowledge. Quantitative researchers lay claim to this advantage by arguing that quantification facilitates the comparison of a large number of cases sampled from a population. These arguments reflect different kinds of appreciation for the approaches, the one promoting understanding and the other, generalizability. But, for many scholars, both values are important, and the distinction between the approaches in terms of serving one or the other value is not so clear. Some in this “camp” prefer either quantitative or qualitative approaches based largely on training and skills development: Some people are more comfortable with numbers (or words) than others. I find value in both approaches and feel comfortable with both types of analyses. In fact, the distinction is not as sharp as many think. Quantitative studies have significant qualitative aspects, especially with regard to interpretation. As well, studies that are primarily qualitative often benefit from complementary analyses of quantitative data.

Several important qualitative decisions or activities inform most, if not all, quantitative projects. One is the use of previous research to frame the problem or hypotheses: Which studies are relevant? How are the previous results to be used to define a new, or the next, research question? Another concerns the decisions made with regard to the observational domain for the study, the unit of analysis, and the number of cases to use for data collection. Although previous studies often help an investigator with these decisions, other considerations are usually entertained when the new study is not a replication. A third set of qualitative decisions involves the categories to be used for coding behavior, events, discussions, or self-reports. Again, previous studies provide guidance but are usually not sufficient for all these decisions. Even for hypothesis-testing studies, implemented in a deductive tradition, decisions regarding acceptable criteria for rejecting the null hypothesis are not

decided by formula. More generally, qualitative decision making plays a more substantial role in original, as contrasted to derived or replicated, research.

With regard to qualitative studies, quantitative methods can also play important roles as illustrated from some of my projects conducted with colleagues. One example is the use of formal analysis, such as game theory, to bolster interpretations based on thought experiments that ask “what if . . .” questions about verbal documents retrieved from archival sources about the distant past (see Druckman & Guner, 2000, for an example). Another example is to augment policy exercises, including simulations, with computer-based diagnoses of the situation (see Druckman, 1994a). A third is adding time-series analyses of data to the historical interpretations performed on single cases of conflict (see Mooradian & Druckman, 1999, for an example). And a fourth example consists of attempts to define more precisely elusive concepts used in complex analyses of conflict within or between societies (see Druckman & Green, 1995). The approach taken in this book advocates the combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods, and this is illustrated with many examples of studies in the chapters to follow.¹

ETIC AND EMIC APPROACHES

A fourth issue concerns the debate about comparative research. For a number of researchers in the field, conflicts are unique events and must be understood within their own contexts. This opinion is similar to those anthropologists and linguists who hold to an emic approach to discovery. It also coincides with case-based or clinical research as discussed above, although it does not necessarily favor concrete over abstract analysis. A challenge to the emic approach is whether social phenomena can be understood without collecting data from participants. If not, then, secondhand accounts (including archival material), samples from populations, and artifacts from lost civilizations are irrelevant sources of data.

For other researchers, any particular case is seen as an instance of a larger class of conflict processes. It is the type of conflict—sources, dynamics, influences—that interests these researchers. This interest is similar to those comparative political scientists who favor an etic approach to discovery. It also favors statistical analyses of aggregate (large-*N*) data sets further removed from individual cases and, thus, more abstract. A challenge to the etic approach is whether large-scale social phenomena, including inter-group conflicts, can be understood without invoking intentionality. If intentions are important, then subjective probes of actors are needed. However, examples of unintended consequences of actions support the argument that intentions can be misleading. Examples include gun ownership for personal protection without any intention to increase the homicide rate, car ownership for convenience without an intention to worsen the greenhouse effect, and laying off workers without

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an intention to create an underclass (see Harris, 1990, for more examples). These sorts of unintended consequences are usually not considered by emic approaches to research. But, of course, it can also be argued that emic-inspired research is less concerned with broader societal consequences or with micro-macro linkages. It is concerned with the meaning assigned by individuals or other single units to their experiences. The key differences between these approaches are shown in the table below.

<i>Etic</i>	<i>Emic</i>
Language of science and linguistics	Language of culture and experience
Nomothetic, universal language	Ideographic, cultural language
Outsider vantage point	Insider vantage point
Observed behavior or events	Self-reported sense of meaning
Prediction (or post-diction) in a causal analysis framework	Prediction is irrelevant; avoids interpretations that suggest linear causation
Materialist and behavioral	Mentalistic, intentions, mental states or desires
Comparative analysis emphasized	Single case analysis preferred
Longitudinal analysis preferred with or without direct interviews	Short time periods with living participants and available information
Focus on social consequences of action	Focus on stated or inferred intentions

Although these issues will continue to stimulate debate, it would seem that a larger perspective on conflict would include aspects of both approaches. An example in the area of negotiation analysis is a two-stage study: In the first stage, analyses are performed across a large number of cases to establish a relationship between process and outcome; in the second stage, analyses are performed on a small number of cases to ascertain, through interviews, possible reasons for the relationships obtained in the first stage (see Irmer, 2003). Data collected in an emic tradition, often in the form of ethnographies, can also be used as cases for large-*N* statistical analyses in the etic tradition (e.g., Ember & Ember, 1992). This is discussed further in Chapter 7 in the section on aggregate case analyses (see Jones, 1979, for an early attempt to integrate these two approaches in the field of intercultural communication).

	Emic	Etic
Qualitative	Ethnography/ single case study	Focused comparisons (small- <i>n</i>)
		?
Quantitative	Case time series analyses	Experiments/surveys/ aggregate case comparisons (large- <i>N</i>)

Figure 1.1 Examples of Methodologies in Four Research Traditions

Research approaches have been closely aligned to these distinctions. For example, most ethnographies are qualitative studies done in the emic tradition (see Chapter 8). Laboratory experiments are usually quantitative studies done in an etic tradition (see Chapters 3 and 4). Many time-series analyses of single cases are quantitative analyses in an emic tradition, whereas small-*n* focused comparisons are qualitative analyses in an etic tradition (see Chapters 6 and 7). The methodologies are shown with these examples in the form of a 2×2 matrix in Figure 1.1. A challenge is to develop a methodology that combines the features of all these approaches as indicated by the question mark in the middle of the matrix.

BREAKING DOWN THE DUALITIES

Each of the issues discussed in the sections above illuminates a particular aspect of research. The abstract-concrete issue emphasizes the role of experience in knowledge acquisition. The epistemological issues call attention to the importance of vantage point, object or subject, in data collection. The quantitative-qualitative distinction highlights features of precision in measurement. And, the etic-emic distinction deals with matters related to comparison in research design. These aspects will be discussed in more detail in the chapters to follow. In particular, the abstract-concrete difference is discussed in the context of simulation modeling in Chapter 3. The quantitative-qualitative distinction is apparent in the discussion of case-study methods in Chapters 6 and 7. We return to the emic-etic issue in our discussion of ethnographic methods in Chapter 8.

A project on utilizing research findings in negotiation training programs illustrates the relevance of the etic-emic distinction in conflict analysis. Summaries of research findings from experiments conducted largely by

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American investigators were organized by theme and presented in the form of narratives. The themes covered many of the aspects of negotiation found in most frameworks for research on the topic. They are then used by trainees in a series of real-world case analyses (see Druckman & Robinson, 1998, for details). This approach to the integration of research and practice has been used with participants from societies in most of the continents of the world. To the extent that it consists of viewing the negotiation process through the lenses of Western models and experiments, it is based on etic assumptions: The approach applies an "external yardstick" to a conflict resolution process that occurs in different places, even when translated into local languages.

A more recent application of the approach is being developed by colleagues in France. They decided that it would be more useful to adapt the general approach to their own research and training context. Thus, rather than translating the narratives and cases, they are constructing new narratives based on themes and research approaches used in the French literature. In contrast to the American literature on negotiation, French scholars have conducted research in historical, sociological, and industrial relations traditions. They often develop lessons from historical texts such as De Callieres (2000 [reprinted]) and view the negotiation process less in terms of its component parts and more in terms of complex systems of competing coalitions: For example, Petit (2003) views international trade negotiations as a process where governments respond to multiple, conflicting demands made by both domestic and external constituencies. As a result, they behave in ways that may appear to many as being irrational because it contradicts the apparent objective of the negotiation, such as increased trade liberalization. To the extent that these investigators develop an approach that reflects French research traditions, it is based on emic assumptions. The gain afforded by this approach in local relevance is offset by the loss in comparing training results from one country setting to another.

Yet despite assiduous attempts to avoid investigator biases in comparative research projects, it is virtually impossible to avoid "contamination." Research done in a positivist tradition on experimenter effects reveals that even the most disinterested and passive experimenters can influence the data at the stages of design, collection, and interpretation (Rosenthal, 1964). This research shows that the experimenter's assumptions and expectations play a role in subjects' behavior or decisions. Referred to in the experimental literature as demand characteristics (Orne, 1962), these expectations play a strong role when subjects are prone to speculate on the purpose of the experiment or when they seek guidance on how to act in the situation. Put in another way, investigators bring their own emics to the research situation. This can be especially problematic in research on conflict interventions where third parties take a more active role in the interactions. Clearly, there are opportunities here for influence; there are

also challenges that can arise due to differences between researcher and researched on the emics that they bring to the situation. In this research, it may be difficult to identify the outsider role, thereby compromising an etic perspective.

Although the debates on each of these dualities are often spirited with little flexibility shown on either side, it can be argued that plausible points are made by proponents on both sides of the issues. It would seem that a larger perspective that incorporates elements of all the approaches would have advantages by covering many aspects of any research problem: abstract and concrete elements, outsider and insider data, scaled and categorical/narrative data, and in-depth or deep and comparative or wide probes. Such a perspective entails a multi-method, multi-paradigm approach to research in this field: Case studies, statistical methods, and formal models are complementary rather than competitive approaches to doing research. It is close to the sort of post-positivist paradigm of research advanced by Cook (1985). It is also similar to the idea of Boudreau's (2003) multiplex methodology, which is a "systematic inquiry into the multiple, simultaneous and often contradictory knowledge claims made by all significant parties to a violent human conflict" (p. 101). (Similar arguments emphasizing triangulation in social science research have been made by King, Keohane, & Verba, 1995; Stern & Druckman, 2000; and, most recently, by George & Bennett, 2004.) These are the perspectives that guide the discussion of research methods in this book.

An agnostic stance on preferred methods and paradigms would seem appropriate for a field such as CA&R. One reason is that the field is defined as much by its practical problems as by its theoretical issues. Confronted by a host of real-world problems, the conflict researcher benefits from a "tool kit" that can be used to perform analyses on a broad spectrum of problems. Another reason is that this is an interdisciplinary field. It seeks larger perspectives on conflicts, linking analyses at micro levels (individual, small groups) to macro levels (organizations, institutions, nations). Such a broad conceptual range requires comparable methodological breadth, where no particular methodology (experiments, surveys, or case studies) has a corner on this market. A third reason concerns the mission of many conflict scholars and practitioners to integrate theory, research, and practice (see Cheldelin et al., 2003). The scope of this challenge is apparent when we consider the variety of types of theories, methodologies, and practices that characterize the field. For this reason, frameworks for analysis must be elastic, by which I mean sufficiently general to integrate a number of configurations in the theory-research-practice tripod. Thus, an attempt is made in this book to help readers develop the skills needed to do research on a variety of problems that leads to robust findings and that contributes to an integration of theory and practice with research.

Research Motivations, Norms, and Assumptions

In this section, I discuss what research is, some motivations for doing research, features and norms of the enterprise, and faulty assumptions often made about research. According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Mish et al., 2001), *research* is defined as “studious inquiry or examination, especially investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws; the collecting of information about a particular subject.” These definitions depict a goal-driven activity aimed at discovering new knowledge through a serious, organized strategic plan. The goal of discovery is to contribute to theory (understanding of a phenomenon) or practice (use of knowledge to improve conditions). The strategic plan is the method designed to produce the knowledge.

Although research has benefited from the discipline imposed by strategy and systematic processes, many researchers approach problems with a more playful attitude. Some argue that informality—as a kind of trial-and-error experimentation—encourages flexibility and creativity in scholarly work. There is a role for playfulness in doing research. That role is often thought about as the earlier, exploratory phases of research projects. Those phases are encouraged for developing ideas or formulating research hypotheses. However, there is also a role for playfulness in the later, more systematic, phases of research. This attitude can serve to stimulate questions that could be overlooked during the implementation of techniques, as well as suggest ideas for further investigations. In discussing research in the chapters to come, I show how both attitudes—playfulness and discipline—contribute to doing effective research.

MOTIVATIONS

Researchers are motivated by a variety of incentives and inspirations. My own reasons for becoming a social science researcher include making discoveries that would contribute to my understanding of behavior and group processes as well as a fascination with the drama of experimentation. In the first edition of his textbook on methods, Robson (1993) distinguishes between motivations that produce successful and unsuccessful research. Important contributions are more likely to result from a genuine curiosity, excitement about doing research, theoretical understanding, being part of a network of researchers with similar interests, seeing clearly the next steps in a progression of findings on a topic, and understanding the real-world value of research. Contributions are less likely to be made by researchers motivated by expedience, the promise of

publication, using a particular method for its own sake, or a lack of concern for or understanding of theory. A key difference between these motivations is a long-term career commitment to doing research and a desire to attain short-term gains from assignments or contracts.

The distinction between basic and applied research is often raised by textbook authors as another source of motivation for social science research. At one time, it was fashionable to describe one's profession as either a basic or applied researcher. Social scientists did not "march to the same drummer." Some scholars wanted to understand the world. They were the basic researchers who measured their accomplishments in terms of contributions to the science or discipline. Other researchers wanted to solve practical problems. These applied researchers measured their accomplishments in terms of problems solved or practices improved. In the past, it was easy to distinguish between these researchers: Basic research was done mostly in universities; applied research in public or private "think tanks" or consulting firms. Today the distinction is blurred. Most researchers in social science—whether inside or outside the academy—construe their work in both basic and applied terms. A discernable trend toward a merging of theory, practice, and research is evident, particularly in the field of conflict resolution.

Yet, differences in emphasis exist among researchers. Those who are closer to the basic research "wing" prefer the slower pace of design, data collection, analysis, and peer review publication. For them, professional rewards are derived from publications in prestigious research journals. Those closer to the applied research "wing" engage in the faster-paced enterprise of solving problems for clients. They, too, derive rewards from publications but also strive to maintain relationships with clients and are more focused on the practical applications of their research. The standards of systematic inquiry, as defined by the philosophical traditions that inform their research, guide both of these types of researchers. They differ, however, with regard to the way their research is used: namely, to contribute primarily to theory or to practice.

FEATURES, NORMS, AND ASSUMPTIONS

In this book, research is construed as a public activity. Individual researchers are part of a community of social scientists. The community establishes norms, provides rewards for contributions, creates associations that hold scientific meetings, publishes professional journals, and provides opportunities for professional visibility and advancement. These features sustain an enterprise that contributes to the larger society, which includes people in a variety of professional and non-professional pursuits. Contributions from social science research have been made in teaching approaches, skills training,

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educational policy, welfare policy, politics (including public opinion polling), the workplace, organizational management, environmental policy, foreign policy, security studies, and conflict resolution. The research has also contributed to more general understanding of social processes as reflected in the development and refinement of theories of persons, groups, organizations, cultures, and nations.

As part of the larger social science community, CA&R professionals conduct their research and practice within the normative framework of these disciplines. This framework places a strong emphasis on the value of a peer-review process for judging the merit of contributions to the growth and development of the field. Original ideas are valued but so too are studies that take the next step in a cumulative process that builds on existing knowledge. However, the norms provide only general guidelines for judging merit or contribution; they do not offer precise criteria. Thus, it is not surprising that members of peer-review panels disagree about the value of the same piece of work. Their disagreement is often along the lines of preferences for different paradigms or methodologies. Nonetheless, the debates are open, and the “debaters” (peer reviewers) typically accept their responsibility to render a fair judgment about the value of the research being evaluated. After all, peer reviewers are also researchers eager to make their own published contributions.

The framework also places value on ethical considerations in the conduct of research. Ethics refers to the treatment of all those involved in a particular research enterprise. Issues with regard to research subjects include disclosing information about the purpose of the research and any possible short- or long-term consequences that may arise from participation. There are strong norms against deception in the conduct of scientific research. These norms are implemented by human subject review boards at academic and research organizations (see Kelman, 1967, for an early statement about deception in research). Issues that arise with regard to collaborators include proper credit for contributions, including authorship on publications and openness among all members of the research team in discussing design, data collection, and analysis issues. Unlike treatment of research subjects, collegial relations are self-monitored, with avenues of complaint available in most departments.

Another area in which ethics are important concerns matters of trust in reporting findings. These include the very serious charges of plagiarism and manipulating or creating false data. When these matters arise, they are usually prosecuted through legal channels and can result in exclusion from the community or a loss of professional recognition. More difficult to detect are the subtle attempts to manipulate procedures or analyses that change non-significant results into significant findings. Pressures for promotion and recognition may encourage these forms of deception. The frequency of this behavior is difficult

to calculate. A low frequency, if it were discovered, would indicate that most investigators subscribe to the community's ethical norms.

Research is a difficult profession. The knowledge accumulation process is slow and labor intensive. Resources are rarely sufficient to carry out many investigations or to build a program of research. The peer-review process is neither perfect nor efficient, and often leads to disappointment. Progress is usually apparent only after many years of painstaking investigation. Yet, despite these frustrations, the larger body of social science research is quite impressive—with regard to the scope of issues studied, the depth of analyses, and the practical implications of findings. Seasoned investigators can take pride in their contributions to this enterprise. New researchers can look forward to rewarding careers if they recognize that they are part of a much larger endeavor and appreciate the long-term value of doing research.

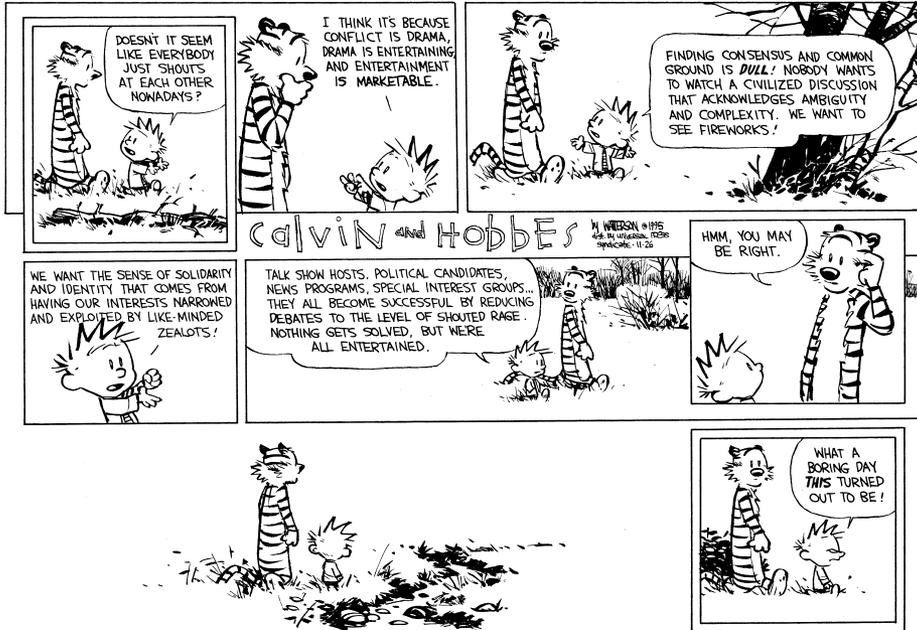
New researchers can also benefit from knowing about some faulty assumptions made about research. These include the following:

1. A critical experiment can be designed and conducted in order to confirm or disconfirm a theory.
2. Results of experiments can identify the single factor that explains social behavior.
3. Any concept can be defined in terms of a single measurement or by its operational definition.
4. At some level of abstraction, we can discover universal laws that apply across time and space.
5. A deeper understanding of a social process can be gained only through the use of ethnographic methods and participant observation.
6. Applications flow directly from the results of scientific research.

In fact, the research process is more complex than these statements suggest. Statistical findings reveal many interaction effects that indicate contingent (it all depends on the situation and time frame) relationships among variables. Surveys show many differences among sub-groups within any population with regard to values, preferences, and activities. Ethnographic studies reveal that behavior patterns are anchored in specific cultural contexts that can change. These and other findings move us away from the chimera of grand, all-encompassing theories and toward an appreciation for variety in expression for different groups and for the same group in different periods of time.

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Some Contributions From Research on Conflict



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A motivation for writing this textbook is the hope that it will help students conduct high-quality research on topics of CA&R. This hope is based on the opinion that it is worth investing the time and effort to do research on these topics. Because I have pursued a career along these lines, it would be dissonant for me to reject that opinion. I continue to be sufficiently stimulated by my own and others' research to enthusiastically endorse the value of the CA&R research enterprise. This enthusiasm springs from the insights generated by many of the projects completed to date. It may be infectious, not because you interact with me in the classroom, but because you appreciate the products. In this final section of the chapter, a sampling of some of these products, obtained from studies using various methodologies, is presented. Before the findings are presented, however, a brief overview of the range of conflict situations represented by them is provided.

The sampled studies cover a variety of situations and contexts in which conflict occurs. These include divorce mediation and custody disputes, mediation in community dispute resolution clinics, conflicts in schools, interactions between feuding departments in organizations and between nations, inter- and intra-national war zones, formal negotiations that occur in laboratory and field settings, and disputes among political interest groups and ideological constituencies.

Issues include economic competition, power or status rivalries, national or cultural autonomy, environmental regulation, health policy, and nuclear arms control. Some matters are more tangible than others, such as the difference between disputes over money or land and those concerning recognition or identity. Variety exists also in levels of analysis: Divorce mediation is an interpersonal conflict, feuding gangs in schools are inter-group conflicts, department competition for resources is an intra-organizational conflict just as ethnic conflicts occur usually within national boundaries, and inter-organizational or inter-governmental conflicts occur when different firms consider mergers or nations attempt to negotiate membership in a regional alliance.

This complexity is captured by Sandole's (2003) three-pillar framework (elements of conflict, causes and conditions, design of interventions). It is also reflected in the framework devised to organize the chapters in Cheldelin et al. (2003). At the core of this framework are types, sources, and dynamics of conflict: What is the conflict about? Where does it come from? How does it unfold through time? The framework expands to consider the various influences on this core—situations, identities, cultures, structures, and institutions. All of these factors inform the choice among various formal and informal interventions to resolve conflict. CA&R research scholars navigate in this complex conceptual world. The analysis ("A") challenge is to gain an understanding of it. The resolution ("R") challenge is to improve upon (and evaluate) tried ways of dealing with it. The route to A&R advanced in this book is twofold: develop complex theoretical frameworks and subject them to evaluation by multiple (and often complementary) methods. This may indeed require more thought in preparation and execution of studies than is given to research in many other fields of social science. Let us turn now to examples of the progress made to date.

- From experiments on mediation in field settings, we know about some consequences of taking a problem-solving approach (with information search intended to explore mutual interests and goals) compared with a settlement orientation (emphasizing moving toward compromises) to disputes. The former usually produces better outcomes (Kressel, Frontera, Forlenza, Butler, & Fish, 1994).
- From a series of studies on peer mediation, we learned that students trained in the procedures chose an integrative rather than distributive approach to negotiation and developed more positive attitudes toward conflict. Further, the investigators found that integrating conflict resolution and peer mediation training into an academic course produced higher achievement, greater long-term retention of the academic material, and greater transfer of academic training in the social sciences and language arts (Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, & Schultz, 2002).
- From a meta-analysis of 25 years of experimental research on bargaining processes, we know that such variables as negotiator orientation, pre-negotiation

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experience, and time pressure have considerably stronger effects on outcomes than representation, accountability, and visibility of the bargaining process (Druckman, 1994a).

- From content analyses of negotiation transcripts, we know that when delegates engage in sustained problem-solving behavior through the middle phases of the talks, the outcomes are more likely to be integrative (all benefit) than compromise (all sustain some losses) or impasse (Wagner, 1998).

- From complex simulations, we know that when representatives choose between courses of action that favor their interests or their ideologies, their interests usually prevail (Druckman, Rozelle, & Zechmeister, 1977).

- From events analyses of interactions (including negotiations) between nations, we know that actors adjust their moves toward each other's previous move (or concession) in order to achieve synchrony and reduce any perceived unfair advantage. This behavior can produce impasses (Patchen & Bogumil, 1995).

- From both comparative case studies and simulations, we know that bilateral negotiating structures lead to better outcomes than multilateral structures, especially when the bilateral interactions occur between relatively weak parties whose power is roughly equal (Beriker & Druckman, 1996; Druckman, 1997a).

- From a simulation of the dispute in Cyprus, we know that cooperative negotiation processes result from confronting and discussing differences in values prior to negotiation (referred to as *facilitation*) as compared with de-emphasizing those differences both before and during the negotiations (referred to as *fractionating the issues*) (Druckman, Broome, & Korper, 1988). This has been found to be due to both increased liking of and enhanced familiarity with the opposing negotiator (Druckman & Broome, 1991).

- From a score of laboratory experiments, we see the ease with which subjects develop ingroup-outgroup perceptions and biases (even in temporary groups formed on the basis of trivial issues). We also know about the difficulty of changing these perceptions and biases (Brewer & Kramer, 1985).

- From time-series analyses of violent conflicts between former republics of the Soviet Union, we know that timing of mediation efforts is critical. They are more likely to work following a series of military campaigns that produce a hurting stalemate (Mooradian & Druckman, 1999).

- From field experiments of community conflict resolution centers, we know that the anticipation of arbitration can either chill or hasten movement toward reaching agreements. Chilling effects occur when bargainers fear looking weak by making concessions, when they expect a split-the-difference solution, and when they have had favorable experiences with (or actually choose) the arbitrator (McGillicuddy, Welton, & Pruitt, 1987; Pruitt, 1981).

- Studies within organizations show that team-building exercises reduce conflict within units but can increase inter-unit conflict throughout the organization (Buller & Bell, 1986; Insko et al., 1988).
- Based on results from simulated environmental conflicts, we know some conditions that lead parties down a path toward agreement and other conditions that trajet them toward impasses (Druckman, 1993, 1995).
- Social-psychological research identifies the conditions under which contact between adversaries should take place if changed attitudes are to occur—for example, equal status of participants, institutional support for such contacts, common goals, and inter-dependence between the parties (see Rouhana, 2000, for a review of the evidence).
- From ethnographic descriptions, we have a richer but context-specific understanding of people’s coping mechanisms in times of war. One researcher observed the ways in which people living in the midst of brutal conflict creatively resist violence through their personal stories, songs, poetry, and dance. These acts, she argues, when taken together, constitute “politics in the making” that counter violence and build the foundation for the restoration of peace (Nordstrom, 1997).
- By using narrative and discourse theory, one researcher analyzed the stories of individuals involved in the tobacco conflict, paying particular attention to power. She examined and conceptualized types of discourse in conflict (generalized, specialized, dominant, and demotic) in order to understand the stories of those in the conflict. She found, however, that these categories were not static, and individuals could choose to move among the categories, exercising influence over the course and dynamics of the conflict in the form of power or knowledge (Johnston, 2000).

From findings such as these, by using a wide range of methodological approaches, we can draw implications for both theory and practice. Some contributions to theory include the prevalence of equilibrium-seeking behavior, trajectories toward escalatory or de-escalatory paths, and structure (macro-level)–behavior (micro-level) linkages. With regard to practice, the findings suggest ways for third parties and negotiators to arrange situations, construe issues, and encourage certain behaviors that are more likely to produce beneficial agreements or improved relationships.

Discussion Questions

Several discussion questions are suggested by the topics treated in this chapter. Use these questions to provoke class discussion or student review of the key

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ideas in the chapter. This review format will be used at the conclusion of each of the chapters to follow.

1. Discuss the relationship between the contrasting epistemologies and choice of research methodologies in conflict analysis. How might the different epistemological approaches be combined in doing research?
2. How might the gap be bridged between abstract and experiential approaches to learning concepts in conflict resolution? What are some ways in which abstract concepts or findings can be used in the practice of conflict resolution?
3. What are some differences between etic and emic approaches to research? How might these approaches be combined in a project?
4. What are some examples of qualitative contributions to quantitative research? How can quantitative analysis contribute to qualitative research topics?
5. List various reasons for doing social science research. Distinguish among the reasons in terms of those likely to lead to more and those that may lead to less important contributions to the field.
6. Describe some key features of the research enterprise. What can consumers of research products expect to learn? What are they unlikely to learn from results of projects?
7. Describe two conflict settings, an interpersonal conflict of interest and an inter-organizational conflict of values or worldviews. Which is likely to be more difficult to resolve and why might this be the case?
8. Discuss some new insights generated by the sample of research findings listed in this chapter. Which findings contribute primarily to understanding or theory? Which findings have more practical relevance?

Note

1. Many students and professional researchers have the impression that quantitative research is systematic and qualitative research is not. The approach to research taken in this book emphasizes the systematic features of both kinds of studies: Both are guided by widely accepted paradigms, are goal-driven activities, and are conducted within the context of research designs or rule structures. Responses by interviewees or respondents to open-ended questions, frequently used in qualitative research, acquire meaning in relation to planned designs or probing procedures. (For example, see the discussion of focused case comparisons in Chapter 7.)