Working Together: Bridging the Researcher-Practitioner Gap

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Abstract

In this article we share our professional experiences in bridging the gap between research and practice. These experiences are discussed from the standpoint of the roles of consulting analyst and conciliator. Five research-practice areas are viewed through the lens of the former role: alliance dynamics, issue re-framing, sources of conflict, procedural justice, and turning points. Three areas are discussed from the latter perspective: goals and motivations, cognitive and motivational biases, and relationship development. Each theme is organized into three parts that illuminate the value of research knowledge for practices at both a macro and micro level of analysis: research related to the theme, the type of assignment and the practical applications related to that assignment, and lessons learned for practice. Implications of this type of career for our view of social science are developed in a final section along with suggestions for graduate education.

Bartunek and Rynes (2014) argue that the traditional gap between researchers and practitioners stems from a variety of factors including their different logics about tackling problems, their tolerance of time horizons to solving problems, their communication practices related to connecting with one another, and their values about rigor and relevance. However, these authors also support the idea that these tensions can create dialectics, or contradictory elements that can serve as driving forces to enhance outcomes for both groups. For example, practitioners understand the complexity of the problems they face while the researchers bring a conceptual rigor to this complexity to highlight the essential elements of these problems.

As both researchers and practitioners who have conducted rigorous research and developed a more in-depth understanding of the complex phenomena, we have worked within this researcher-practitioner framework for several decades. We have lived simultaneously in two cultures as academics and as consultants. Our approach has been to strive for an integration of these cultures rather than to compartmentalize or treat them as being antagonistic.

We entered the world of practice as trained academic researchers. This training informed our perspectives on a variety of practices, in the role of analytical consultant or conciliator. But it was the specific types of practices that suggested where to find relevant research literatures. We were recruited to consult because of, rather than despite, our research contributions: For example, research on alliance dynamics informs the practices of multilateral negotiations; research on types of conflict informs the way that political actors deal with their competing interests and ideologies. These examples illustrate the different ways in which research and practice are bridged.

In this article we provide eight examples of how this type of career works. Our aim is to explore how research consulting is done and to derive lessons that may be of more general use. Concepts and findings were adapted to the problems we confronted. This is evident in the examples to be presented. In each example advice is based on research knowledge, usually in the etic or comparative tradition, that fits the case and setting, reflecting an emic or case study orientation.[1]

A first task was to immerse ourselves in the case by learning about its history, key actors, and sources for impasses. We did this about a variety of multilateral international negotiations on arms control, climate change, and the Law of the Seas as well as bilateral talks between the Philippines regime and a liberation movement. In counterpoint to these international settings, we provide examples from the domain of grievance counseling. The switch of setting gives the reader an opportunity to learn about how the research-practice nexus works across domains. All the examples retain the feature of mixing emic understanding with etic comparisons. By taking this approach, we seek to generate lessons learned for both practice and research.

We demonstrate this approach with five examples from the perspective of a consulting analyst and three from the experiences of a conciliator. After summarizing relevant research, we present the practical challenges that arise in various cases, illustrating the tensions between what research recommends and what works in practice. We conclude each section by closing the feedback loop with lessons learned or take-aways for practitioners from these applications. In a final section we reflect on how these careers were developed and how they shaped our views about the value of social science training and knowledge. These reflections lead to suggestions for graduate education.

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[1] An etic approach emphasizes breadth by analyzing large samples to evaluate hypotheses in a deductive tradition. An emic approach emphasizes depth by analyzing cases usually in an inductive tradition. (For more on these approaches see Druckman, 2005.)

Role of Consulting Analyst

This section provides five examples of the way that the analyst role was implemented in the context of complex problems on a world stage. In addition to being problem-driven, the analyst provides support from outside the process. The support often takes the form of written reports to the clients. Each example to follow starts with relevant research, shows how the research was applied, and generates lessons learned from a comingling of research and practice. These examples include a long impasse in conventional force reduction talks between the NATO and Warsaw Pact alliances, a walk out by the Soviet delegation in strategic reduction negotiations, a threat to an incoming administration in the post Marcos Philippines, how to achieve a consensus in global climate conferences, and bridging differences between the North and South on sea boundaries.

Alliance Dynamics

Research

Insights from research on multilateral international negotiation contribute to our understanding of the way alliances negotiate with each other. One insight comes from studies on responsiveness, showing patterns of reciprocation among negotiators representing delegations (Druckman & Harris, 1990). Another insight concerns tactics, notably the way different members of a delegation display hard or soft postures rather than presenting a unified front (Brodt & Tuchinsky, 2000). A third insight refers to the well-known hypothesis of ingroup (own alliance) cohesion in response to outgroup (other alliance) hostility (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). A fourth area of research deals with types of compromise highlighting the importance of trading on different preferences or log-rolling in order to construct an acceptable package (Raiffa, 1982). A fifth idea is negotiating for side effects rather than for getting agreements (Ikle, 1964). Each of these research-based insights was used in our consulting assignment performed for the US delegation participating with the NATO alliance on the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) negotiations between NATO and the Warsaw Pact (from 1977-1980).

Consulting Assignment

We were asked to analyze the dynamics of the multilateral process. With regard to responsiveness, we found that three members of the Warsaw Pact responded to their Bloc leader (Soviet Union) with tough postures (refusal to concede) following concessions made by the leader in the previous round. This was interpreted as a tactic similar to the well-known good-bad cop routine often used to elicit concessions but also to confuse the other negotiating team by reducing predictability. Interestingly, we also found that when one alliance increased its toughness, the other increased its cohesion by showing more uniformity of response by each of the country member delegations. Most importantly perhaps we suggested a package deal in which the Warsaw Pact advantage in heavy missiles (ICBMs) would be traded for the NATO advantage in the lighter cruise missiles. This trade was a classical log-rolling deal that was reacted to positively by the US chief of delegation. It was not however a solution. It dawned on us (the analysts) that this was a negotiation that would serve the side effect of preventing unilateral reductions in conventional forces by appearing to negotiate in good faith for mutually agreed reductions. Thus, agreement was not sought by either alliance.

The alliance dynamics input, which also included an assessment of alliance objectives, led to a recommendation about a viable trade between weapons systems. This was well received by the U.S. Chief

of delegation, Ambassador John Dean. Despite its plausibility, the proposal was set aside in favor of continuing the talks to prevent unilateral troop reductions.

Lessons Learned for Practice

The lessons learned from this application should be helpful to a larger professional community, particularly those involved with large-scale conference diplomacy. Much of the work done by these negotiators and their support staffs involves monitoring the moves and communications made by other delegations. Our analyses provide guidelines that assist with the monitoring. First, it is useful to keep track of shifts in coalitions by noting how uniformity and divisions alternate at different times in the conference. But it is also important not to be fooled by apparent divisions. As shown in the case of MBFR these may be tactical ploys. Second, it is also important to be skeptical of tough rhetoric used by other delegations. Typically, this other-posturing fosters cohesion within a negotiator's own alliance reducing flexibility and increasing the chances of impasses. The goal is to focus on the content of proposals rather than the way they are communicated. Third, negotiators should look for log-rolling opportunities. To do this effectively, they will need to know the issue preferences of the other delegations. With that information in hand negotiators are ready to calculate a trading formula where the less-preferred issues are dealt in return for gains on the more-preferred (or their less-preferred) issues. This is easier said than done but well worth the effort. At least it sets a tone for fair bargaining**.**

Re-framing Issues

Research

In their research on turning points, Druckman and Olekalns (2013) found that negotiators frequently chose to reframe the issues when confronted with a crisis. The simulated crisis in their study consisted of the death of a president. Re-framing was the most popular choice among three possibilities: to abandon the talks, continue from where they left off, or reframe the issues. Another finding was that mutual dependence leads to reframing the issues when trust between the parties is low.

Types of reframing include the way issues are defined, the scope of the issues, the task of negotiating, assumptions about the other's preferences, and the mechanics of trading. With regard to defining the issues, one challenge is to move from an abstract or symbolic discussion (global climate change) to more concrete negotiable issues (carbon emission quotas). About the scope of the issues, the distinction between broad values and interests is relevant. A considerable amount of research has shown that when values or moral issues are addressed the talks typically break down (e.g., Harinck & Elemers, 2014). We discuss this research further in the next section.

Regarding the negotiating task, the way the talks are framed may create expectations for how the process will unfold. For example, Small et al. (2006) showed that when a negotiation is framed as a discussion, it is less intimidating or confrontational. Assumptions about the other party's credibility, about the risks of alternative proposals, and about how and when to bargain loom large during planning and have been shown to influence the process (e.g. Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 2011; Johnson, 1967). Gauging issue trades for equivalence and log-rolling opportunities are an essential part of evaluating alternative agreements (e.g., Larson, 1998; Moran & Ritov, 2002). These are some of the research-based insights, from an etic perspective, used in two emic-based consulting assignments, one performed for the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the other for the State of Illinois Department of Mental Health.

Consulting Assignment

Progress in the bilateral Strategic Arms Reductions Talks (START I)—opening on June 30, 1982, in Geneva—came to a halt when the Soviet delegation walked out of the talks in 1983. They objected to the deployment by NATO of Intermediate-range nuclear weapons (INF) in Europe. Our assignment was to develop a plan that would encourage the Soviet delegation to return to the table. We proposed to learn about their negotiating objectives by performing a content analysis of the discussions. With access to the transcripts, we coded the issues discussed and the extent of commitment expressed on each of those issues. With measures of frequency and intensity, we inferred objectives.

In short, the Soviets were intent on balancing their advantage on strategic weapons with their disadvantage on intermediate-range weapons systems (INF). The US plan was to separate these systems by convening a separate negotiation devoted to INF, which occurred in 1987. This is an example of issue de-linkage. It entailed a reframing of the issues that would encourage them to return to the table in 1985. Their willingness to reframe may have been due to mutual dependence and low trust as shown in the research reviewed above. An agreement among them was reached in 1991 and replaced by New Start in 2011.

The re-framing input provided a rationale for getting the Soviets back to the START I table. This was considered by the ACDA director, Kenneth Adelman. The Soviets did return to the talks and we (the consultants) were rewarded with a lunch in the State Department dining room where we were introduced to Ambassador Paul Nitze.[2]

An earlier assignment consisted of reconciling differences among three mental health care professions working within the same outpatient center: clinical psychology, social work, and child psychiatry. The differences concerned training models, outpatient services, teamwork, and status. During a week-long workshop, it became increasingly clear that the issues were inchoate. The major contribution made by us was to provide a clear rendering of issues that were negotiable. A challenge was to separate or de-link the large issue of status from the negotiable issues of responsibilities, salaries, and benefits.

The key achievement was to identify four issues responsible for tensions between the clinical professions represented on the staff. These issues paved the way for negotiations that eventually eased the tensions. For example, instead of negotiating professional status within the organization, the workshop participants agreed to consider the composition and responsibilities of the different professions on training teams. To accomplish this reframing, we showed how equivalent trade-offs could be realized and implemented in a changed working environment that encouraged perceptions of credibility.

Lessons Learned for Practice

The lessons learned from these applications may be helpful to a larger practitioner community. First, attempts to reframe are likely to be useful when a negotiation has reached a critical juncture. Even more so when the negotiators have nowhere else to go and do not trust one another. Second, during reframing, the negotiators should separate the higher stakes issues from those that have less dramatic consequences. The latter are usually more easily negotiable. Third, for linkage possibilities, adding issues may bring underlying sources of the conflict to the surface. Subtracting issues may increase negotiability by shedding the more difficult intangible matters such as status. Fourth, de-link the values or ideological components from the interests' aspects of issues. Shared interests can be achieved in the context of different worldviews. Prioritize

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[2] Paul Nitze's famous "walk in the woods" was featured in a Broadway/West End show by that name. The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies bears his name, usually referred to as the "Nitze School."

the interests over the ideologies, a task largely unheeded by the US political parties these days. Informal workshops may be helpful for reframing the sensitive issues into a negotiable agenda.

Sources of Conflict

Research

Taking the lead from early theoretical work by sociologists on the interplay between values and interests (e.g. Aubert, 1963), we have pursued a program of research on how value differences influence negotiation over conflicting interests. Experiments have shown that when values are made explicit in a negotiation it is difficult to settle the interests (Zechmeister & Druckman, 1973).

More recently, various interventions have been shown to reduce the negative influence of value differences. These include de-linking the two types of conflict (Druckman et al., 1988), conducting a pre-negotiation workshop discussion of the values (Druckman et al., 1988), affirming the other (Harinck & Druckman, 2017), and combining explicit affirmation with facilitative mediation (Harinck & Druckman, 2019).

In addition to the experimental research, we developed a theoretical approach that captures the dynamics of the interplay between the two sources of conflict (Druckman & Zechmeister, 1973). The approach consists of a set of propositions that highlight how these sources of conflict play out through time and repeated interactions between the conflicting parties. These propositions were applied to an analysis of an important negotiation that came on the heels of a consulting assignment where we developed models of the stability of the Marcos regime in the years leading to its fall (Druckman & Green, 1986).[3]

Research-Based Consulting

To help the Philippines government work toward an agreement, the U.S. administration arranged a negotiation with the Communist insurgency known as the National Democratic Front (NDF) and its military arm, the New People's Army (NPA). Our negotiation analysis consisted of two parts, ripe conditions for getting to the table, and the negotiation process (Druckman & Green, 1995). The process analysis applied our framework on sources of conflict.

The analysis consisted of describing the negotiation process in terms of the theoretical propositions put forth earlier by Druckman and Zechmeister (1973). Those propositions captured cycles of cooperative and competitive interactions during the talks. We showed that moderate factions on each side (government and NDF representatives) effectively moved their more extreme delegates toward the moderate ideologies of the political center. In effect, the parties' contrasting values or ideologies were depolarized.

This depolarization enabled the negotiators to confront their different interests on the issues. However, the process broke down when a mediator's—a respected Philippines Senator—proposed formula failed to produce an agreement. The formula was sufficiently vague to call attention to shared goals, but it also masked the substantive differences that needed to be resolved for an agreement. Through time, the moderate factions within each party moved toward their more extreme members to return to a state of polarization leading to a more intense conflict. The fundamental issues of power sharing, an integrated military, and land reform remained in limbo. The NDF leadership encouraged the NPA to resume the armed

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[3] The results of our political stability modeling was "confirmed" by Imelda Marcos during a visit in her Manila apartment in 2002.

struggle when the cease fire expired. Prospects for reconciliation during the remaining years of the Aquino administrated withered.

Lessons Learned for Practice

The lessons learned begin with a suggestion that mediators and other conflict practitioners separate these sources of conflict. It is important to segment the issues into value (or ideological) components and interests. With confidence in making that distinction, parties can try several approaches for encouraging a settlement or a more lasting resolution. Settlement goals are within reach when the values are separated from the interests or when each disputant affirms the other's qualities. Resolution goals are more likely when they encourage an informal facilitated exchange that increases understanding.

The practical application discussed above shows that interactive dynamics are important. When interventions fail to reduce the intensifying effects of value differences, the conflict is likely to escalate out of control with increasing polarization as in the Philippines case. At this point a re-framing of the issues in the direction of shared goals, discussed in the previous section, may be helpful. In team negotiations, strengthening the moderate factions without risking further escalation within the teams could also be helpful.

Procedural Justice

Research

Considerable research has been done on procedural justice (PJ) in negotiation and mediation. Much of this work is reviewed by Druckman and Wagner (2016)**.** These authors organize their review in terms of negotiation stages. During pre-negotiation meetings, PJ principles are discussed, group boundaries or identities are defined, and issues are framed. These discussions structure the way a negotiation is managed (e.g., Mikula & Wenzel. 2000). During the negotiation process, PJ principles are strongly related to problem solving with an emphasis on equality rather than equity (Hollander-Blumoff & Tyler, 1988; Lind & Tyler, 1988). A group values orientation offsets negative effects of power asymmetries: more powerful negotiators with this orientation seek fair treatment and integrative agreements. The justice issues raised during pre-negotiation discussions and the negotiating process often surface in the outcome.

When adhered to during the process, the PJ principles of fair treatment and transparency increase the chances that the outcome will reflect the distributive justice principle of equality (Albin & Druckman, 2012) and high mutual benefits (Hollander-Blumoff, 2017). It will also be a more durable agreement when the parties comply with the terms through time (Pruitt et al., 1993), particularly when the principles are observed during implementation. In peace agreements, a key is trust and relationship building (Rosoux, 2013).

Another finding from justice research has a clear practical implication. This is referred to as compensation: An unjust process can be offset by a fair outcome just as the negative impact of an unfair outcome can be lessened by a fair process. Relationship building is helped by fair processes even when outcomes are unfair. More broadly, adhering to PJ is a step toward creating a culture of peace (Bar-Tal, 2008).

The research on justice guided our analysis of a multilateral global climate negotiation prepared for the Centre for Multilateral Negotiations. This application is discussed in a policy brief authored by Wagner and Druckman (2019).

Commissioned Policy Brief

Several useful suggestions emerged from Lynn Wagner's role as a participant observer in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Each of four principles was at play in the 200-delegation conference. She was instrumental in creating e-portals during the meetings to maximize transparency. She also advocated for fair representation in small contact groups and during the text drafting process. A third PJ principle, fair treatment, was evident by assuring that no cluster of UNFCCC delegations would "control the pen." A variety of perspectives were represented in the final document. However, a fourth PJ principle, voluntary agreement, was difficult to achieve. The conference president gaveled the conference to a close without considering objections raised by several delegations.

These principles are difficult to put into practice in large multilateral or global conferences. The most difficult principles to satisfy are fair representation and obtaining a consensus. Conference Secretariats must balance transaction costs with the benefits of integrative agreements. Typically, they settle on vague provisions crafted to satisfy the lowest common denominator.

Lessons Learned for Practice

The research reviewed and the application described offer several lessons for practitioners in a variety of service delivery pursuits. One lesson is to learn to implement the four PJ principles, particularly fair treatment and transparency. A second is to link the principles to problem-solving processes and push for integrative (joint benefits) agreements. Third, use the examples from the multilateral climate change negotiation application to find creative ways to move complex conferences toward solutions that serve the interests of all the delegates. And fourth, sustain the gains in trust that were achieved from a procedurally just process by building on the new relationship, for example, in the form of inclusive community activities.

Turning Points

Research

The concept of turning points (TPs) has been a fertile area of negotiation research over the last three decades (Druckman, 2020). Highlighted themes in this research include monitoring and adjusting moves, synchrony or matching, the role of crises, issue reframing, precipitants and departures, and institutional structures. A sampling of findings are the following. Adhering to a reciprocity norm, negotiators compare offers and demands in an attempt to sustain a synchronous pattern (Stoll & McAndrew, 1986; Patchen & Bogumil, 1995). The matching typically results in tough posturing on all sides leading to an impasse (Griessmair & Druckman, 2018). Turning points often occur in the context of crises or escalating conflicts. Realizing that there is no way out, negotiators often attempt to re-start the talks by reframing the issues, as discussed in an earlier section.

Other precipitating factors include internal (procedures and substance) and external (policy changes, third party interventions) events. Progress in negotiations over high–risk security issues was shown to depend on outside interventions (Druckman, 2001). On the other hand, Crump and Druckman (2012) showed that progress in multilateral trade negotiations depended on internal (procedural or substantive) precipitants: procedures were more important in the Ministerial-level WTO talks; substantive factors dominated in the committee-level GATT talks. Many of these findings contributed to practical applications in two quite different contexts.

Clinical Practice and the Law of the Seas

Turning points have been useful in clinical practice and in diplomatic negotiations. In his recent article, Laws (2020) described his experience with the way critical moments (turning points) facilitate negotiation in the context of his reconstruction clinics where disputants are encouraged to tell stories about their past experiences on joint projects. He illustrated the importance of transitions in the interactive story-telling process as moments of revelation. He took advantage of these moments by (a) being vigilant to or monitoring opportunities for recall, (b) making these moments accessible to the story-tellers, and (c) using them to sequence or structure the stories being told. The sequencing was helpful for generating additional details and putting into motion a string of other critical moments. In terms of the TP framework discussed above, he used the reflective stories to precipitate critical reflections (opportunities for recall) that reshaped the way the story unfolded leading to further moments of reflections or TPs. A key in this example was the clinical intervention that made the moment salient and created a path for relational progress to be made.

Another applied example of TPs comes from Ambassador Tommy Koh's work at the second UN Conference of the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS II) in the early 1980s. A first TP was Koh's appointment as President. He emerged as a compromise candidate that resolved a bitter dispute between the leading contenders. His work as president was critical in completing the treaty. Among other things, he crafted compromise language to resolve intractable differences between the developed and developing countries on defining a sea boundary zone and on the continental shelf, which became Article 74 in the treaty (second TP).

A more difficult conflict dealt with 32 amendments, many from the Reagan administration, that did not meet the established criteria for inclusion in the treaty. He called for a cooling off period followed by establishing a group of 12 medium-sized countries to play a bridging role between the developed and developing countries (third TP). Only Spain and Turkey held out from accepting the proposed solution. The key TP, however, may have been the way that Koh addressed the crisis by re-framing the purpose of the treaty as neither a product of the West (a colonial treaty) nor a codification of an existing treaty. The result was a treaty that satisfied both blocs, the developed North and the less-developed South. Similar to the clinical intervention example above, Koh's work initiated and sustained a string of TPs that built on each other.

Lessons Learned for Practice

For practitioners the TP research and applications suggest that there are opportunities to create TPs (a sense of agency) as well to react to circumstances not in their control (a sense of social determinism). Negotiators are both diagnosticians and influence agents. The diagnostics reveal moments for action or intervention as illustrated by Laws' and Koh's efforts to seize opportunities for change. Negotiating crises occur, at times out of the blue, demanding a re-thinking of the process or a re-framing of the issues.

Another challenge is to coordinate the re-framing or procedure changes during the crisis. Koh's cooling off period may be helpful. But it may only be a short-term remedy if the disputing parties disagree with the proposed changes. Procedural changes, such as organizing working committees, may be easier to implement than the substantive task of re-conceptualizing the issues. Getting the parties back to the table is a first step in resolving an impasse. Keeping them there is the larger challenge. Mediators and other third parties are particularly helpful when negotiators are keen to avoid the risks posed by alternative agreements on security (borders, arms control) issues.

Role of Conciliator

In this section we describe three examples of how the conciliator role, conducted in the context of interpersonal and intra-organization conflict, was informed by relevant research. A conciliator aids the parties in dispute by "systematically isolating disputed issues in order to develop options, consider alternatives, and reach a consensual settlement that will accommodate their needs" (Wenying, 2005). When counseling parties in a campus-supported dispute resolution program, the research on mediation was very helpful, as many college campuses have discovered (Bienstock, 2019). In fact, these programs have been run for years (Douglas, 1998), and often become a part of campus culture (Jameson, 1998). The three sections to follow show how this role was implemented in the context of a university faculty grievance office.

Goals and Motivations

Research

Much has been written about goals and motives in negotiation. In the field of communication, Wilson and Putnam (1990) differentiated between instrumental goals focusing on substantive outcomes, relational goals dealing with power and trust, and identity goals related to face management. They argue in this work that these goals function interdependently in a dynamic fashion as individuals negotiate all three goal parameters from utterance to utterance. Other negotiation research, summarized by Druckman and Robinson (1998)**,** explores the strategic value of pursuing either competitive/distributive or collaborative/integrative instrumental goals. The distributive strategies are aimed at emphasizing positions over issues and making concessions to reach an agreement, while the integrative strategies focus on information sharing to identify interests and priorities and inform positions aimed at addressing the key issues. Research cited by these authors also indicates that spirals of distributive behavior can be broken by either not reciprocating or by responding with more integrative behavior. Findings also reveal that quick agreements may be bad agreements because they limit information sharing causing the achievement of sub-optimal outcomes, also known as a "winner's curse." Tough postures may work when followed by softer behavior (Hilty & Carnevale, 1993).

Research discussed by Brett and Thompson (2016) and De Dreu (2004) also explores the underlying personal motivations driving goals. For example, De Dreu finds that three broad classes of motivation tend to influence information processing and strategic choice in negotiation: social motivations regarding the distribution of outcomes between the negotiator and the opponent, epistemic motivations aimed at gaining a rich and accurate understanding of the world, and impression motivations dealing with identity management. These studies reveal that pro-socially motivated negotiators try to maximize joint gains whereas pro self-motivated negotiators are more individualistic and competitive. Pro-social negotiators are still integrative regardless of whether opponents are pro-self or pro-socially motivated. Epistemically motivated negotiators, preferring structured strategies, are more likely to reach higher joint gains because they ask more questions about interests and priorities**.** While negotiators generally want to settle, it is important to ensure that motivation is reciprocated.

Practical Applications

An attempt was made to apply discoveries about goals and motivations to guide a general approach to working with faculty members who had grievances. Questions were aimed at determining which kinds of goals and motives were driving their case. Typically, faculty came to the office seeking justice for a perceived

administrator infraction (e.g. bad evaluation, low raise, improper teaching assignment). Rather than viewing these alleged infractions from a substantive or social motivation perspective, faculty viewed them primarily as affronts to their professional identity. In most cases these issues caught the faculty member by surprise and disrupted his or her personal and professional life. As a result, identity goals and impression motivations would dominate initial conversations. Their goal orientation was to bolster their own face as a competent, well-intentioned individual forced to deal with a perceived injustice.

A challenge was learning how to shift from the emotional identity-focused interactions to substantive goals aimed at problem solving. Perhaps the identity-driven reactions simply need to play themselves out while looking for cues that the client might be ready for a solution and a switch to substantive goals. In applying the literature, a first inclination was to encourage big picture thinking by exploring the larger context of the dispute. Clients were asked on many occasions to explore how the issue they were raising impacted their career trajectory. The goal was to determine whether the issue they were raising was ultimately productive or counter-productive to their personal career goals. Often this was a tough sell. They were focused on the immediate issues, even though resolving these issues would require a longer-term perspective.

Lessons Learned for Practice

The first lesson learned is that approaching a conflict from an integrative perspective is very challenging for individuals, particularly at the initial stage. Revealing personal interests displays a great deal of vulnerability and thus requires significant trust. Perhaps in economic negotiations where identity and justice issues are not intertwined individuals can be encouraged to take an integrative approach. But, when the issues are viewed as personal attacks, emotions are high and external attributions dominate, the conversion to a focus on longer-term interests rather than immediate solutions is not often welcomed. Even though ultimately addressing these interests was important the time needed to get to that conversation was underestimated. The lesson learned was not to assume that individuals want to explore personal interests even though this conversation might benefit them more than focusing on positions. This transition is difficult.

A second lesson learned from the practical application of this area of research focuses on the need to assess very early on whether individuals are bargaining in good faith. Are they really interested in solving the problem or continuing the conflict to retain the victim identity? An underlying assumption of most negotiation research is that individuals are motivated to bargain in good faith to reach an agreement of some kind. The most surprising insight learned during the faculty grievance experience was that many people who came to the office were not motivated to resolve substantive issues in good faith. A number of these individuals were drawn to conflict even though they professed distaste for it. They found it energizing to retain the victim identity and receive social support to address their victim status.

A third lesson is that practitioners must clearly understand disputants' many motivations and how they intersect with one another as the conflict emerges. The research reviewed above makes it clear that goals and motives are complex and often paradoxical. A stated substantive goal of resolving an issue might paradoxically conflict with an identity goal of continuing the conflict, for example. The lesson is clear that in future conflicts it is important to look first for the need to repair face, second to build a trusting relationship, and then finally to explore substantive concerns. These goals and motives must be aligned to have a chance at meaningful change.

Cognitive and Motivational Biases

Research

When individuals came to the Faculty Grievance Office, they were generally plagued by several common biases that impact their ability to move toward a resolution of their issues. As the summary by Brett and Thompson (2016) indicates, when parties frame their goals in terms of minimizing losses they make fewer concessions and obtain fewer agreements. In addition, when they display over-confidence, they are likely to resort to more rigid behavior. The fixed-pie bias creates the perception of incompatible goals which blinds people to their compatible interests (Thompson, 2015). Generally, these biases cause individuals to fixate on positions and not explore interests. In contrast, taking the perspective of the other person helps build value by moving beyond biases.

The emergence of these biases also creates a social climate problem for the ability to sort through tough issues. Negative framing and the fixed-pie bias, combined with the need to defend identity goals, creates the kind of emotional flooding and anger that impacts problem solving (Barry, 1999; Liu, 2009). Specifically, anger limits the generation of new information while reinforcing old slights, which ultimately reduces joint gains. Anger can generate retaliation and impasse since negotiators are more positional and less issue oriented. On the other hand, anger that provides new information about the negotiator's own higher limits motivates the counterpart to make concessions. Also, anger that is perceived as authentic provides useful information about the intensity of preferences, which may produce higher joint gains (Daly, 1991). In contrast, reflection on one's own role in the conflict has the opposite effect. It generally creates a positive tone that helps build rapport and creative problem solving which ultimately avoids impasse.

Practical Applications

When conversing with faculty members about their concerns a point was made about looking for biases that might impact their perspectives on the issues. In nearly every conversation with a faculty member it became apparent that most of them entered the conversation with a loss frame. They focused on protecting their reputation (e.g. I received a bad evaluation), or retaining a favorable situation (e.g. my chair wants to reduce my lab space) that was taken away for some reason. On many occasions an attempt was made to shift the conversation to a positive frame and discuss potential opportunities associated with the issues being addressed. In one case a faculty member was being asked to expand her teaching load due to the chair's opinion that she was no longer research active. She had no publications in many years. Instead of focusing on the teaching we explored the broader picture of her career trajectory. Did she want to be research active? Did she want to transition to different kinds of opportunities? Sometimes these conversations went well, but other times they were viewed as distractions.

Looking for evidence of a fixed-pie bias in conversations with faculty also proved to be helpful. They believed they were competing with administrators for the same outcomes, and the process for deciding how the pie should be sliced was unfair. In one dispute a faculty member and an administrator were fighting over the proportion of summer funding the faculty member might receive. Since they were unable to expand the pie and fold in other issues, such as research funds and teaching load, they reached an impasse which required a hearing. In addition, these discussions often became fraught with anger, exacerbating the fixed-sum bias.

Anger also played a role in interactions with disgruntled faculty. This may have been tactical in the sense of seeking support from the conciliator in order to confirm their views of justice. The risk for the conciliator was to lose credibility as a neutral facilitator by assuming the role of advocate. A way around this dilemma was to defuse the tension by repeating elements of the narrative that caused the anger, asking

questions and expanding information about their issues. It was vital to show understanding of these distressing events. Then it was also important to ask about the impact these issues were having on their family.

In most cases, the spillover was significant. Spouses became upset and the ripple effect was wide. When that was understood, it was important to empower the person to think broadly about issues. Exploring the issues and then developing strategies for addressing them became the priority. These conversations often took more than one session and included eliciting permission to talk with their administrators about the issues. It was important to move slowly and deliberately through the story, diffuse anger, and ultimately convert it to an issues-based conversation.

Lessons Learned for Practice

The first lesson for conflict practitioners deals with the impact of moving disputants from a loss to a gain frame particularly when the person is angry about their circumstance. The movement seems to happen best in three parts. First, it is important to listen to the client's plight and capture their story. This systematic listening process begins to expand information while demonstrating a commitment to help. Second, it is important to enable the faculty member to reflect on the issues being raised by sorting them out and understanding how they impact one another. The key is asking lots of questions and prioritizing the issues. Third, after priority issues have been established, it becomes possible to move toward a future orientation and ultimately to a gain frame. The question asked is: What is the better future and how can parties accomplish it? This sequence was executed with a faculty member who was asked to reduce her lab space and the number of guest scientists invited to the lab. The outcome was that she reframed the issues in terms of the way personal tragedies impacted on her productivity and how she needed to reconnect in a more deliberate way with her family. She ultimately decided to retire and move away to set up a business with her daughter.

The second lesson learned is that disputants must focus on the larger context associated with their dispute. Faculty typically begin with the belief that if the narrow problem they faced was resolved, life would return to normal. In most cases, the issues faculty are facing have been developing for years and finally reached a head in the form of a crisis. Now they must confront the crisis and the immediate problem that precipitated it and be directed to the larger picture surrounding the dispute. For example, rather than fighting about whether the faculty member should teach more or less, the larger issues at play are exploring different kinds of productivity, career trajectories, teaching and research support, and service activity. In most cases this was the first conversation held with a client about broader career objectives and how they should manage their productivity demands. Chairs rarely take these steps during evaluation meetings.

A third lesson learned is to not overreact to disputant anger aroused by their victim status. Those untrained in dispute resolution might want to believe that the faculty member's angry narrative of an injustice is the only perspective worth exploring. Adopting that perspective would cause the conciliator to be a faculty advocate rather than a neutral tasked with helping forge a resolution that impacted parties might embrace. In one case a faculty member brought her spouse to a meeting and the spouse began to yell and pound on the table. We were able to listen and then move through the steps outlined above to diffuse the situation, which required two hours to achieve.

Relationship Development

Research

Brett and Thompson (2016), like many negotiation scholars (e.g., Kimmel et al., 1980) focus extensively on the issue of trust. This research indicates that trust in a counterpart (often defined as bargaining in good faith or willing to be cooperative) facilitates information sharing, insight, and joint gains. **This** involves information sharing and question asking. Low trust causes distributive strategies and positional bargaining whereas high trust creates a more integrative bargaining context. Lewicki et al. (1998) **discuss** two types of trust, referred to as knowledge and identity trust. The former refers to a willingness to share information that helps parties predict the other's behavior with some accuracy. The latter emphasizes the recognition of similar interests and values and the acknowledgement of a shared identity.

A second relational issue impacting the dispute resolution context is power and status. In their introduction to a special issue of *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research,* Greer and Bendersky (2013) highlight some of the key findings associated with the benefits of enhanced power and status in negotiation. Among the findings they cite are the impact of power differences in negotiation. The research indicates that power differences tend to produce inequities and dissatisfaction with mediated agreements. In addition, when parties build a relationship in which status differences are large, the low status person tends to defer and show greater respect to the high-status individual. The lower status person also tends to have fewer opportunities to influence and contribute to the interaction, and when they do contribute, their views are seen less positively. On the other hand, it appears that deference to the higher status person creates expectations by that person for increased responsibility. They are expected to listen better and consider others' wishes more than low status negotiators. The key to this research then is understanding how perceived power and status differences impact a disputant's approach to a conflict.

Practical Applications

Applying the trust research in the role of conciliator led to an understanding that most faculty seem to have a knowledge-based, as opposed to an identity-based, foundation of trust with their administrator. When trust is not based on shared interests or a common identity, it seems easy for the faculty members and administrators to distrust the integrity of one another. On many occasions faculty have accused their administrators of lying to them about some commitment they made or did not make in the past. In academic institutions it is not uncommon for individuals to be peers one day, and boss-employee the next day. Chairs and deans are often selected from faculty ranks when vacancies arise. Even when individuals reported that their one-time peer "used to be my friend," the cooperative relationship seemed to vanish, or was greatly overestimated in the first place.

This lack of trust begs the question of how trust works in the context of seeking to restructure professional relationships. An observation is that trust under normal working conditions is primarily knowledge based and tends to be superficial. Sure, faculty do their jobs, for the most part, and the organization keeps moving forward. But, when a slight hiccup occurs in the system, the conversation becomes rules-based with little trust being exhibited.

Thus, the practical application of the research on trust makes it clear that the lack of trust, either knowledge or identity-based, leads to more positional bargaining. In several instances relationships between faculty and administrators sputtered quickly, which resulted in both parties digging in on their heels, even when integrative options were readily apparent. But the larger application issue relates to repairing the lost trust to the point of crafting some sort of deal to address the substantive issues. Attempts were made to try repairing or rebuilding a knowledge-based trust relationship with both disputants so that a deal could be

brokered. This strategy worked on many occasions because a great deal of time was spent communicating with both parties about the issues and how to address them. In other words, knowledge was increased.

The status and power issue in relationships also played an important role in managing cases. Universities are hierarchical workplaces with layers of administrators, professors, academic specialists, and a host of other titled individuals, each of whom is aware of his or her position in that hierarchy. As a result, power and status were generally an overt part of most conversations. Almost without exception the administrators were perceived as having all the power, and perhaps even more than they actually had. In one case an international faculty member came into the office and complained that chairs and deans "just don't care about us because they can do whatever they want!" Because of this proclamation, the faculty member was positional and confrontational. This stereotypical characterization of all chairs and deans made me wonder whether faculty tend to exaggerate the power of their administrators. This exaggeration negatively impacts problem solving as the research on power discrepancies suggests.

Lessons Learned for Practice

A key lesson learned about relationships in conflict is that they may drive the extent to which individuals are willing to see possibilities for settlement. Trust and power gaps were discussed early on in conversations with clients. The chair or dean was unfair, or said one thing and did something else. When this fundamental relational norm was compromised individuals often felt powerless, because predictability had just been removed from their employment, leading to frustration and a sense of despair.

A second lesson that presented itself deals with the issue of power and status in managing a dispute. Recall from the discussion of goals that individuals accompany substantive goals with relational and identity issues. The forces driving desired levels of power and status are identity objectives. Individuals seek to achieve power and status to fulfill their identity needs. The lesson is that, after assessing the relationship between the parties to determine the potential for settlement, it is vital to understand how identity needs for power and status are impacting those relationships. Ultimately, relationships must change when deals are struck; some level of trust is required to believe that the other will honor the deal. But those making the deal must first believe that they can live with it. They will not lose power or status, and perhaps even enhance it, when the deal is executed**.** A lesson learned is that a deal can be crafted to ensure that, at a minimum, a disputant's dignity is not compromised when the settlement is reached. This is an important lesson in working with disputants.

More generally, the dispute management process at the university was changed significantly by adding additional services to treat a wider variety of disputes beyond those focusing only on faculty members and administrators.

Working Together: Challenges, Achievements, and Education

The lessons learned for practice in each of the eight areas reviewed emerge from an approach that uses findings from research conducted in an etic tradition to make sense of a variety of cases typically understood from an emic perspective. By combining these perspectives, we shed the divisions between these approaches in favor of integration. The roads that we have travelled from academic research training to consulting and conciliation practices have resulted in lessons that apply across a swath of practices. In this section we reflect on how these careers were developed and how they shaped our views about the value of social science training and knowledge.

Our careers have featured efforts to bridge the "social" with the "science." We have attempted to bring the social to the science, not as two parts of a field but as an integrated whole. This article heralds an interdependence between social applications and the generation of knowledge. The examples suggest how

researchers gain and sustain collaborations with practitioners. They bring to light a sequence of challenges referred to as entry, credibility, and delivering. The entry challenge consists of gaining access to the practice. For the consulting examples this was done through the vehicle of long-term government contracts awarded to each of two Washington DC-based firms. The length of these contracts (five, two, and three years) helped in developing the needed relationships. For the conciliator examples, a university appointment as a Grievance counselor provided opportunities to experience a variety of conflicts that occurred within faculties.

The credibility challenge involves earning the right to work with the client and gaining their trust to convince them that we were working to achieve their best interests. This credibility objective was promoted from two directions. First, gaining credibility with clients requires active immersion in their case achieved by listening carefully to their perspectives, defining key issues, and sorting through them systematically to create clear goals and an action plan to accomplish these goals. Clients seek help because they are confronted by a series of challenges that obscures a clear path forward. Second, it was important to frame the client's needs using evidenced-based concepts that are commonly understood by conflict scholars. The use of these concepts brought clarity to the complex factors underlying the clients' dilemmas, which provided clients with confidence in the goals and action plans created for their case.

The delivery challenge is met by implementing these action plans. When actions were taken, such as contacting stakeholders involved in the conflicts, it was important to provide feedback to clients and readjust goals and action plans as needed. Creating this continuous feedback loop with clients affords everyone involved with learning opportunities, not only about their situation, but also about bigger-picture issues that went beyond the immediate conflict. This process continued until a final set of recommendations was formulated that served to resolve the conflict and create a new reality for the disputants and their situation. These recommendations also set the stage for further collaborations with the same or other clients.

The tension between our roles as scientists and consultants also has implications for graduate training. An important question is how to train aspiring social scientists to develop careers that merge research and theory with practice. The theory-action aphorism, coined by Kurt Lewin, has become a motto for many applied programs, particularly in social psychology: There is nothing so practical as a good theory. This is a good starting point for preparing students for the sorts of research-practice careers we envision. A next step is to provide guidelines for program design and implementation.

First and foremost, we are staunch advocates for thorough grounding in theory and research with a preference for multi-methods (Druckman, 2005).That said, we also have a preference for a particular approach to the way these subjects are taught. One hallmark of this approach is contextual learning, by which we mean grounding theories and situating methodologies in conflict settings. This is done by merging emic and etic perspectives. Theory-derived hypotheses are evaluated with detailed information about a case; the same hypotheses are evaluated with many cases in a comparative design. Students learn to move back and forth between the particular and the general. By doing so, they develop an appreciation for depth and breadth in the analysis process.

Another hallmark of the approach is problem-driven learning. The emic and etic analytical skills are applied in attempts to solve practical problems. Considered as the clinical stage of graduate education, this follows the contextual learning curricula. It exposes students to the entry-credibility-delivery consulting sequence discussed above. This stage can be packaged in the form of a practicum and internship during the third year of doctoral training. Students would be encouraged to make a transition from learning how to create valid knowledge to how to use the knowledge to solve problems. The transition entails a change in pace from a research grind that includes a peer review process to a fast turn-around that suits a client's needs. A capstone course that integrates science and practice would prepare students for the kind of social science career we envision.

Conclusion

The experiences discussed in this article have shaped our perspective on what it means to be a social scientist. That perspective consists of more fully integrating the social with the science. Rather than bifurcating research and practice, we advocate for careers that use the fruits of research to address problems faced by the practitioners in the consulting examples or by the faculty members that present issues in the conciliation examples. By doing so we integrate research-based insights with specific cases involving diplomats, professional negotiators or university faculty members. We learned the ropes later in our careers when given opportunities to provide advice to government negotiating teams or to faculty members caught in binds. Realizing that on-the-job learning is not ideal, we offered an approach to graduate education that gives students a head start and encourages them to contribute to the solution of problems faced by practitioners who work in complex social and political environments.

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