Peace Research

A Practical Guide and Stories from the Field

Dr. Amr Abdalla, Ph.D.

Heidi Resetarits

Lilian Umir

University for Peace
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Research Methods in the Field of Peace and Conflict Studies: A Working Guide for Research Development

INTRODUCTION

By Dr. Amr Abdalla

Throughout my career in the field and with much travel to conflict zones, post-conflict societies, and to nations going through the peacebuilding process, I have discovered that there is a huge need for real, dedicated research in the field of Peace and Conflict studies. During my career and my work worldwide, I have found many positive examples and unfortunately, also many negative ones. Each of such examples seemed to impact people to a great extent; sometimes in healthy and constructive ways and sometimes the most devastating.

I have also experienced many situations that defy common knowledge dictated by dominant media. For example, while briefly in Rwanda and for a few weeks in Burundi in 1998, I encountered a sizeable population of Muslims who lived among a majority of Christians. I was curious about the connection of the people's ethnic and religious identities. I thought for a while that perhaps Muslims were made of ethnic groups other than Hutus and Tutsis. I was quickly corrected; Muslims too were mainly either Hutus or Tutsis. This raised the question of how they handled themselves during the ethnic war in 1994. The response I received from Muslims in Rwanda and Burundi was that because they were Muslims they should not, and could not fight each other, or fight others, due to ethnic differences. Islam, they said, prohibited that sort of violence against each other. In order to validate this story, I asked professionals working with the United Nations and other Western non-government organizations if they knew about that situation, which to me seemed like a phenomenon. Everyone I inquired from responded positively: that it was true that the Muslim population refrained from participation in the war and those Muslim sections of Kigali and Bujumbura were safe havens during the war.

This information seemed to be of great value to those interested in the role of religion in conflict resolution and peacebuilding-- especially given the fact that a vast literature on the subject assigns blame, especially to Islam, for instigating conflicts.

As my background and experience dictated, I knew there had to be more to the story: something that we could learn from the current situation to affect the future. I asked myself, does this story not deserve further research into the "why" and "how" the Muslims there managed to play such a peaceful role in the middle of an ethnic genocide? Would not the result of such research inform us and guide us to develop similar approaches to reduce violent conflicts in other Muslim countries such as Iraq and Libya? Would not we be able to contribute to the knowledge about what can work in the mirth of violent ethnic conflict? Could not we learn how to use religion in a constructive manner, instead of abusing it for the sake of war and violence? For these reasons and much more that span the possibility of building a more peaceful world, we have developed models for research in the field of Peace and Conflict studies. I consider us researchers who can make a difference, and researchers who have the possibility to change the world. We are researchers with an attitude: we search for answers in difficult situations, we give people a voice to tell their stories and we make sure that voices are heard.

Plan of the Practical Guide

We prepared this practical guide to combine several elements. First, we ensured that the Guide includes academic, conceptual models, and processes which comply with standards of research rigor and quality, and supported that with academic literature. Second, we set the Guide within a strong framework of Peace and Conflict studies, making it relevant to researchers and practitioners in the field. Third, we used real stories from the field to illustrate how we use specific research principles and steps. During the reading of this Guide, you will find opportunities to read *Stories from the Field* in Dr. Abdalla's voice and from his experience (boxes with the signature Dr. A.A.). There is a glossary of terms at the end of the guide, and you can find recommended readings in the following Link:

https://1drv.ms/f/s!ApXwNFAET9955jEpxcLLRg0ui9xJ

In the Link, you will also find an appendix of case studies, recommended readings, and a sample research paper from the field of Peace and Conflict Studies.

The Guide includes two major sections: *Principles* and *Steps of Research*. The *Principles* provide the Peace and Conflict framework of research, emphasizing the purpose and the principles of inclusion and participation. The *Steps* provide a systematic process for conducting research in areas related to Peace and Conflict, starting with the conceptualization stage and ending with implementation.

Research Methods for Peace and Conflict Studies

Principles of Research in the Areas of Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution

The following 7 Principles were created to give you an outline of what is expected of a researcher in the field of Peace and Conflict Research. These principles should be used as a guide to help you frame your approach to finding and developing a research project in this field. It is our hope that these 7 Principles will create continuity for your projects as well as challenge you to think on a different level than other research projects so that you can maximize your impact on the field of Peace and Conflict Studies.

1. **Purpose: Understanding conflict causes and dynamics, and effective approaches to peace by deconstructing oppressive and destructive structures, institutions, attitudes and behaviors and through promoting and developing ones that foster justice and peace.**

Although the definition of peace itself differs depending on the sources, those who study peace agree that the research must be diverse in order to address different perceptions of the world. Historically, Peace and Conflict Studies have not been confined to the traditional educational settings but instead connected to people from different backgrounds who want to positively affect the world (Jeong, 2000, p.41). This desire to work towards change helps breakdown previous structures that have confined and oppressed people in conflict area for centuries.

The mission of research in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies is to advance the objective of peace and effectively address the causes of conflict and violence. Although our purpose is clear, our work must always focus on being objective and neutral. We must also conform to all guidelines and high standards of conducting fair and rigorous research. If our research advances peace and addresses such causes, we can easily fulfill our purpose. To the extent that we do not, we must question the ethicality of our research. This is a unique distinction in the field of Peace and Conflict. Research which merely looks at a conflict situation to predict the recurrence of violent cycles and which does not provide tools for preventing such cycles from recurring would raise questions about the purpose. Alternatively, such research with a focus on the factors which would prevent the recurrence of said cycles and which offers recommendations on how to use them will help us fulfill our purpose: finding, building, and supporting peace.

2. **Holistic Epistemology: Acknowledging the benefits and shortcomings of conventional research approaches with strong awareness and application of feminist, indigenous and cultural theories and methods.**

From a worldview, research is not immune from the influences of certain doctrines, ideologies, and agendas. A materialist secular viewpoint, for example, has dictated for centuries a view of the world which solely focuses on the economic, material, business, and utilitarian elements. This standpoint has dominated the culture of the developing world, which also assumes a predestined path for humanity's salvation. The modern worldview has also influenced social sciences with a strong quantitative outlook which narrowly focused on variables which reflected the elements of such worldview, mainly materialism and economy

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Fortunately, over the past 30 to 40 years such worldview has been challenged on feminist, indigenous, and cultural basis. The feminist approach has uncovered much of the contradiction and "incompleteness" of social science research which focused on those who controlled the material and economic realms: men. In the past processes, women's realities and voices were hardly included in such research. This exemption also excluded the voices of minorities, indigenous people, people with specific resource, and physical limitations. Fortunately, the world of research is changing and minority views are starting to be recognized as not only important but invaluable. Feminist researchers have been able to introduce suitable approaches to capture data from the women's perspective, which had up to then been a neglected world (Reinharz, 1992). Eventually, with the entry of researchers from non-Western worlds into the field of social research, especially the field of Peace and Conflict, a renewed appreciation for culture, traditions, and religion has seeped into the field of social science research. The influences from feminist, cultural, and minority perspectives have inspired a trend towards more holistic approaches to research in the field of Peace and Conflict. These new perspectives have widened the reach of research in general and have had a special impact to those suffering in silence in conflict areas. This field has now expanded into an area that includes material and economic components among other elements such as culture, spirituality, and different understandings of development, peace, and modernity.

3. **Multiplicity of Disciplines: Informing research from various disciplines, such as sociology, cultural studies, communication, political science, economy, and law.**

The field of Peace and Conflict is relatively new. It owes its existence to several other fields in the area of humanities--yet it is not confined to just one of them. From the beginning, this field benefitted from the contribution of scholars from different fields: political scientists, international relations scholars, sociologists, economists, psychologists, social workers, cultural and communication studies experts and many others.

Since there is not only one discipline claiming full rights to the field of Peace and Conflict, it has attracted scholars from all disciplines, with each providing her/his contribution from their fields. This has made the multidisciplinary aspect an integral part of the foundation of Peace and Conflict studies. This means that research in this field should not confine itself to one or another of the established fields of humanities, and instead to make the diligent effort to incorporate various approaches from different disciplines. The assumption underpinning this element is that conflict and peace are complex phenomena which run the risk of being distorted if viewed from one angle (psychological for example) without considering the implications of other angles such as sociology or culture.

4. **Participation and Inclusiveness: Making all research aspects inclusive of all those affected by a conflict, especially groups that have been traditionally marginalized, such as women, children, the indigenous, and the socio-economically disadvantaged.**

Participation and inclusiveness are key principles in the field of Peace and Conflict. This applies to all practices of peacemaking and peacebuilding, and also to all aspects of conflict assessment and analysis. Therefore, when conducting research in the area of Peace and Conflict it is prudent to understand who the various groups are as well as the individuals who are affected by the situation. You must especially make

the effort to reach out to those who are traditionally excluded, as they often hold key factors to the situation at hand. This may become a difficult task as it would challenge the status quo and considerations of power balances in different settings. However, without it, we would be compromising important principles of our work that could later continue to re-produce conflict and violence.

It is necessary here to also realize that reaching to populations which have been traditionally excluded, especially the illiterate and socio-economically disadvantaged, would raise questions about *how* to reach them. Here the methods of research must adapt to the capabilities of such groups, and to best collect information which reflect who *they* are, not who *we* are.

5. Cultural Appropriateness: Ensuring active cultural input and participation in all aspects of research design, implementation, analysis and reporting

Conflicts do not take place in a vacuum. They always take place within a context and are usually due to elements in that context. A strong, always-present element in each context is *culture*. This is perhaps the most significant element which has influenced all aspects of research, from conception to design to implementation. Culture is also a significant content variable (which you will learn about in the Steps section) as it influences context, attitudes, feelings, behavior, relationships, and interventions.

If you are not aware of cultural influences in your research it can be easy to slip into making faulty assumptions on which to build research design and implementation. This is why it is crucial to always compose research teams that include various cultural perspectives, and which are grounded in the context in which research is carried out. To effectively create a team, these individuals must be engaged in the research effort from the beginning, through its design, implementation, and during the analysis and report-writing stages.

6. Multiplicity of Research Methods: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to thoroughly answer the *What, How,* and *Why* questions.

It has become a standard practice in almost all fields of research in the social sciences to recognize the mutual benefit of combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to reach a thorough objective. Although now it is normal, it has actually been a long struggle to reach such point, as the resistance to the use of qualitative research as inferior to quantitative measures persisted for many years. Meanwhile, advocates of qualitative research continued to undermine or underestimate the benefits of using quantitative research in the field of Peace and Conflict, and almost demonized as patriarchal, "Western" and pro-establishment. This hostility is sometimes explained by the fact that many researchers in the field of Peace and Conflict lack any basic understanding of quantitative research, and therefore prefer to dismiss it than to be seen as unable of using it! Fortunately, the resistance from both sides is diminishing.

We insist here that the use of both approaches is necessary for a complete comprehensive understanding of a research topic. We believe that if fear of quantitative research, on one hand, and doubt about the objectivity of qualitative research, on the other hand, are factors hindering the development of such quality research in the field of Peace and Conflict, then our task is to break into such fear and misconceptions by

educating and training more people in both approaches. This is vital in the field of Peace and Conflict, as many people (as discussed in Principle #4) without voices are quietly depending on us to speak for them.

7. **Replication and Sustainability: Exploring approaches to replicate effective peacebuilding efforts, and to sustain existing ones.**

Related to the first principle (*Purpose)* this principle assumes that the knowledge we gain from research in the field of Peace and Conflict should be of benefit to people, communities, organizations, nations, states, and not only to the specific context in which it was carried out. Therefore, the design and reporting of such research must take into consideration the need to develop mechanisms for sustaining peaceful approaches as well as explore how such approaches may be implemented somewhere else.

These objectives relate more to the area of reporting and information dissemination. Therefore, researchers in the field of Peace and Conflict need to be aware of their greater purpose. They have the responsibility to share their research approaches and findings and to realize their responsibility in this regard beyond the basic academic requirement to publish for the purpose of receiving promotions, tenure and raises.

→ For more information about the following topics find these resources in the Link (PAGE 2):

Principle 1

- *The history and definition of Peace and Conflict Studies read: Peace and Conflict Studies: An Introduction by Ho-Won and Jeong (2000), included in the Link (PAGE 2).*
- *The History of Research in Peace and Conflict Studies read: The Global Review of Ethnopolitics Vol. 2 no. 2, January 2003, 75-82, Peace and Conflict Studies Today by Stephen Ryan, University of Ulster.*

Principle 2

- *Feminist research perspective read: Feminist Methods in Social Research by Shulamit Reinharz (1992). Conclusions are included.*

Principle 4

- *A specific case study on a marginalized group read Women and Warfare in Ethiopia: A Case Study by Minale Adunga.*

Principle 6

- *History of the resistance to combining qualitative and quantitative research: Denzien & Lincoln (2005), The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research.*

Steps in Research Design on Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution[1]

The Steps reflect common elements in the design and implementation of research in social sciences specializing in the field of Peace and Conflict. Although similar to most research method books, these steps also reflect actual field experiences and are the product of numerous research projects conducted in relation to Peace and Conflict studies in different countries.

The Steps are organized into three major stages: *Conceptualization*, *Design*, and *Implementation*. *Conceptualization* is the process of identifying a specific research area, understanding the purpose of the research, developing assumptions and/or hypothesis, and establishing a theoretical/conceptual framework. The *Design* stage includes the operationalization of the conceptual elements into concrete researchable variables, with a clear design of research methods and techniques. The *Implementation* stage refers to the actual conduct of the research in the field, the analysis, and reporting of data.

Stage 1: Conceptualization

Step 1- Identify a Research Area

The field of Peace and Conflict is wide and diverse. There will always be a limitless amount of topics which need thorough research, especially by someone who is specialized in Peace and Conflict research. Of course a research area must be of interest to the researcher or must be an area that a donor, or an organization is interested in learning about, and for which the researcher has interest and experience. Therefore, research areas may include investigations of conflict causes and dynamics, peace processes, post conflict reconstruction, conflict prevention, and so on. Regional and geographical areas are always of interest within any of the thematic areas mentioned above (Gall, Borg, and Gall, 1996).

It is important to remember that in selecting a research area one must ensure that it is indeed

Story from the field: A World of Experiences

As an expert in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies, I have been fortunate to have been asked to conduct research in several countries in all continents. For example, in Bangladesh, one research I conducted focused on the dynamics of primary Madrasas (religious educational institutions) on children's progress. In Kenya, I looked at the effectiveness of media-based peacebuilding programs on changing the populations' attitudes and behaviors. In Rwanda, I researched the effectiveness of an economic development project combined with a conflict resolution component on the relations between Hutus and Tutsis in rural areas. All of these experiences have led to a rich and colorful career that has allowed me to be a part of many peacebuilding projects. –Dr. A. A.

[1]*Copy Courtesy: Dr. Amr Abdalla, 2003 (updated 2010). University for Peace, Costa Rica. Please share and duplicate with appropriate credit.*

researchable and that it bears no potential harm to people or the environment. Usually the selection of a research area starts broad and wide. For the rest of this text we will talk about our research using the example of the Arab-Israeli conflict. If you have interest in researching this conflict, you must be thoroughly educated on the topic, and then begin to go deeper. Obviously this is a very wide area, and without delimitations we would not know where to start and where to end. The *Conceptualization* stage will naturally bring you to other steps which will bring the research area to a manageable level.

You'll be spending a lot of time on your research paper so it is particularly important to select a topic that you really enjoy working with. There are several pitfalls which could prohibit you from a successful research project, so it is important to try to identify them early in order to avoid them. It is also important to be clear about the difference between educational research and other types of research. "Research is not haphazard data gathering. It is not a process in which the researcher knows the outcome before the study is completed. It is not the selective or biased interpretation of results. It is not verifiable by independent, nonbiased research. Conversely, true research is guided by an identified topic or issue. It describes a plan to carry out the research. It collects pertinent data in a systematic and unbiased manner. It analyzes the data and makes it available to other researchers for examination" (Gay, L. R. & Airasian, 2000, p. 40). In order to impact the field you should be clear in understanding what your topic is—and if it is strong enough to carry through a complete research project.

Below are a few ways to find out if you have a strong topic before you begin the hard work.

1. Is there already research on the subject?

As much as you may like your topic, you should make sure you have some literature review to back it up. This will help you get a start on creating your thesis, which you will learn how to do in *Step 3*.

2. Does the research that exists support my thesis?

There is nothing wrong with coming up with intriguing and exciting ideas, in fact, that is how a lot of new information is realized in the field. However, if you are doing a research project that completely contradicts all the current research, you could find yourself in a bind. Make sure you are not trying to create a thesis that refutes evidence, as you would be wasting yours, and other people's time.

3. Have I looked at more than one thesis option?

Give yourself several options of research topics so that you don't go too far and get stuck. Do minimal research on each topic and then decide what you will do for your final project. The preliminary search will help you narrow and focus your topic so that you have a strong and feasible project to begin with.

Preliminary search steps:

- Search several databases
- Look for books, not just internet articles
- Look for academic research. Base your thesis on a topic that has strong background information, previous academic research, and existing literature to reference. This will help you create a thesis topic that is strong, relevant, and interesting.

Step 2- Define Research Topic

Once a research area is selected, the next logical step is to try to identify specific topics to conduct research on. This step is best accomplished by identifying the interests of the researcher, donors, or organizations. Ideally, researchers and those interested in the research will engage in a process to define the topics they are interested in. However, the research topic should not only be about your interests. As discussed above, availability of resources dictates the content and limits the topics to be researched. The amount of money available for research, the time availability of researchers, and the risks associated with conducting research in a conflict zone may force the selection of certain topics.

Despite the motives, identifying research topic sets the parameters for a roadmap to follow, so it is incredibly important to do this in the *Conceptualization Stage*. Once researchers agree on certain topics, this implies that there are other topics within the same research area that will not be considered. It is prudent that researchers stick to selected topics and to restrain from the temptation to venture into more topics. There are limitless topics to cover in Peace and Conflict studies, but as a researcher you will have limited time (and possibly funding) and having too much data will force you out of focus. Keep in mind that if you stray too far off your strategic path, you could eventually lose funding or miss an incredible opportunity to help a certain minority demographic in need of your specific research.

In the book entitled *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, Creswell identifies several ways in which you can gain insight on your topic to help you discover if your topic will work for your research goals.

- Write a brief title for the project.

  -This can ground you and help you focus and refocus as your project continues.

- Write your project topic as a brief question.

  -This can help you expand your topic in the future.

- Ask yourself if the topic adds to the current research and literature on the topic.
- Decide whether or not the topic will enhance your future career goals, help you get published, or further your education.
- Finally, seek advice from advisors, colleagues, and members of the field of research in question. They will give honest feedback on whether or not your topic ‘floats.’

EXAMPLE CASE: Define Your Research Topic

In the Arab-Israeli conflict example, selecting topics may lead to a focus on the effects of the second Intifada versus the first one; or the relations between Palestinian factions since 2000; or the significance of the Lebanese war of 2006. By selecting such topics, the researchers exclude several other topics, but end up with a manageable research project. Of course they will have to draw on other elements of that conflict (such as history, internal dynamics, etc.), but these would be treated as elements (variables) to consider within the research without being the core focus.

Story from the field: Different Topics of Research

The research in Kenya about the effects of media-based peacebuilding efforts was intended to affect the population on different levels: attitude, knowledge and behavior. However, the donor (in this case DFID) was mainly interested in changes that happen regarding governance in the wider sense of the term. Therefore, my research team and I selected topics of research which would lead to making conclusions about whether the media-based efforts affected actual governance on the ground. As you can imagine, this had implications about whom to interview, what questions to ask, and what to look for and what to disregard. -Dr. A.A.

As you will see, a major objective of the *Conceptualization Stage* is to make the research project manageable within the existing resources and to make it conceptually coherent so that you can truly reach your audience and make a difference in the field of Peace and Conflict studies.

→*For more insight on refining your topic, Creswell (1998-9, pp 94-112, Chapter 5) Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design in the Link (PAGE 2).*

→*For more information on creating a hypothesis, read Gay, L. R. & Airasian, 2000, Chapter 2, Educational Research in the Link (PAGE 2).*

Step 3- Focus and Narrow Research Topic; Define Hypothesis/Assumptions

Even after identifying research topics within the selected research area, the development of a good research design may require more delimitation and specification. This is what we refer to as focusing and narrowing. **Focusing and narrowing** is a process intended to bring the research area and topics finally to a state of being researchable--meaning that we can at this point identify specific topics which may translate into specific variables and researchable elements with clear outcomes.

The **delimitations** of a study are those characteristics that limit the scope (define the boundaries) of the inquiry as determined by the conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions that were made throughout the development of the proposal. Among these are the choice of objectives and questions, variables of interest, alternative theoretical perspectives that could have been adopted, etc.

Remember that every research always starts big and then it gets more focused as we get further into the project.

This example was used in a report about education in the United States to explain delimitations:

> "Imagine a cross-case comparison study of state-level education policy systems that broke entirely new conceptual ground in the field of policy studies by exploring for the first time the role of political cultures and prevailing public values in policy making. This study generated detailed profiles of political cultures and public values and vice versa, how they differentially shaped education policy choices in each of the states included in the study. There were a number of interesting research questions that could have been asked but were not pursued, such as, "how are the public schools affected by different policy choices on the same educational issues?" or "Do these differential policy choices evidence themselves in different educational outcomes among public school students?" These questions were not pursued in this particular study because (a) the focus of the inquiry was on developing a new theory of how policy systems work, not on their outcomes, and (b) the inclusion of these questions, while interesting, would have been beyond the reach of the research team, given limited time and money for conducting the study," (Mitchell, Wirt, and Marshall, 1986).

Delimitation is used to make study better and more feasible and not just for the interest of the researcher. It also identifies the constraints or weaknesses of your study which are not within the control of the researcher.

The **limitations** of the study are the characteristics of design or methodology that set parameters on the application or interpretation of the results of the study; that is, the constraints on generalizability and utility of findings that are the result of the devices of design or method that establish internal and external validity (Cline, education.asate.edu).

This example was used in a research paper discussing examples of limitations:

> "The most obvious limitation would relate to the ability to draw descriptive or inferential sample data about a larger group. For example, a study of alcohol consumption among native French, Italian, Russian, and European Jewish males, based on data from a truly representative sample of these groups, would allow the researcher to make generalizations about the consumption behavior of all other native French, Italian, Russian, and European Jewish males that were not included in the study, assuming the sample is large enough and randomly selected. If the study included a finding that differences in consumption across groups were strongly predicted by specific cultural values and beliefs, it might be legitimate for the researcher to speculate that similar findings would accrue from a study of other ethnic groups with similar cultural characteristics, such as Germans or Bulgarians, but such an inference would be purely speculative. The researcher, however, could not generalize the findings to next generation American Jews, French, Italians, or Russians of the male gender. Certainly, the researcher would be foolish to draw conclusions from the data about

the drinking behavior of females of any nationality, or of native Japanese or Japanese-American males" (Cline, education.astate.edu).

Here is where researchers ponder over what they really want to know. A topic or topics may be specific within a certain research area, but the question of *what do you want to know* is what leads to producing a narrowed and focused research concept. It is that type of question, and similar ones, that begin to set the research project on the direction from a mere concept to a researchable project. This is because once we ask *what do you want to know* we tend to formulate questions to the effect of *why*, *how*, and *what* certain elements of the research topic lead or don't lead to something. This becomes the foundation for developing hypotheses and assumptions.

EXAMPLE CASE: Focus and Narrow

In the Arab-Israeli conflict research project, we now look at the topic of the significance of the Lebanese War of 2006. This is the point where we can ask the question: "What do we want to know?" Many answers are possible, but all of them would lead naturally to limiting what we are looking for to answering the specific question. So, for example, we may want to look at the effect of using cluster bombs or other weapons of mass destruction on the long-term health of the population of Lebanon.

Now we can see how far we have come with the preceding three Steps: we started with an interest in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and moved towards a more specific topic: the Israeli-Lebanese war of 2006, and now we are looking at the effect of weapons of mass destruction. This is what narrowing and focusing is about: providing us with specific questions upon which to formulate our research.

Formulating hypotheses/assumptions is a major step towards moving the research project from the conceptual stage to the design and operationalization stage. It is the guide for the rest of the research, as every step of the project will be determined by the hypothesis (Gay & Peter, 2003). Hypotheses/assumptions are the scientific formulations of what we referred to earlier as the question: "what do you want to know" by doing this research? In natural science research and in quantitative research in general, the notion of hypotheses is very important. It is so because when we are dealing with numbers as the base of research, we need to be precise on exactly how we expect certain numbers (representing a specific variable) to relate to other numbers (other variables). Some of the questions we might ask are: Is the first set of factors affecting another set (independent/dependent variables)? Is this a causal effect or a correlational one? Can we be confident about the relation between the variables based on the number relations? In order to do all this, we must start with a clear hypothesis stating what we expect from the inter-relation of variables.

It is important to note here the difference between a hypothesis in qualitative vs. quantitative research. Researchers in qualitative studies do not generally state a formal hypothesis before the study. They are much more likely to generate a new hypothesis as a *result* of their studies. Meanwhile, quantitative research produces a hypothesis (Gay & Peter, 2003). We will talk about this when we discuss grounded research.

Story from the field: Quantitative Hypothesis

From 1998 to 2003, I worked with the school system in Prince William County, VA, United States. We conducted a workshop with school students evaluating the school attendance, assistance, truancy, and anger management.

In our workshop we defined truancy as students who have trouble coming to school on time or at all. These students were identified as needing help so we created a program to talk to them to learn about their specific needs, then we took actions depending on those needs. During this program we had a clear objective of improving the truancy rate. Therefore, our hypothesis was: 'Truancy intervention with the students will improve the overall attendance rate at school by a certain percentage because of the program.' Our assumption was that there was truancy before the program, and we measured truancy without program (control group) as well as truancy in the intervention group. Then we monitored attendance rate to see if it improves and compared it to the other group.

This hypothesis led to quantitative and verifiable data because it was such a logical question. Due to the depth of our study and the access to the information, our program was very successful, and did lead to better attendance rates at the school. -Dr. A.A.

Qualitative (or assumption-based) research is not as verifiable in quantitative (or countable) terms. Qualitative research has more of a general trend, which can allow you to see improvement or change in the research area as a *result* of the interaction of some variables.

Story from the field: Qualitative Hypothesis

During an evaluation of a peace building effort in Burundi, I was involved in a program called "Positive Solidarity" which asked women from opposing villages to reconcile, rebuild, and reintegrate together after massive violence and tragedy between them. The hypothesis was: 'If these women are given the chance to go through the reconciliation program, the propensity for such violence will be reduced." -Dr. A.A.

(see Appendix A for the full Positive Solidarity Case Study)

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In qualitative research there is still a form of hypothesis, but it is not as countable. It was our hope that if we taught the women to work together, there would be less likelihood of them fighting again, but it was much less verifiable. (See "Story from the field: Qualitative Hypothesis")

Fortunately, as researchers in Peace and Conflict studies, you can and should use a combination of both types of research. This liberty will give your research not only scientific data, but stories of real people who have been affected by conflict. This could be an opportunity to bring awareness to an area that is in great need of resolution.

What is a hypothesis?

A hypothesis is a logical supposition, a reasonable guess, or an educated conjecture. It provides a tentative explanation for a phenomenon under investigation (Gay & Peter, 2003). "By formulating a series of reasonable guesses of cause and effect, we are able to understand and explore the events in our surrounding

environment, these individual hypothesis are generated in the human mind on a constant basis to help us understand day-to-day activities," (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). In your research, you will use your hypothesis to guide your research. Hypothesis should also:

- Move towards a solution
- Help you collect data
- Help you determine the 'sub-problem'

Below are assumptions that can be turned into hypotheses:

- Assumption: Hunger may cause conflict
  Hypothesis: In a post-conflict situation between two villages, in which one has less access to abundant food and water, the less advantaged will suffer from hunger and will start to have more cases of assault and murder among themselves than the groups that are receiving adequate amounts of food in the same situation.
- Providing women with a micro-finance loan can lift them out of poverty
  Hypothesis: A comparative study of two villages in the same area with the same demographics, measuring their poverty rates according to a recognized poverty index at a baseline (before introducing the micro finance to women in one village) will show an improvement in the index to those who receive the microcredit vs. those who do not.

Consider the assumptions below and practice creating your own hypothesis:

- Homelessness might increase crime in urban areas
- After school programs can increase the GPA of at-risk youth

It is important to remember that a hypothesis is never proved or disproved. Instead, as a researcher, you should 'support' or 'reject' the hypothesis. If you are led to reject it, then you will be led to a new hypothesis to explain the situation. If it is supported, it could eventually evolve into a theory.

EXAMPLE CASE: Hypothesis

The hypothesis for our Lebanon case is: More use of cluster bombs during the war on Lebanon in certain villages resulted in more cancerous diseases compared to using conventional weapons. So in this case, the research would focus on accounting for the amounts of weapons used in different villages, and try to determine if this was related to certain cancerous diseases. As you can see, the hypothesis here helps us to be very specific about what to research, and not to get lost.

Assumptions are also hypotheses but are formulated differently. Instead of an "if-then" format as expected in natural and quantitative research, assumptions are for qualitative research where numbers and frequencies of cases are not the backbone of tests. In qualitative research, and also in exploratory research,

even quantitative, the use of assumptions is not as strict as with hypotheses, and lends itself to wider varieties of research approaches.

EXAMPLE CASE: Assumptions

The effects of using cluster bombs on civilian population are worse than when conventional weapons are used vs. If there were less cluster bombs used in Lebanon, there would be less cancerous diseases.

Both hypotheses and assumptions are tools that are necessary to focus and narrow our research and to ensure that the research is conducted within certain parameters, and that it would not go awry. As you can imagine, the more you are clear and precise about your assumptions or hypotheses, the more you are clear on what to look for during the research and what not to look for.

Story from the field: Grounded research

In 2004, a research team went to an all-girl Madrasa (Muslim religious school) in a very rural area 2 hours away from a major city, Chittagong. There is a common stereotype that Madrasas were known to be extreme in religious dogma and previously only for certain poor segments of Muslim society. We were working with them to learn more about this important system and to dispel myths about these schools. During this visit the team went to two schools, one for boys (with 2000 student) and one for girls (with 800 students) to learn about their needs to improve the educational experience in the school. It is important to note here that the team did not start with any assumptions about the schools except for that they had needs. If we had started saying: 'Because it's a girl's school in a village and they need money,' then our research would be guided by this question. Then, we would be trying to figure out how much money they need based on this assumption and infrastructure. Instead, what we actually did was go there without knowing the specific needs, so our question was very general.

When we asked 'what do you need?' we were extremely surprised when the girl's school asked for a basketball court and also asked for musical instruments. Of course, this was not what we expected and against pre-existing notions about Madrasa systems. Our research team came back to the US with our findings, and our work helped give positive exposure to these very relevant school systems in Bangladesh. As a result of our reporting, 40 children from the Madrasas received scholarships to learn English in addition to their schooling and 3 teachers were sent on an all-expense paid tour of the US education system to educate them on other teaching methods. -Dr. A.A.

Here it is important to refer to grounded research because it is relevant to this particular field. Often researchers do not start from a specific hypothesis because they cannot develop anything before they do the research. Therefore, **grounded research** assumes that a researcher starts her/his research without any assumptions or hypotheses. Instead, they let the information on the ground produce its own assumptions or hypotheses (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

Of course, there is always a debate about grounded vs. hypothesis research. Often, in 'real life,' our research will be a mix between both. As a

researcher in Peace and Conflict Studies, you should learn to appreciate the ability to work within the two and navigate both.

→*For more reading about forming hypothesis and research questions, read Creswell (1998-9, pp. 94-112, Chapter 4) Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design in the Link (PAGE 2).*

→*For more information on creating a hypothesis, read Gay and Airasian (2003, Chapter 2) Educational Research in the Link (PAGE 2).*

Step 4. Determine Purpose

As stressed earlier in the *Principles of Research in the Field of Peace and Conflict,* we must be clear on the purpose of our research. The purpose should always be about advancing peace, averting the negative effects of violence or war, or preventing conflict. The purpose of the research is the guiding force of research conceptualization.

Being clear on the purpose of the research at this stage contributes to how we narrow and focus our research topics and helps clarify what outcomes we are after. At this point, it is important to start stressing that all the steps under the *Conceptualization Stage* do not follow a linear trend—they do not go from the first step, to the second and so on. Instead, the steps are cyclical. This means that the more we ponder over the research topics, narrow and focus them and define our purpose; the more we find a need to go back and start over again: selecting a research area, or redefining our research topics and refining our narrowing and focusing. This becomes more prudent, as we will see, once we conduct literature review.

The cyclical nature is a normal process in all research, so be ready to be challenged in your ideas of what you think 'should be' and go with the flow of change! This flexibility in refinement will take your project to a professional level that will reach the demographic you are looking to help as well as create a coherent well-researched piece of work. "It is also important to understand the 'human face' of research….In reality; educational research is truly a process of trial and error. As you work through your research topic, you will find things that don't fit as expected, or topics that are not as clear on paper as they were in your head, or topics that require considerable rethinking and writing. That is the reality of research. However, working thorough these realities will be an important and satisfying measure of your understanding, more important and satisfying that having everything work perfectly for the first time," (Gay & Peter, 2003, pp. 40).

EXAMPLE CASE: Determine Purpose

For the Lebanon research, it may be safe to say that the purpose of the research is to highlight the detriment effects of using weapons of mass destruction on a civilian population, to expose the Israeli war machine, and to add pressure in the world to stop using such weapons.

Step 5. Do Literature Review; Develop a Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

A crucial element of conducting research in social sciences in general is to put together a **literature review**. This refers to reading and writing about the effort made by researchers to recognize the work conducted by other researchers and scholars on the same topic or similar ones. We conduct literature review in order to learn about what others in the field have done to understand similar phenomena like the one we are interested in. We do this in order to learn of theories, concepts or frameworks which may inform how we go about our own research (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). The importance of developing theories or frameworks to inform our work is that they too contribute to a solid internally coherent research. A specific theory or framework would serve in ways similar to those of hypotheses and assumptions. They provide predictions and also provide guidance on what to look at in order to test such predictions (Creswell, 1999).

Researchers often come to a stall in their work when they realize either that there is too much research on their chosen topic, or not enough. Fortunately, Gay outlines a few general guidelines to assist you during your literature review:

1. Do not include everything you find: smaller and organized helps you get to your main points clearly and concisely.

2. For largely-researched topics: rely on directly-related studies, not studies that have 'a little' to do with the topic. "Heavily researched areas usually provide enough references directly related to a specific problem the need for relying on less related studies" (Gay & Peter, 2003, p. 47).

3. For little-researched topics: use any study related to the topic to help you develop a framework for this new topic (Gay & Peter, 2003).

Most students confuse literature review with readings about a specific conflict of peace situation. Often students and researchers are expected to produce a framework which would enable them to understand their topic of research. Such framework must be built on the scholarly and academic work they read during the literature review. A theoretical framework then tailors specific theories of concepts in order to form a guide to the study.

→*To read more about how to write and research a literature review, read Creswell (1998-9, pp. 94-112) Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design in the Link (PAGE 2).*

EXAMPLE CASE: Literature Review

A student researching the topic of the effects of cluster bombs on the health of civilians in Lebanon and who is researching the history of that conflict is not conducting literature review. This is only collecting background information and helping him or her get knowledge about the conflict. He/she would be conducting literature review when he/she looks at academic, scholarly, and professional literature on the use of weapons of mass destruction and their effects on populations, and then can apply the theories he or she has read about to her own work.

Step 6. Determine Type of Research: Exploratory and/or Explanatory, Descriptive, Causal, Comparative, and Correlational

The last step in the *Conceptualization Stage* is to clarify whether the research is explanatory or exploratory. This means finding out whether the research attempts to just describe a specific situation or to go further into explaining it. Both approaches are important and needed in our research.

Story from the field: Exploratory Research

In order to illustrate the importance of exploratory research, I always use the example of conducting exploratory research when we need to assess the needs of a group of displaced people who had to leave their homes and now live in difficult conditions. In order to provide humanitarian assistance for them, a research must be solely concerned with understanding their demographics (age and gender) and specific health and nutrition needs. Accordingly, you can figure out how a humanitarian campaign can best meet their needs. A research in this case must be descriptive and exploratory. It would not be wise or productive at that time of humanitarian emergency to attempt a more analytical explanatory research on the conflict causes and dynamics. -Dr. A.A.

Explanatory research is that which attempts to clarify why and how there is a relationship between two aspects of a situation or phenomenon.

Exploratory research is when a study is undertaken with the objective either to explore an area where little is known or to investigate the possibilities of undertaking a particular research study.

Both exploratory and explanatory approaches are important and are needed in specific situations. When discussing steps of research we must stress that you should be aware of which type of research you are conducting: exploratory or explanatory (or a combination of the two). This will help you further clarify your research. When you know that you are interested in exploring or describing a situation, you will tend to ask questions such as "what", "where", "when", and "who". When you are interested in explaining a situation you will ask more "why" and "how" questions.

→*For examples of these, see Research Methodology, Kumar (2005, pp. 10-12) in the Link (PAGE 2).*

EXAMPLE CASE: Explanatory and Exploratory Research

In the example case of our research on the effects of cluster bombs or weapons of mass destruction on the civilian population's health in Lebanon, we have come from deciding on an area of research, narrowing it down to a specific situation, created a hypothesis and created a literature review about what is already written on this type of warfare.

Next, we would be conducting both an exploratory descriptive research to determine the specific effects on various sections of the population, and an explanatory one. When we look at how and why the use of such weapons differed in terms of effects compared to when conventional weapons were used we would be entering into the explanatory part of our research, especially the causal one.

Causal research attempts to determine if a certain variable of combination of variables, affect another variable. A **variable** is any entity that can take on different values, that is anything that can vary in a specific situation. Some example of variables could be age, eye color, or country. These variables can be assigned a numerical value during your analysis to be used for your data collection.

Correlational research tries to establish if there are relations between variables even if they do not depend on each other. For example, as a child grows both his shoe size and belt size grow. The correlation between the growth of the belt and show sizes are not dependent on each other, but they happen simultaneously.

Comparative research attempts to compare research variables across different groups in order to determine whether there are differences between the groups. Another question is whether such differences are caused by being a member of one group or the other (for example, higher education among men compared to women), or are correlated with such groups.

The benefit of being aware of these different types of research approaches is to help *focus and narrow* your research to make it manageable. The worst outcome of any research is unmanageable data that is not guided from the onset by such approaches.

However, it is important also to realize that such approaches do not always exist at the beginning of a research. Most often they emerge as we start to look at the data and conduct analysis. This is when we decide that we want to test comparative, correlational, or causal assumptions. The entire process of research conceptualization, design, and analysis is much more dynamic than it may appear, and it is important to be ready to continually refine and redefine what you are looking for.

Finally, and as this is the last step of the *Conceptualization Stage*, it is important to remind of the cyclical nature of this stage. The steps do not always follow a linear progression from step 1 to step 6. Instead, the conceptualization process tends to move forward and backward between these steps until we are content with a specific conceptual design that meets our interests and our resources.

Stage 2: Design

Step 7. Identify Initial Partners: Insure participation and inclusiveness and cultural input

Conducting research is the work of several people. True, you may be able to carry out a research project entirely on your own, but we do not recommend it! No matter how much you think that you can be neutral and objective in your approaches, we as humans are always influenced by pre-conceived notions and ideas which may subconsciously have an effect on how we go about our research. Also, most research projects are limited in time and funding, and if you try to do it alone, you may not be able to complete it.

> ***Story from the field: Building a Team***
>
> *Whenever I conduct research in any given country, I select a group of 6-10 individuals to form the research team. The individuals, I always insist, must include equal or close to equal numbers of men and women. This is an issue of empowerment for women in many societies, which is fundamental to our work in Peace and Conflict, and a very effective means for ensuring that we receive diverse views, and that we are not excluding points of views because of gender exclusion or over representation. In addition, I always look at the important factors in the situation I am researching, such as religion, ethnicity, tribalism, and so on. Accordingly, I make sure that the research team includes members of said groups on as equal basis as possible.*
>
> *-Dr. A.A.*

In more cases than not, a research project also needs the help of others who can support its various elements. It is vital for your project to consult experts in the field and those who can help you make a plan in a professional manner. For example, for any project you need scholars, academicians, or researchers who would help develop the conceptual *design* of the project. You also need people who can carry out the research in the field and who must be very familiar with the cultural context of the research project in order to have the proper entry into the populations targeted by your research. You also may need people with strong quantitative and statistical knowledge to support the data analysis. As you continue your design process, you will find the list goes on and on. It is your job to plan for these needs and find a team that will best work for your goals in Peace and Conflict studies (King, Lynn, & Fitz-Gibson, 1987, pp 7-41).

For these reasons, we must plan ahead in terms of forming a proper team to conduct the research. It is incredibly important that such teams are representative of the populations that you will be researching.

Although you are the project manager, you should remember how important having a research team is to your projects success. The team should be engaged in the research from the beginning, not only at the implementation stage, but also at the conceptualization and design stages. When the researchers are included at the conceptual and design stages they feel ownership of the research and become familiar with its logic and rationale which allows them to conduct their work more effectively. They also provide invaluable contribution because of their familiarity within their own context. This is particularly important when the lead researchers are themselves foreigners or not part of the cultural context of the research.

Step 8. Develop and Operationalize Research Questions, Variables, and Constructs

If we compared the entire research project to a car, the next two steps are its engine! In other words, the research project would function properly or not based on how well these two steps are designed and developed.

Once the conceptualization process is completed and we are clear on our ideas and what we want to test in our research, we can look at them from a research standpoint. When we transform concepts into researchable and measurable variables, we are operationalizing. **Operationalization** is the process of transforming concepts into coherent measurable variables. This is easy when we are measuring tangible ideas such as the population's gender or age. Of course, operationalization becomes a challenge when we want to measure abstract concepts, such as peace, safety, love, hate, and so on. Although we can detect such concepts physically, to measure them we need to develop tangible indicators which would reflect them. So if we want to measure the existence of peace in a specific country, we need to develop indicators that would, if possible, show that peace prevails and if they do not; would indicate that peace does not prevail.

Developing such indicators becomes part of what we refer to as constructs. A **construct** is an abstraction of a behavior that cannot be observed directly. Instead of direct observation, a construct is observed through indicators; for example: kindness, intelligence, and artistic ability can be considered constructs. These indicators need to be operationalized to be somehow observed and measured (Gay & Peter, 2003). Obviously the design of indicators must be addressed in the literature review and conceptualization stage because it entails looking at what scholars have used to measure such abstracts, how they developed them, how they validated them, and how they used them. For example, if you are rating a server at a restaurant and the question is asked "How friendly was your server?' the answers are operationalized constructs: 'not friendly, average friendly, and very friendly.' This helps you as a researcher make constructs more countable, and then it becomes a variable (see definition below). With such review, we can move forward either by adapting existing constructs if they meet our research needs, or by designing our own while being informed by what others have done.

Another task associated with this step is to establish the relationship between variables. A **variable** is any entity that can take on different values, that is anything that can vary. An example of a variable could be age or country. These variables can be assigned a numerical value to be used for your data collection. Often research attempts to understand how certain variables relate to each other: is one of them dependent on the other? Do they correlate with each other?

EXAMPLE CASE: Variables

Let's say we find that where cluster bombs were used there is a higher instance of a certain cancerous disease. How can we prove that there is a relationship between the variable of "using cluster bombs" and the variable of "increased instances of cancerous diseases"? Did the cluster bombs cause it, and hence one is dependent on the other? Or were there other variables that may have contributed to this increase in the instances of cancer? This is where we go back to our conceptual design and re-examine our research approaches: correlational, causal, and comparative.

One final word on developing constructs relates to culture. Abstract concepts such as peace, love, hate and so on are all *culturally constructed*. What we understand in one culture to be an indication of love or hate may not appear the same in another culture. Therefore, it is important to realize the benefits from conducting careful literature reviews in such area, and to engage the proper partners who have the proper insight into their own culture.

→*For more information about operazationalizing and creating assumptions, read* (Gay & Peter, 2003, Chapter 2) *Educational Research in the Link (PAGE 2).*

Step 9. Identify Target Population and Samples

In research, **population** refers to the total sum of individual cases that we are interested in researching. The population in our example can be the civilians who were exposed to weapons of mass destruction, and those who were exposed to conventional weapons. Take note, however, that a population is not always made of human beings. It can be made of inanimate objects, animals or anything that you can count and analyze. For example, if we were to research the frequency of using electronic voting across different elections, the elections themselves would be the population of the research (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

Often we cannot conduct research with entire populations; therefore we must resort to sampling **approaches**. Sampling refers to drawing a sample from a population. Different types of sampling are used depending on the type of research you are doing. In quantitative research, we collect data from a sample in order to generalize the results to the entire population (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Staying with the quantitative approaches to sampling for now, generalizing research results from a sample to a population is achieved via a careful selection of the sample in order to represent all the characteristics of the population, and to do so with sufficient numbers. The key to good sampling in quantitative research (*good* means that you can generalize it to the entire population) is achieved by:

1) Selecting a sample which represents the same characteristics of the population

2) Selecting a sample size which allows for generalization.

Random sampling is a process which gives each individual case of the population an equal chance to be selected to the sample. Random sampling is viewed as the most efficient way to ensure sample

representativeness. There are different approaches within realm of random sampling such as: *simple random sampling, stratified sampling, systemic sampling, and cluster sampling.*

In qualitative research, (and sometimes in quantitative research if it is not concerned with the ability to generalize results from the sample to the population), the logic of sampling is different. In our case, sampling is used to select representative cases of the population, but not with the purpose of generalizing results. Here we want to just look at certain research questions within certain cases which we assume represent the population. Purposive, snowball, intensity, and homogenous sampling are example of such types (see Gay and Peter, 2003) for more definitions of more types of samples). Don't try to stick to the very rigid guidelines of sampling that are very scientific based. It is very time-consuming and costly. When you are working with Peace and Conflict there is a factor of urgency. Develop approaches that will give you the level of scientific credibility but be realistic. It does become a limitation but it is a reality: quantitative samples cannot always apply in human situations. The downside is that we will not be able to generalize to an entire population, but ultimately we will be able to say something meaningful about conflicts, peace processes. In selecting a sample or a sampling model, be practical and how to investigate sufficient information.

→*For more information about sampling, read (*Gay and Peter, 2003, Chapter 4) *Educational Research in the Link (PAGE 2).*

Step 10. Develop Participatory, Inclusive Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

Once we are clear on the concepts, we want to measure the samples of populations we will work with, we can decide on the best ways to collect the data. Collecting data can take place in various forms. We usually cluster such forms into two categories: qualitative and quantitative methods. **Qualitative research methods** refer to approaches which use open-ended methods of investigation or questions. Examples of qualitative methods include interviews, focus groups, and observations. In such approaches a researcher gathers "words" or event descriptions to use for data collection. Qualitative research gives more space to interviewees or members of focus groups to express themselves in their own words rather than to force on them a certain scheme of response such as a number scale.

Qualitative research methods are powerful in gathering in-depth data and in ensuring that data is natural. They are also much more time-consuming at the analysis stage. Often qualitative approaches are concerned with the "why" and "how" questions, and give a good narrative from the local perspective about what is going on.

The quantitative research method is an approach that is based on quantifying research questions and variables in *numerical terms*. Surveys and questionnaires are the most common methods for gathering quantitative data. In designing surveys for quantitative research, you will measure each variable using numeric scales. These scales vary in their nature, with major implications to how to analyze them statistically. For example, a question about "what is your gender" would use a *categorical scale* of "female" or "male". Although, a question about "what is your age" allowing respondents to report their actual age would result in a *continuous scale*. In addition, a question about "how do you like this class?" with a scale

of 1-5 with 1= I hate it and 5= I love it, would result in an *ordinal scale*. The differences between the three scales dictate the types of statistical tests that we can use later to examine our hypotheses and assumptions.

Whether you develop qualitative or quantitative methods, you must make sure that the wording of your questions and the methods of data collection are both valid and reliable. Validity and Reliability are crucial concepts in research. Simply put, **validity** refers to the degree to which a question or a construct measuring a specific variable (tangible or abstract) is accurately measuring it.

For example: How do I measure the level of affection between people? Is it by the extent they hug and physically get close to each other or is this culturally specific?

If you can insure that you are measuring affection using the appropriate indicators culturally, your measurement is valid. **Reliability** refers to the accuracy in collecting data. It deals with how we apply a research instrument evenly and equally with all research subjects. So, if I use a measuring tape to measure people's height and the measuring tape is designed properly it would be considered *valid*. If the measuring tape in an inconsistent manner--sometimes asking people to take their shoe off, and sometimes not--then we say that the measurement is invalid.

Ideally you should combine qualitative and quantitative approaches for any research in Peace and Conflict. This combination will give you the opportunity to conduct thorough research from many different angles.

→*For further reading on these approaches, read The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research (Denzin & Lincon 2005, Chapter 6) and Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative (Creswell 1998-9, Chapter 6) in the Link (PAGE 2).*

Story from the Field: The Case for Case Studies

In all evaluation research missions, project managers and donors expect that the evaluation conducted would be able to tell them with accuracy what impact they achieved. But this seem to be difficult to achieve especially when they expect quantitative, macro, and causal results! I remember during one evaluation mission in Liberia (evaluation of Talking Drum Studio-TDS- media peacebuilding work), and as I realized that it was impossible to find such evidence using the parameters I mentioned above that I suggested that we turn to the opposite parameters: qualitative, micro, contributional results. I came to that realization after several meetings with the project staff who would tell me compelling stories of success and impact that they have in communities because of their media-based peacebuilding work. The problem was that such stories did not lend themselves to the quantitative, macro, causal parameters. But they were there! And they in fact impacted people. This is when I realized that if I insisted on the method (quantitative, macro, causal) I would be missing the evidence on the ground. The evidence on the ground was suitable for the alternative method (qualitative, micro, contributional). So, I decided to use the case study approach to document each of these success cases. –Dr. A.A.

→*See Appendix C for how/why/when to conduct case studies*

Step 11. Conduct Cultural Reality Check

As explained earlier, cultural factors are critical in the field of research for Peace and Conflict. Therefore, as you are designing your research components and as you move towards drafting qualitative and quantitative instruments to gather data, make sure to review them from a cultural perspective.

The 'cultural reality check' can be conducted by members of the research team you composed, or by experts on the cultural context of your research. Examples of issues that must be addressed culturally vary.

Story from the Field: Reality Check

While conducting a conflict resolution workshop and research in Burundi in 2001, my research team and I planned a pre and post evaluation of the two-day workshop. We wanted to identify knowledge, attitude, and skills of the participants on issues before and after the workshop.

I met with the organizers of the workshops and said that we had done numerous types of these evaluations. Driven by efficiency, I showed them the previous models and then we thought we'd tailor it to those specific workshops. I was of course trying to impress them; I was driven by efficiency and speed. During this meeting, I showed the organizers the pre and post stage Likert scales (1-5 standard scale) but to my surprise, they were upset by the idea of using them. I didn't understand why it was such a big deal, but they did not like the check-box system. They explained that in their system 'our people' are not familiar and comfortable with the boxes. I tried to convince them about the efficiency and why, but they said the people did not feel they could express themselves that way. Although it was frustrating to me, I realized that if I did not work within their system and in a way that was comfortable for them, I would lose valuable input, so finally I asked them what they wanted. They told me to create a survey that asks a general question and to ask them what they do in specific situations, and ask them the same questions after the workshop. Of course, this created more challenges and obstacles, especially in the fact that I would have to find a translator and would have to spend more time on the data and qualitative analysis. However, my cultural reality check was that in their culture they were not driven by speed or efficiency, but by how the people would respond and express themselves. The director of the program offered to help and I realized that as a researcher I should not have imposed my own ways and accepted the way they wanted it. Of course it took longer, but they sent me the data translated and I worked on it but it ended up being what they wanted and were comfortable with, which is something should be considered as well. –Dr. A.A.

Don't start with an assumption that a certain model will work culturally. Check first because people want to be fairly represented and expressive of themselves. Something may be wrong with your method, not the other way around!

→*For another good example of culture reality checks, go to Voicing Differences: Gender and Civic Engagement among Karachi's Poor, by Dr. Abdallaan Asdar Ali in the Link (PAGE 2).*

Step 12. Conduct Pilot Tests

Pilot testing is the effort made to rehearse a research instrument before launching the survey widely and officially. Pilot testing is usually conducted with a small number of respondents to a survey or interview to assess whether the questions are clear or not, how long it takes to complete the survey or interview, and if there are missing areas in the research. The best practice is to send out researchers to conduct pilot testing with about 20 individuals (if it is a survey) in order to assess such issues. This becomes the final test before making your last adjustments. Do not under-estimate the importance of pilot testing. This trial run can detect mistakes and misunderstandings that may ruin a research if not corrected (Gay & Peter, 2003).

Story from the field: Do you know what I mean?

We conducted a survery with students at UPEACE about their use of different media (radio, TV, Internet) before and after coming to UPEACE, we realized that a question read: "Did you use the internet before coming to UPEACE," which was interpreted as had you ever used it in your life, instead of what we intended, which was "Did you use the internet before coming to the UPEACE Campus today?" We adjusted the survey to avoid more confusion, and got better results because of our initial pilot testing. -Dr. A.A.

Step 13. Make Adjustments Accordingly

Needless to say, based on the cultural check and the pilot testing, a researcher will make adjustments to the design of research instruments to ensure that they are valid and reliable. With this step, the *Design Stage* is complete and you are ready to launch your research in the real world for the *Implementation Stage*.

Story from the field: Make Adjustments

During a research project in Burundi in 1998, we were faced with a situation where the group of Burundian researchers refused the inclusion of a question in the survey about whether a respondent was Hutu or Tutsi. It was such a sensitive issue at that time and asking such a question could have had negative implications. After this, we decided to take out the question and instead ask respondents about their ancestral rural home, which usually indicated with much confidence whether they were Hutus or Tutsis. Interestingly, 3 years later when we conducted a similar survey in Burundi, we were told by the researchers that it was OK to ask the question about Hutu of Tutsi! This was due to a wide media and government campaign over the three years to help people identify with their own ethnic identity without fear.
–Dr. A.A.

Stage 3: Implementation

Step 14. Design Participatory, Inclusive, Culturally Appropriate Research Plans of Implementation

Now you are finally ready to conduct the research in the field. To do so, you must go back to some of the principles we discussed earlier, especially those about inclusion and participation.

It is probable that you have already accounted for including several groups in your sample, and that you have hired a culturally appropriate research team who have the proper entry into the research populations. With that, you also want to make sure that the approaches they use to address different segments of the population are appropriate, and that proper methods are used. For example, if you are conducting the research with illiterate groups, then make sure that your researchers will provide them questions in a simple easy manner, and will not impose on them terminologies or methods (quantitative for example) which do not fit with the illiterate population's context. Instead, make sure that the researchers use simple language, and gather data in the way the respondents can express their answers to their fullest capacity. In this stage, you should also develop a code of conduct for your research team as well as yourself. "Rese
'arch studies are built on trust between the researcher and the participants; researchers have a responsibility to maintain that trust, just as they expect participants to maintain it in the data they provide" (Gay & Peter, 2003).

Story from the Field: Cultural Considerations

It is important to make sure that cultural considerations are observed. In one research in Bangladesh, our team failed to gather data from housewives because our entire research team was made of men. We had selected only men because we were conducting a research on Madrasas. Knowing that these are conservative highly patriarchal institutions, we made an exception to the rule of including women in our research teams. But we paid the price when housewives would not speak to strange men knocking on their doors when their husbands were at work!
-Dr. A.A.

An example of a focus group can be seen in research conducted in 2007, in Egypt, on the effectiveness of a TV drama. During this work, the researchers conducted a series of focus groups in urban and rural areas. The researchers were instructed to set up focus groups in a circle format in order to ensure openness and equality between participants which reflects our personal liberal values. When they went to conduct the research in the village called Behera, the team found that focus group participants had already arranged themselves in a model that represented their cultural hierarchy of status, gender and age: the mayor and senior men in the front, followed by young men, women and finally children in the back of the room. The researchers realized that if they had tried to impose their own model of a circle it would have caused confusion and perhaps could have resulted in refusal to participate because it would have symbolized a sign of disrespect. So the researchers went against 'the book' and kept that set-up which allowed for people to be open in their own comfort-zone.

In terms of logistics for the research team, make sure that your researchers are safe and comfortable. Their needs will vary from one place to another. In Kenya, researchers asked for umbrellas to protect from the

sun. In Sierra Leone they asked for insect spray. In most places they ask for ID badges and letters of introduction. Provide them with appropriate accommodations and with pocket money for their trips as well.

Step 15. Gather, Code and Store Data Properly

Usually research data is gathered in the form of paper surveys, paper interviews, or focus groups. It is very possible that you can lose such forms if they are not stored properly. It is also possible that you can get confused if you do not identify the data properly. One rule of thumb in data gathering and coding is to assign to each form a unique ID. When you do this, you can easily track the forms and correct electronic data coding when needed. It is important to never under-estimate the need to assign unique ID to each research form.

Story from the field: Details, Details, Details!

During a baseline research in DRC in 2010, we commissioned local researchers to conduct a survey in 4 different locations in DRC: Kinshasa, Lumumbashi, Matadi, and Bukavu. Even though we developed one standard survey to be conducted, the researchers made local decisions to add or take out some questions in order to fit for their own local needs but did not inform the lead researchers. As a result, when the data was coded in excel and sent electronically to analyze, it became evident that we couldn't do it without carefully reviewing the design of each of the 4 survey forms and standardizing them in order to analyze it adequately.

Similarly in Morocco in 2010, we sent the survey electronically to researchers in 3 areas: Casa Blanca, Tetuan, and Marrakesh. When we received the data back in one of the locations, we realized that an entire set of questions from one region was totally missing. When we investigated, we found out that during the copy process, a whole page was dropped. So we ended up having lost a large number of people's responses to many questions. This became another limitation, so we had to include that error in the report and talked about it in the analysis.

If anyone has been through something like this, you know it is a researcher's nightmare. You have to pay attention to details of details on how it was gathered, and makes you waste time that could have been used in other things. You can end up with bad research or bad analysis! –Dr. A.A.

Once you have the forms identified, make sure that they are stored in a safe place. Depending on the nature of the data and the sensitivity of information, you may consider careful security measures.

Usually we code data on computerized systems such as SPSS or Excel. Of course careful attention to data coding is expected and it is recommended to have researchers double check data coding. In all cases, make sure that data files are saved frequently, and that back-up versions are stored safely. Computers crash and your data may be lost!

Step 16. Conduct Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis

This is the main point of all this research stages and steps! Ultimately, we want to test our research questions, assumptions, and hypotheses. Data analysis is the step in which we look carefully at the results, explore what it tells us, compare results, look at correlations, look at causality, and dig into qualitative data.

If you have been organized from the beginning, and to the extent that you stuck to a focused and narrowed research design with clear assumptions and hypotheses, and out of which all your variables and questions emerged, you stand a good chance of enjoying smooth data analysis. However, you were all over the place, and had no internal coherence between your research questions and the conceptual elements of your research you stand a chance of sifting through chaotic data and losing precious time and resources in the meantime.

As we explained earlier, quantitative analysis depends on the nature of your scales and numeric data. You choose the proper statistical tests based on a clear understanding of the assumptions and hypotheses you are testing. Some of these tests are: Frequencies, T-Test, Chi Square, ANOVA, and Correlations. With practice, even without a mathematical background, you will be able to understand the logic of each test, when to use, how to apply it, and how to interpret it.

Qualitative data analysis on the other hand does not rely on numbers. It relies on what we call **qualitative significance**. This means we look at the relevance of what is important in what people say or do as well as what this mean to the research. In doing qualitative data analysis, we are concerned with the stories of people, their anecdotes, their

Story from the field: Qualitative & Quantitative in Action

In Sierra Leone, 2002, we conducted research on human rights. In that research we identified 3 major areas which related to human rights, the country which were women's issues, children's issues, and citizen's issues. In each category we had subgroups, such as abuse, early marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), and many more. In the FGM example we asked a sample of 400 people if they thought mutilation was a violation by law, family rules, or by tradition on a scale according to how prevalent it was in their situation. As expected, the FGM showed that many people saw it as a violation by law but not by tradition, and they also agreed that it is very prevalent in society. To our surprise, our research showed that the women in the study did not see it as a violation of human right. When we looked into this quantitative data, we saw that the qualitative data explained that FGM is currently a rite of passage for a woman and an entrance to 'secret societies,' which could not be ignored culturally. Here the combination of quantitative results and qualitative data explained it and it helped us understand what was going on.

So what do you do? The report showed that based on the information, we should recommend something different than what is usually expected. Since we knew that the majority of people don't think FGM is a violation of human rights, especially women, we had to approach it differently. As a result, we recommended working with women and through them, especially in the secret societies. As a researcher, your knowledge is what informs you on how you can recommend intervening.
–Dr. A.A.

→See the full report in Appendix A

experiences, and the meanings of them all. We accomplish this by conducting various types of analysis such as content analysis, discourse analysis, and narrative analysis (Druckman, 2005, pp. 257-275).

Step 17. Write Report

The final step in conducting research is to write it in a report format. A research report usually includes:

1) An ***Introduction*** explaining the reason for conducting the research, and the benefits of conducting it. It may refer to some of the highlights of its findings. A short section may follow which would include a historical account of the conflict, if any.

2) A ***Literature Review*** section discussing the main theories and concepts used by scholars and academicians on the research topics. This section may also include the theoretical or conceptual framework.

3) A ***Methodology*** section explaining the three stages discussed here: conceptualization, design and implementation. Of particular interest in this section is the rationale for constructing variables and sample designs.

4) A ***Findings*** section to include the results of the research. Here you show what your data analysis revealed, and provide your interpretations of such data. This is also a place to relate the literature to the results.

5) A ***Recommendations*** section to include the actions that you suggest in order to advance peace, avert violence, or prevent conflict. This section may be preceded by a short summary of the main findings and interpretations.

Our most important advice for the report: be honest and do not hide anything. For example, if there were shortcomings with the data, or the sample you ended up using did not meet your requirements, just explain them. Do not try to hide them. It is better that you be upfront about them and explain any limitations they caused. Such approach averts much confusion and dismissal. Remember that your ultimate mission is to promote peace and work towards the resolution of conflict issues.

Appendix D is a sample of real research conducted in the field of Peace and Conflict studies.

Appendix C is a guide on how/why when to create a case study.

Step 18. Disseminate Results to Appropriate Constituencies

Your report is usually needed for donors or for your own graduation assignment; you may need to share your research results with other audiences. Here are our suggestions of how to get your research more widely noticed, in the media, or in academia.

ACADEMIA: Producing a published document could further your career in academia. To do so you may want to produce a journal article; this would conform to the standards established by the publisher. Citing

other research, appreciate that you are a scholar and that your work is valuable in the field, show theories, assumptions, and research methods, etc. know recommendations in terms of 'can you prove it?'

MEDIA: Sharing the results of your findings with media could result in more attention to an area that is in high need. You will be speaking to a different audience who may need a sort of 'translation' of your project. In this case, you want to produce a simple, easy to understand, presentation for the lay person so that you can increase your reach into the general public.

Story from the field: Presentation Success

I recall that the Bangladesh research on Madras's in 2004 achieved most success via a presentation to high level officials in the US State Department, who, based on the report findings and recommendations I presented to them in a meeting, decided to fund English language training to Madrasa students, and fund educational tours for some of the Madrasa teachers in the US.

-Dr. A. A.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR: You may want to use your research to influence policy makers. This too would require a different type of presentation focusing on the main findings and connecting them to the actions that emerge out of your recommendations. During this process, you will focus on using practical language to reach your audience and not overwhelm them academic recommendations and actions.

Regardless of how you decided to disseminate your findings, it is important that you do so. Your additions to the field of Peace and Conflict studies could further educate the public, help fund more research, change policy, and possibly save lives.

CONCLUSION

Peace and Conflict Studies is a relatively young field! We are still learning and exploring our way within multiple well-established disciplines such as psychology, sociology, political sciences and so on. In the process, we are producing a multi-disciplinary approach to inform various sectors of societies worldwide about peaceful approaches to conflict. Our work requires ingenuity, creativity, openness, compassion, and humility. Our goal is to show more people all over the world examples of peace and justice, and to learn together how to sustain them and replicate them in more places. Otherwise, we would be wasting time and resources. I told you from the beginning: we are researchers with attitude, and our work can make a difference!

-Dr. Amr Abdalla

Glossary of Terms

Assumptions are hypotheses but are formulated differently. Instead of an "if-then" format as expected in natural and quantitative research, assumptions are for qualitative research where numbers and frequencies of cases are not the backbone of tests. In qualitative research, and also in exploratory research, even quantitative, the use of assumptions is not as strict as with hypotheses, and lends itself to wider varieties of research approaches.

Causal research attempts to determine if a certain variable of combination of variables, affect another variable.

Comparative research attempts to compare research variables across different groups in order to determine whether there are differences between the groups.

A **Construct** is an abstraction of a behavior that cannot be observed directly.

Correlational research tries to establish if there are relations between variables even if they do not depend on each other.

Delimitations of a study are those characteristics that limit the scope (define the boundaries) of the inquiry as determined by the conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions that were made throughout the development of the proposal.

Explanatory research is that which attempts to clarify why and how there is a relationship between two aspects of a situation or phenomenon.

Exploratory research is when a study is undertaken with the objective either to explore an area where little is known or to investigate the possibilities of undertaking a particular research study.

Focusing and narrowing is a process intended to bring the research area and topics finally to a state of being researchable

Grounded Research assumes that a researcher starts her/his research without any assumptions or hypotheses. Instead, they let the information on the ground produce its own assumptions or hypotheses.

Limitations of the study are the characteristics of design or methodology that set parameters on the application or interpretation of the results of the study

Literature review is reading and writing about the effort made by researchers to recognize the work conducted by other researchers and scholars on the same topic or similar ones. We conduct literature review in order to learn about what others in the field have done to understand similar phenomena like the one we are interested in.

Operationalizing is the process of transforming concepts into coherent measurable variables.

Pilot testing is the effort made to rehearse a research instrument before launching widely and officially.

Population refers to the total sum of individual cases that we are interested in researching.

Qualitative research methods refer to approaches which use open-ended methods of investigation or questions.

Qualitative significance means we look at the relevance of what is important in what people say or do as well as what this mean to the research. This significance does not rely on numerical values.

The **Quantitative Research Method** is an approach that is based on quantifying research questions and variables in *numerical terms.*

Random sampling is a process which gives each individual case of the population an equal chance to be selected to the sample.

Reliability refers to the accuracy in collecting data.

Sampling refers to drawing a sample from a population.

Validity refers to the degree to which a question or a construct measuring a specific variable (tangible or abstract) is accurately measuring it.

Variables A variable is any entity that can take on different values, that is anything that can vary. An example of a variable could be age or country. These variables can be assigned a numerical value to be used for your data collection.

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