

Chapter 2

Recognizing the Science of Peace to Build Positive Peace

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ABSTRACT

Different academic disciplines conceive of peace through their respective lenses. Often overlooked are the theories and guiding principles of the field of peace and conflict research itself. Peace science, the discipline examining the causes of war and conditions for peace, can help bridge the gap between peace movement moralism and pragmatism toward achieving peace on multiple levels. A research-practice communication gap is discussed as a strong impediment in making peace science relevant. Communication barriers, the requirements of academic publishing and the lack of public relevance for academia are examined. Examples of often under-recognized peace research contributions are presented within the framework of the Global Peace System. In doing so, the potential and actual relevance of those research contributions to real-world peace and justice issues is emphasized. The authors recommend that peace researchers make conscious efforts to contribute to peacebuilding practices, public discourse and attempt to reach audiences beyond academia in general.

INTRODUCTION

We are at a stage in human history where we know better and more effective alternatives to war and violence. We understand the causes of war and the conditions for peace. We systematically analyze a destructive War System and an evolving, growing Global Peace System. We are a community of peace and conflict researchers developing knowledge that advances the practices of creating a more just and peaceful world.

This invented manifesto issued by an imagined community of peace researchers sums up the tremendous potential that peace and conflict scientific contributions can make in the real world. Peace is no longer

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an elusive catch-all term for well-intended people who just want to get along. Peace as a process and discipline is grounded in proven, effective practices guided by increasingly strong theoretical perspectives. In this chapter, the authors argue that by making the science of peace accessible beyond academia, peace workers can produce more enduring and just processes of peacebuilding. The primary obstacle in this hopeful scenario is the gap between peace science and peace practice. In other words, peace science can and should be more relevant.

In this chapter, the authors discuss the importance of making peace research relevant to practical peacebuilding initiatives. Emphasis will be placed on approaches from peace research that address multiple structural determinants of war and violence that halt immediate violence (negative peace) and transcend those often-limited efforts to achieve a more just and sustainable peace (positive peace). The authors do not argue against preventing or halting violence, which is described as negative peace. Most of the time, negative peace is a necessary precondition for creating positive peace. However, it becomes problematic when negative peace is seen as a satisfactory end result while underlying structural issues are not addressed, even in cases of successful nonviolent resistance (see for example Braatz, 2014). In this chapter, the authors show that the field of peace research is not only mature enough to provide viable conceptual alternatives to war and violence, but also recognize a series of global trends and evidence-based insights of empirical studies that create conditions for positive peace.

The chapter is grounded in the notion that peace is not a static end-product of a world without war, but a systemic and dynamic process of human evolution in the three areas of social change, global collaboration and constructive conflict transformation. Trends in the three areas certainly move us toward the possibility of ending all wars. Peace with justice, however, is the far and aspirational end of a continuum from war to peace. It is a preferred future of human evolution that may never be fully achieved. Insights from peace science, if made accessible, understandable and useful to the many beneficiaries, can enhance peacebuilding practices on personal, local, regional, national and global levels to move humanity in the right direction on the continuum from war to peace.

The chapter is organized around three main sections. First, the authors introduce the evolution of peace science from its genesis to the contemporary importance of peace research and practice. In the next section, the authors point to specific communication barriers and bridges between the research and practice communities. Those barriers include the requirements and constraints of academic publishing on researchers, but also the accessibility and dissemination of academic studies through journals and books. The third section introduces the Global Peace System, where the authors provide selected examples of where empirical peace research can be inherently useful to the practice of building positive peace within global trends in the areas of global collaboration, constructive conflict transformation and social change. While there exists a real gap between peace research and its usefulness in the broader context, the authors point to approaches already in place, working to bridge the gap and identify potential pathways forward. The chapter concludes by reiterating the importance of not only advocating for peace, but for peace science as one of the tools necessary to build and sustain positive peace. The overall objective of the chapter is to provide a pathway to bring peace researchers and practitioners into mutually beneficiary relationships.

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