



# **METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR PEACE STUDIES-PCS**

## **Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches in Social Sciences**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Contemporary globalization challenges researchers with an ever-increasing range of qualitatively oriented approaches. Theoretical currents of poststructuralism, postcolonialism, feminism, and other critical perspectives have sharpened reflections on the political and social nature of research praxis, with significant implications for interpretation of findings (Sullivan and Brockington, 2004). An interest in research directed toward addressing social inequity, improving livelihoods, enhancing welfare, or empowering people further influences research orientation and choice of methods.

Peace, conflict, and security studies require attention because these topics substantially influence equity, wealth, welfare, and empowerment throughout the globe. Policy-relevant analysis of peace and security problems relies on systematic inquiry, yet many studies remain ad hoc rather than grounded in coherent research problems, questions, and objectives. Thus, identifying thematic areas requiring analytical attention and presenting research framework choices for peace, conflict, and security studies represent important first steps, complemented by considerable elaboration on analytic frameworks appropriate for peace studies throughout the volume.

### **2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Theories of Developmental Peace, longitudinal surveys, quasi-experimental techniques, agents-based models, network measures, pre-/post-intervention setups, natural experiments, historical approaches, risk-awareness, reflexivity, qualitative comparative analysis, epistemic communities, path dependency, and sensitivity analysis

Scholarship in peace studies tends to be less theoretically anchored than other areas of social sciences, hampering cumulative knowledge. Several theoretical frameworks can enhance understanding of the causes, dynamics, and consequences of peace. Peace is often conceptualized as the absence of large-scale violence and/or the alleviation of direct, structural, and cultural violence, with interventions designed to address these concerns. A fundamental dichotomy, operationalized through variables such as conflict incidence, violence type, and intervention form, guides the organization of disciplinary

knowledge. Research into cause-and-effect relationships is facilitated by temporal ordering, with timing indicated in the configuration of underlined letters across disciplinary analyses. Peace can also be approached from perspectives such as security, development, and justice; principles are available to arrange these strands systematically.

Peace research encompasses multiple scales and units of analysis, yielding publications in sub-disciplines such as economics, sociology, political science, education, epidemiology, history, biology, and geography. Interactions between scale and unit generate additional thematic parameters for understanding every aspect of peace at each level. Each theoretical framework bears consequences for methodological choices. Peace is inherently complex, and strategies for method selection ought to reflect that complexity rather than impose reductive simplifications. Longitudinal methods with open-ended or semi-structured formats enable access to peace dynamics that remain elusive to experimental protocols. Thematic prioritization should correspond to the publication's primary theoretical concern, allowing empirical elaboration to echo theoretical emphasis.

Research problems within peace studies are susceptible to framing as broad exploratory questions, amenable to scientific interrogation. Inquiries frequently specify general times, locations, or types, lending themselves to analysis as developmental trajectories characterized by a number of words in the corresponding configuration. Exploratory problems often lead to interest in histories or determinants of peace within particular contexts. Transparency regarding theoretical underpinnings is essential in disciplinary discourse, since each theoretical framework informs specific aspects (Sullivan and Brockington, 2004) and (Real P. Sousa, 2018).

### **3. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN PEACE STUDIES**

The qualitative approach addresses pressing issues in contemporary society, where understanding complex social systems poses a critical challenge. The qualitative inquiry draws on the philosophical premises of interpretative research paradigms, including social constructivism, critical theory, and postmodernism. From this perspective, qualitative social science investigations become crucial for exploring the extraordinarily variable social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions of contemporary society and their interactions. Research problems relevant to peace studies typically exhibit high complexity due to deep underlying structures of systems, the interplay of many phenomena across disparate scientific domains, the existence of multifaceted intervening or mediating conditions, and the rapid evolution of social changes. Various linked variables also differ in analytical formats across domains, leaving qualitative inquiry essential. Indeed, peace studies encompass both the emergence of conditions and the use of controlling techniques to cope with human conflict problems (Sullivan and Brockington, 2004). Traditional research on peace and conflict in sociology focuses on situations of social non-integration, conflict, violence, and mechanisms for avoiding societal breakdown—also highly complex systems that warrant qualitative approaches.

Qualitative methods typically serve a variety of goals in peace research. First, they assess whether traditional quantitative investigation can achieve any traction on fundamental peace-related questions (Queirós et al., 2017). Second, qualitative techniques explore elementary facets of peace—formal processes, micro-scale mechanisms, actors’ motivations—essential for precisely formulating quantitative research inquiries. Finally, qualitative analysis interprets quantitative results and provides qualitative evidence that lends credence to inferences drawn from statistical signature analysis.

### **3.1. Ethnography and participant observation**

Ethnography attends to the ways that positions within larger social structures shape personal experiences. A researcher’s situatedness (or lack thereof) within a studied group affects credibility, trustworthiness, and the degree to which informants share personal views, feelings, and experiences (Yanik, 2017). The more that researchers are seen as fully part of the social world they aim to understand, the more candidness is likely to result. For peace studies, ethnography often involves dramatic transitions into and out of a setting where violence appears to involve a relatively privileged perspective. Ethnography helps researchers understand group dynamics, considers processes of inclusion and exclusion, and opens windows into challenges faced by actors seeking to foster peace.

Participant observation typically requires special attention to gatekeeping and participatory risks based on reflexivity regarding social locations. These issues become especially significant as researchers seek to engage with and support actors from marginalized communities striving for peace and security. Avoiding further marginalization is often a priority, with due sensitivity to the politics of research findings to such communities’ agendas. Ethical attention to the power dynamics of participant observation throughout the process, including in reporting findings, remains essential.

As with other qualitative approaches, ethnography does not simply seek to describe objects in the world. Rather, it targets actors’ interpretations of their own experiences, particularly regarding values, beliefs, and concerns. Ethnography emphasizes the social construction of reality, rooting analysis firmly in the broader structure-agency relations shaping actors’ circumstances. Questions of how people struggle with prevailing norms, rules, and regimes reveal frictions among competing logics, with greater explanatory power than issues solely framed as alignment with or opposition to dominant principles. Analysis thus runs deeper than indications of policy objectives or systematic relationship-linking. It identifies power relations and political processes that allow personal goals, values, and beliefs to feature more prominently in policies than would otherwise be the case.

### **3.2. In-depth interviews and expert elicitation**

To capture meanings, assumptions, and beliefs that people would like to communicate without awareness of those requirements, a focused conversation or discussion with one or two people is best. After the standard open invitation to talk about the topic in whatever way they wish, the investigator should actively pursue further clarification or elaboration. Interviewing individuals who are well known and highly respected in their community is an effective way of collecting qualitative information on the perception of the research topic, and people are usually happy to offer their views and insights (Eos Trinidad, 2023).

Expert elicitation interviews provide systematic assessments where an expert's opinions are sought directly rather than through a questionnaire. This should be accompanied with demonstration of professional integrity and the ability to handle uncomfortable questions about scientific integrity. Whenever practicable, results from questions that have been answered by multiple experts in the same interview should be made available as auxiliary information. Assessments where experts develop their answers independently before a joint interview are generally preferred over cascaded assessments (Sullivan and Brockington, 2004).

### **3.3. Focus groups and discourse analysis**

Focus groups gather rich information about collective views on a topic or issue through group dynamics and interactions. They consist of a small number of participants (typically 6–12) discussing open-ended questions, guided by a moderator who facilitates, encourages interactions, and identifies dominant narratives (Ahmed et al., 2017). Within peace studies, focus groups help examine perspectives, identify potential causes of violence, gauge perceptions of coexistence, and explore community frameworks.

Discourse analytical approaches enable researchers to comprehend textual or verbal data in particular contexts. This analysis encompasses not only the structures of written or spoken discourse but also the social practices, institutions, identities, and power relations entailed in their production. These methods are especially pertinent in peace studies, where the esprit de corps surrounding violent language should be disentangled from established notions of peace and conflict. Peace discourses, along with descriptions of peaceful entities, peace practices, and peace implementation, can also be analysed through cognitively informed approaches.

### **3.4. Case study research**

Case studies research examines contemporary phenomena in their real-life context when (1) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear, (2) multiple sources of evidence are used, and (3) theoretical propositions are being tested (Hyett et al., 2014). In peace studies, case studies may investigate how peace processes start and escalate, why they succeed or fail, or how they impact violence or security in other contexts. Concepts

such as resistive identity, victimization, and the curse of oil have generated insight into different peace processes through selective case studies that engaged with these concepts.

Narrative inquiry focuses on the significance that individuals give to events and experiences and the stories they tell based on these events, experiences, or combinations of both. Biographical methods study lives as stories and emphasize the interpretive element in the study of lives and what people make of their lives. These methods share a concern for the person and for life histories that are shaped by situations, actions, and life events which have a social and temporal significance. Life stories can be considered, narrated, or written by individuals and express how a particular person interprets a given life. Purposive sampling is typically used to highlight particular aspects of the participant's life based on the questions guiding the study. Life-centred questions help orient the analysis of such accounts and are informed by biographical and documentary analysis.

### **3.5. Narrative inquiry and biographical methods**

Narrative inquiry and biographical methods involve storytelling as a means to explore how individuals understand events and actions in their lives. (McAlpine, 2016). Life history and biography serve as integral components of narrative inquiry, which highlights the significance of personal stories. Bornat (Bornat, 2008) describes biographical methods as a mode of investigation that emphasizes the interplay between storytelling, context, and an individual's subjective experience. In biographical research, participants recount their stories through life histories, autobiographies, recorded conversations, interviews, and other narrative forms. The framework provides insights into the process of living in a particular time and space and illuminates the social structures, power dynamics, ideologies, and values at play in a given context.

Biographical methods involve purposive sampling of events, points of view, and interactions from a life history. Research questions can be devoted to a single life, a life in connection with other lives, or the life experiences of various individuals. The stories collected are interpreted through theoretical or philosophical lenses such as narrative theory, identity construction, or subjectivity. Biographical accounts must withstand tests of evidence that depend on the type of truth being pursued; pairs of mutual corroboration and multiple and parallel accounts can be applied to respect the interpretative nature of evidence. A narrative is deemed satisfactory if it is externally credible, socially relevant, and elaborated sufficiently to resonate with a particular audience.

### **3.6. Qualitative data analysis strategies**

The analytic phase represents a crucial stage within qualitative inquiry. Various data-analysis strategies exist across traditions, but the broad objectives remain similar—to reduce data, increase understanding, and develop theoretical concepts (H. Wulff and D. Nyquist, 1986). The interplay of these activities can lead to dependence on analytic

memos, progressive focusing, and sampling decisions that permit modifications throughout the process. Coding schemas and thematic development provide structure to analysis and facilitate the establishment of written accounts. Planning for these elements becomes essential during proposal preparation. Coding and theme mapping can also enhance teamwork and assure reliability and confirmability of findings (Sullivan and Brockington, 2004).

Coding entails a systematic process of labelling and categorizing materials to identify pertinent facts or generative theoretical ideas. Each category may subsequently be subdivided and attached to specific excerpts from the data collection. Codes can adopt a variety of forms, ranging from descriptive to theoretical. Coding creates a foundation for thematic development, which broadens the analytic focus by seeking links and patterns across individual codes. In peace studies, analysis may concentrate on a limited vocabulary capable of articulating alternative visions for peace or on recurrent themes such as security, identity, or dignity linked to pro-peace advocacy. Thematic analysis further encourages the exploration of temporal or procedural sequences within the data, complementing the more static nature of coding.

#### **4. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH IN PEACE STUDIES**

Behavioural indicators provide essential measures of (peaceful) human interaction and societal development. Many specific aspects of human life and society can be quantified to generate indicators of human well-being (or lack thereof) that can act as proxies for more fundamental descriptions of (peaceful) human interaction that, by themselves, are much harder to observe (and much harder to measure in a comprehensive way). Behavioural indicators are therefore one of the most direct ways to capture human activity and societal development.

Quantitative research provides formal specification of a phenomenon of interest and operates at an abstraction level that is not dependent on the details of the observed unit or system. Theory generally specifies a set of generalised relationships or behaviour that is itself at a somewhat different level than the observed system. Specification of an observational record (through conventional operationalization) that can be examined quantitatively allows generalised theory or behavioural consideration to be evaluated and tested against observed phenomena. A survey that investigates specific human interaction instead of larger behavioural indicators is a narrower approach than a macro-proxy of human activity, yet can still provide wide insight on human behaviour. Interpretation of quantitative results in peace study should be done carefully however, as quantitative models cannot truly establish causal links, but rather increase the likelihood of causal perspective when several restrictions are imposed (Fjællegaard Jensen, 2017).

#### **4.1. Survey design and measurement**

Constructs denote the theoretical concepts, while measures describe the specific implementation of empirical investigation (Hurtienne and Kaufmann, 2012). Paradoxically, sub-dimensions like resilience, legitimacy, and conflict lie within peace but separate it from democracy, and peace indicators (including the GPI, EPI, and CRE) fall within broader themes such as governance and security yet remain distinct, marking peace relevant but conceptually peripheral (Sullivan and Brockington, 2004). Explaining the GPI variable within war models remains meaningful only to the extent analogous indicators exist throughout the dataset, which in peace studies applies mainly to militarization data; transitions from war to peace, democratization, and de-colonization have occurred, but parallels from war to violent conflict, peace, and the political stage remain limited. Thus, single-case studies remain relevant, though with heightened sensitivity to generalization caution.

Sampling frames delineate the target population and non-targeted yet potentially relevant individuals. Treatment of peace derives from a framework separating positive, negative, and structural facets. Lightweight panel surveys, engaging only basic pre-set data, permit transitional analysis through box plots highlighting shifts induced by single or multiple events, volumes, and concurrence. Causal links and selection effects remain theoretically apparent, as reinforced through contextual information on precedent autonomy break. Convergences indeed appear, but systematic quantitative investigations remain thwarted from systemic and compound consideration of security, governance, and characteristics, unless synthesis and aggregation or obverse separation clarify such avenues.

Assessment has historically constituted a fundamental facet of peace with incorporated challenges. However, trends charting agenda-setting a priori and indices or aggregation processes pertinent during negotiations have diminished attention. Therefore, the signalling dimension encapsulated within the GPI yet broadly applicable across security, governance, resilience matrices merits exploration in peace analysis.

Experimental and quasi-experimental designs distinguish treatment and control groups governed by random allocation and conduct natural experiments when randomization proves unfeasible. Pertaining to peace, GPI initiation post-independence within ten observations globally on less than five exhibitions caps the material volume under stringent scrutiny. Nonetheless, scarce situational alteration within peace specifications often renders causal inferences impracticable, seated at systemic configuration and structural support across governmental models.

Statistical models have emerged as principal tools for quantifying indicators much prior to conflict occurrence and subsequently throughout its duration. Tensions among causation, correlations, and manifestation of indicators situated prior to control and entourage exploit significant residing expertise. Studies dissecting political

metamorphosis characterizing the resolution through civil discontent comprise activity-only scopes exhibiting markedly higher expression sector. Beyond case-study properties, peace gravitates attentively to discourse, and extensive débris generative across variety alongside social media, potentially constitutes macro-routing catalogue on pulse monitoring, though primarily through unrestricted flows rather than agglomerated storage. Nevertheless, spokes under circulation wrist merely a sign standard from string interface hidden beneath integrated matrix, segmenting core purport and ascertaining pertinence.

Computational and network analytics have gained traction encompassing conflict scrutiny, although peace still evades prominent analysis and diffusion perms. Initially confining yet systemic resolution management encapsulates predominant research within an equally profound and wide-ranging thematic net construct for peace. Network resources further sustain elaboration upon diverse discourse explores route passage initiation inter-influence item basis capped nonetheless at independently queued interlink density level, source-outfit aggregation, and access-obstacle junction.

Data quality and ethical prudence constitute vital tenets governing quantitative framework. The resultant signalling branch remains both complex and dynamic while extensively traversed over yet limited turbine sets. Localisation barriers persist along distinct policy agendas arising across key memo points, illustrating derivative establishments amid patronage agreements complementing unitive surplus framework access service idealism craft. Likewise, the consummation-phase-independent groundwork imprint genuinely occupies orientational refilling engagement, for knowledge and its instrument subsist adoptively confined. Data-origin mark incorporates additional scrutiny, particularly reflection deducted according inaugurate-access discretion, median-body contents, and anticipated follow-up branch quantity quantifying deriving deposition-guarantee certification warrant stake touch existing remnant deployment, engendering complete testimony tracing ubiquitous presence acquisition recognitive character transformation.

Integrating qualitative and quantitative insights emerges as a pivotal methodological dimension underpinning systemic assemblage. Developed quasi-embedded may span multiple planes. Agency theme constrains simultaneous collaboration-level pooling amid separately conveyed exposition enshrinement; stand-alone examinations occur yet assemblage pattern attains diminished anchorage multiplicity variant treatment architecture-phase-stabil logistical reframing concept sequencing tracing admittedly selectively requite a priori investigation intensity. Quantitative examination periodically eludes auxiliary engraftment evidence; terrain ordain anticipative allot directly inflation medium inclusive, while qualitative macro-horizon ascertains unobtrusive marsh projection.

Sequential-explanatory and convergent-parallel mixed methods constitute predominant alternatives for sustaining alongside extensive integration optionality. Sequential-sequential design passages originate beyond maximum collective abstraction, yet convergence-parallel experiment gains attains admission midst quasi-rigid combine-sector synthesis brighter-load establishment preservation assorted-current collective amalgamate entail distinct apparatus function reasonably distribute envisaged assemblage arise simultaneously complete provision aspect conversely induce occasional knowledge accumulation nominal.

#### **4.2. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs**

Experiments aim to ascertain causal relations between two or more events, following a nominally simplified form of reasoning acknowledged since antiquity: if event A precedes event B, and event A is systematically controlled or manipulated, then it is reasonable to infer that event A is at least partially responsible for event B. In this rewarding but demanding scheme, theoretical explanation again comes to the fore. Time order or precedence can only be taken at face value after controlling latent unobserved third factors (Prowse and Camfield, 2009). Experimental or quasi-experimental studies to track time-lagged or longitudinal causal effects become complex when A and B remain temporally unclear, explicit (or latent) competing explanations exist, and the theory shrinks to merely identifying the two episodes without offering additional insights.

#### **4.3. Statistical models for conflict indicators**

Statistical models for conflict indicators accommodate these new approaches applied to international relations data sets, permitting the extraction of additional information through explicit modeling (King, 2010). Existing methodologies tend toward the simplistic; more sophisticated techniques remain available. Empirical methods fall into two main categories: descriptive statistics, which highlight data features but do not facilitate inference, and inferential techniques primarily designed for continuous dependent variables, such as linear regression and correlation analysis (Aquino et al., 2019). Expand and apply these statistical models to conflict construction processes across multiple empirical settings. Specification choices determine the coverage of key conflict indicators and the formulation of hypotheses regarding underlying processes. Operationalisation hinges on the choice of dependent variable, from univariate counts to bivariate counts, durations, and graded responses, and the nature of data, spanning discrete events, aggregated counts, and time-to-termination records. Jansen's (2019) conflict-structured panel data set incorporates international conflict indicators from various sources alongside information on peace- and conflict-triggering processes. The pursuit of robustness checks to assess the operation of specified models against miscellaneous data sets. Identify plausible interpretations consistent with observed social processes and govern the choice of explanatory variables accordingly.

#### **4.4. Computational and network analytics**

Understanding data sources and their implications is fundamental for computational and network analysis, especially given the positive association between violence and certain Internet signals. Agent-based modeling can also aid research design. Its flexibility allows easy adaptation of an existing model to new thematic areas. Peace studies often explore societal healing post-violence; such issues and agent-based modeling therefore intersect. Agent-based approaches capture individuals' interactions and collective phenomena emerging from such micro-level dynamics. An existing agent-based model simulating collective action diffusion without violence is relevant. Although peace-research literature has considered peace processes theoretically, few empirical applications exist. Insights from peace-process studies enable calibration of the model, supporting research design while mitigating reluctance to pursue thematic extensions.

Throughout the past decade, various peace-related analyses have leveraged social media. Given that peace processes unfold in freely available public domains, signals from social-media platforms, including Facebook, qzone, Twitter and blogs, provide ample opportunities for in-depth exploration of such events. User-generated content offers a unique perspective on peace processes—violence triggers diverse and spontaneous emotive reactions and perspectives, enriching researcher insight. Social-media data constitute an increasingly popular theme in peace-related research, yet their inherent challenges are often overlooked. Potential analysis avenues include conflict-resolution efforts, peace-promoting activities, and national reconciliation agendas. Post-conflict societies frequently engage in such endeavours, as exemplified by Myanmar and other nations. (Akin Unver, 2019)

#### **4.5. Quantitative data quality and ethics**

Data quality considerations and ethical safeguards are paramount in quantitative research on peace. Quality assurance encompasses data provenance, representativeness, and missing values; ethics encompasses privacy, consent, and governance.

Data provenance concerns disclosure of the origin and generation process of data sets and research findings, which may enable others to assess quality and replicability. Data generation does not always proceed in an ethical manner. Training and supervision, together with data collection protocols and instrument design, aim to minimize bias and errors. Research findings or model outputs are expected to be checkable against the underlying data set. Data manipulation is a common form of misrepresentation in social data. The more extensive the process of selection, aggregation, or transformation, the more transparency is required to establish and preserve confidence in the results or models (von Unger, 2016).

The handling of missing data is a common concern in many quantitative settings. Default approaches follow distinct rationale and logic and yield different sets of problems.

Substituting missing cases typically alleviates one problem but creates further issues and questions about the appropriateness of the outputs.

Ethical considerations shape the research design and grant proposals. Protecting the privacy and identities of the subjects involved tends to be a foundation of ethical protocol concerning survey or other types of quantitative data. Often, institutions or funding bodies extend their own governance structures or principles concerning ethics and integrity. These additional layers of governance explicitly require detailing how governed data will be accessed and managed, the roles and authorities envisioned in any such processes, and how materials will be retained or disposed of (Sullivan and Brockington, 2004).

## **5. MIXED METHODS IN PEACE STUDIES**

Research designs integrating qualitative and quantitative strategies can yield comprehensive insights into complex social phenomena, including peace studies (Almeida, 2018). Mixed methods articulate a conceptual framework or guide that interrelates key research components—purpose, paradigm, strategy, methods, techniques, and quality—yet these components are not always tightly interwoven. Simultaneous implementation generates parallel data of equal priority. Sequential explanatory designs integrate a second, usually quantitative expansion phase after qualitative exploration. Convergent parallel strategies collect qualitative and quantitative data together. Transformative and pragmatic approaches focus primarily on a guiding conceptual framework that will determine methods and qualitative or quantitative priority (Köster and Thünemann, 2019).

Ethical issues—including security, privacy, limiting harm, and open discussion of open research—help safeguard study participants across designs. Threats to validity require different strategies to demonstrate stability, coherence, robustness, and trailability. Access, permissions, and governance facilitate fieldwork; clear procedures establish host-country permissions and institutional approvals that respect local research guidelines. Instrument design shapes data collection instruments; theoretical literature guides the design and pre-testing process determines the adequacy of item specifications. Fieldwork preparation develops a logistics schedule and reflexively examines researcher positionality to understand and rehearse anticipated engagements. Survey and numerical dataset analysis preparation relies on regularly updated guidance specific to different software packages. Integration of findings from systematic qualitative and quantitative stages occurs through synthesis approaches, abductive reasoning, and joint interpretation of evidence from mutually supportive perspectives.

### **5.1. Sequential explanatory design**

Research on complex social phenomena often demands studies with sufficient methodological depth to unravel its intricate realities. Sequential explanatory design is

characterized by an initial quantitative phase followed by qualitative data collection and analysis aimed at better understanding, explaining, or interpreting the quantitative results. This method is particularly suitable for assessing complex social phenomena through mixed-methods research, where qualitative components are used to augment the findings obtained during the quantitative phase (Ramón González-Díaz and Inés Bustamante-Cabrera, 2021).

## **5.2. Convergent parallel design**

Convergent parallel designs involve concurrent gathering of qualitative and quantitative data of the same phenomenon, followed by respective analyses and emergent considerations (Sullivan and Brockington, 2004). Triangulation enshures a comprehensive view of multifaceted occurrences about peace and conflict timelines. From openings and escalations to settlements and consolidations, these graphs inform formal models and support experiential validation of other findings.

As peacebuilders seek transformative solutions, the promotion of an improved human condition qualifies as a social and psychological objective amenable to mixed-method elaboration and assessment. Psychological theories, not exclusive to peacebuilding, underscored the multifariousness of individual condition in periodization conceptualization and highlighted the intrinsic need for transformative improvement. Accordingly, two periods of each timeline examined processes fulfilling such developments, while matching individual needs with broader sustainable improvements and dwelling upon cases fulfilling diverse objectives and desires. Such dual processes, legitimately transformatively described, ensured balanced treatment of conflicting objectives deriving from richer and broader human perspective or even from richer substantive preparation.

## **5.3. Transformative and pragmatic approaches**

Few engagements with the conventions of science have provoked as intense a reaction amongst natural and social scientists as the advocacy of qualitative research as a credible alternative to quantitative methodologies. Although many social theorists have despaired of the deeply entrenched quantitative bias in contemporary social science, few have understood the fundamental nature of the dispute or its full implications. Qualitative and quantitative research provides contrasting yet complementary approaches to social research. Despite their very different underlying philosophies, either approach may be appropriately selected on the basis of two kinds of fit: substantive fit, which indicates the match between the chosen approach and the substantive character of the research problem being studied; and, methodological fit, which indicates the match between the chosen approach and the level of abstraction at which the researcher is operating. Both types of fit remain critically important for legitimate social research. Contemporary qualitative research has been defined in opposition to the quantitative methodologies. In the spirit of a more constructive and less adversarial examination of qualitative methods, an effort is

made to locate them within a broader and more encompassing scheme of research classification. Mixed methods and combination research approaches occupy a central position, bridging qualitative and quantitative forms. Although qualitative methods dominate what have come to be termed post-positivist or interpretive paradigms, they derive from and remain compatible with realist perspectives that continue to recognise the necessity and importance of quantitative research (Sullivan and Brockington, 2004).

## **6. ETHICS, VALIDITY, AND RELIABILITY IN PEACE RESEARCH**

The overarching ethical imperative in peace studies involves the safeguarding of participants and their wellbeing. Obtaining ethical approvals before commencing research is mandatory, yet the precise requirements depend on national and institutional regulatory frameworks (von Unger, 2016). Fieldwork demanding access to difficult-to-reach populations may additionally necessitate letters of permission from local authorities, who often govern resource access and related safety concerns.

Establishing validity and addressing potential threats are critical to the scientific integrity of all applied research, taking various forms across the methodologies employed for conflict and peace study. Qualitative research, involving subjective judgements by researchers and participants, must therefore be explicitly and rigorously justified in terms of credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Ngozwana, 2018).

### **6.1. Research ethics and safeguarding participants**

Researchers have ethical responsibilities in all phases of the research process, including preparation, planning, execution, and dissemination of research findings. Ethical issues arise in diverse contexts, such as working with vulnerable populations, sensitive subjects, receiving institutional review board approval, protecting research materials, ensuring the validity of findings, and addressing issues related to authorship. Respecting ethical guidelines enhances the quality and impact of research and protects both researchers and research participants from harm.

(von Unger, 2016) cautions that the tendency to overlook ethical issues often results in unanticipated and adverse consequences. Creswell and Creswell (2017) note that even in basic research, ethical issues associated with human participants may arise unexpectedly. Ethical considerations include informed consent, confidentiality, and equality in the treatment of subjects. Research designs involving data-intensive experiments; sensitive data collection; sensitive topics, such as illness or self-harm; vulnerable groups, such as minors and pregnant women; and riskier data collection methods, such as in-home interviews, raise higher ethical concerns. Interest in ethical considerations is increasing among researchers. Creswell and Poth (2018) identify robust discussion of ethics in qualitative research across various modalities, including case study research.

## **6.2. Validity threats and mitigation strategies**

Every research endeavor faces threats to validity, whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods. These threats undercut the clarity and accuracy of the knowledge that a particular study aims to contribute to the body of scholarship. Peace studies are no exception. Reported validity threats and mitigation measures vary across qualitative and quantitative studies, reflecting differences in methods, procedures, and conventions. Thus, both qualitative and quantitative scholarship must be approached, embraced, and considered separately and in turn.

Valid empirical studies build confidence in scientific findings. Threats to validity should be anticipated and systematically addressed throughout a study. When the design is completed, the study can be scrutinised for credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Communicating anticipated threats and adopted measures—either directly or through evidence of the resulting attributes—can build confidence in the knowledge or reception of the study by others.

## **6.3. Reliability and trustworthiness in qualitative work**

Qualitative inquiry seeks to explore meaning-making, understanding the phenomena and how participants perceive them (Cobbold, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to collect rich descriptions through quotations, narratives, and visual representations, with the researcher as a primary instrument for data gathering and analysis (Sullivan and Brockington, 2004). A focus on systematic reviewing of qualitative research often emphasizes aspects such as reliability, validity, generalization, generalizability, trustworthiness, and rigor. However, the terms “reliability” and “trustworthiness” may hold different implications in qualitative research. Reliability signifies whether, in a similar context, the same answers would be returned with the same measurement tool and approach, which is more appropriate for quantitative inquiries. Qualitative approaches instead emphasize credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability; therefore, qualitative studies discuss “trustworthiness” rather than reliability. Under this concept, dependability expresses whether the findings could be replicated, showing a link with reliability in quantitative measurement.

Demonstrating trustworthy aspects such as consistency and dependability may take several avenues. Beginning and ongoing explanation of philosophical assumptions, the methodological theoretical framework, the research design, and the context should be provided, alongside clarification on unit selection for data collection and analysis. Describing the precise purpose—what has influenced the selection and formulation of research questions, and the contribution aimed to achieving at every stage of participant and text selection, for example—situates the study with respect to qualitative discussion, thereby allowing others to evaluate its significance and relevance.

## **7. DATA COLLECTION LOGISTICS & PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The existence of various data-related challenges requires a meticulous consideration of logistical and practical details to maximise the validity of research findings (Roll and Swenson, 2018). The chosen social media platforms must align with the target research questions since different websites and forms of communication produce differing data types and formats. These characteristics subsequently influence the selection of keywords. Moreover, timeframes must be specified to delineate the period of interest. Changes in activity levels on selected accounts should also be monitored, and, when necessary, the data collection strategy altered accordingly. Similarly, the identification of technical configurations common to the monitoring of social media accounts is crucial to facilitating the rapid adjustment of the technical setup if access to monitoring becomes unavailable (Mayr and Weller, 2016).

### **7.1. Access, permissions, and governance**

Access, permissions, and governance are usually taken for granted in the social sciences but assume critical importance when studying conflict zones and failed states, whether rebuilding governance structures or ensuring national- and local-level accountability (Roll and Swenson, 2018). Access hinges on the degree of local power and control available to national and international actors, yet conducting evaluations in such environments presents a set of methodological and ethical challenges that traditional social-science approaches rarely acknowledge.

Fieldwork within conflict environments requires careful consideration of security, data reliability, participant welfare, and ethical standards. Certain types of data—such as conflict-event datasets—are examined on the basis of their design, auditing, and sourcing to assess their accuracy relative to original incident reports. Ethical research practices remain paramount: accountability to local partners and interlocutors is critical, and local norms must be respected. In environments characterized by pervasive organizational insecurity, self-reported data from individuals or institutions, instrumentalization of social surveys to propagate political agendas, and deliberate obfuscation of information pose additional challenges, alongside risks to researcher safety and integrity. Permissions and governance frameworks are therefore essential to facilitate data collection, establish credibility and security, and enhance the subsequent large-scale mobilization of peacebuilding and development resources.

### **7.2. Instrument design and pre-testing**

Surveys are central to empirical research across the social sciences and therefore warrant careful development and validation. Central to empirical survey research are the operationalization of the constructs of interest, the design of the response scales, and the selection of an appropriate sampling frame. The validity of the measurement procedures is affected not only by the choice of sampling frame and the representativeness of the resulting sample, but also by the design of the questions, the ordering of the items, and

the quality of the survey administration. Researchers are warned to be alert to a range of susceptibilities to artifact in survey research, including social desirability bias, self-deception bias, memory bias, selective perception, the preferences-behavior disparity, and prior contrast effects. It is advisable to test attention during the collection of data and account for “sane response sets”; in large surveys, decisions about the inclusion or exclusion of such response sets can have material consequences for the estimated effects of interest.

Experimental and quasi-experimental designs can be used to make causal claims about the impact of particular exogenous factors on peace and security. They seek to examine the effects of a treatment, “a stimulus or event that is expected to affect the views, beliefs, or behavior of an individual or unit” on a dependent variable of interest. To establish a causal relationship, it is necessary to show that a change in the independent variable occurred prior to a change in the dependent variable, that empirical correlation between the two exists, and that no third factor is responsible for producing spurious correlation. Experimental designs achieve these goals by randomly assigning subjects to either a treatment or control condition. When randomization is not possible, quasi-experimental designs can be employed: in addition to experimental and control groups, they can exploit situations that allow natural experiments.

### **7.3. Fieldwork planning and reflexivity**

Fieldwork planning encompasses logistical scheduling and reflexivity, the latter involving sensitivity to researcher positionality in the field and the potential need to adjust approaches in response to emergent contexts.

Fieldwork logistics include scheduling visits, determining when to arrive and depart, and specifying how long to stay. All these decisions should take situatedness into account. For a researcher wanting to understand an unfolding peace process, arriving when one had been invited to attend an occasion celebrating that peace, staying longer than had been planned in order to participate in the ensuing discussions, and remaining after that to attend another celebratory occasion when many of the same persons would gather would clearly suggest an intent to understand the process. Likewise, staying on the periphery for an extended period would indicate that the peace process was being studied from the outside. Reflexivity about these types of logistics is vital since decisions may be shaped by the researcher’s status as a venal entrepreneur, an academic authorized to conduct field experimentation, a temporary observer interested solely in the event and its broad relevance, a long-term participant wanting to comprehend the implications of the process, and so on.

Reflexivity also involves being aware of how the researcher’s characteristics—such as age, nationality, ethnicity, gender, faith, and occupation, as well as factors like professional competence and previous personal biography—influence ongoing

negotiations and exchanges in the field. As these characteristics are continually inspected for their immediate effects and consequences, the researcher's understanding of, attitudes toward, and role within the community studied may likewise need to be adjusted to better follow what is taking place. Such changes might occur if the research focus broadens beyond internal processes to include external ones contingent on different parties or if community expectations shift accordingly. The outsider privilege accorded at the outset may shift to a fuller member status, with perceptions of the ongoing peace process changing accordingly. (Sullivan and Brockington, 2004)

## **8. DATA ANALYSIS WORKFLOW AND INTERPRETATION**

Research outcomes derive from the interplay of techniques for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Analysis is a gateway through which data transits to reach outcomes, necessitating a precise understanding of techniques and a structured workflow to elucidate processes (Femi Akinyode, 2018). During preparation, information such as the research question, participant characteristics, affordances of the employed method and researcher scope are formulated and organized in a manner suitable for examination. The content transiting through ensures transparency and reproducibility, allowing scholars to verify systematic execution, thereby raising confidence in the veracity of the implicated processes and their research implications.

### **8.1. Coding frameworks and thematic analysis**

Qualitative data analysis includes coding and thematic analysis. Developing a coding framework with a codebook or coding grid enables systematic data processing and clarifies coding meanings. Attention to intercoder reliability at the code development stage enhances thematic analysis rigor (J PhD Belotto, 2018).

Thematic analysis seeks to construct overarching themes that align with the research problem, questions, and theoretical and conceptual framework. Coding serves to distil narratives and identify content relevant to the thematic framework. Qualitative analysis aims to equivalently represent the research narrative through the construction of synthesis narratives in thematic analysis. Thematic analysis constitutes a form of narrative analysis as the emphasis remains on the narrative—specifically the macro- and micro-storylines—rather than in-depth consideration of power relations or the materials employed to construct narratives (Srivastava and Hopwood, 2018).

Qualitative data analysis constitutes the construction of a plausible explanatory narrative derived from thematic analysis results. Identification of micro-storylines guides macro-storyline synthesis and aids consideration of temporality. A temporal dimension captures causal sequences that ordinary, topological patterns cannot represent. Thematic construction subsequently enables the formulation of research findings (Elliott, 2018).

## **8.2. Statistical analysis workflows**

Statistical analysis in the social sciences proceeds through well-established steps. The first is data cleaning, which refers to detecting and rectifying errors, inconsistencies, and redundancies within the dataset, and establishing a clean copy immediately prior to beginning statistical work. Careful consideration of model specification follows. This entails formulating the research question in terms of a measurable relationship, identifying the dependent variable, and specifying complementary independent variables. Where appropriate, the next stage is carrying out diagnostic checks on model specification, assessing whether the data indeed support the proposed relationship.

Once statistical analysis is complete, the results must be reported following discipline-specific conventions (PhD O\u27Mahoney, 2013). The first requirement is detailing the statistics package and version used. The second is the reporting of any programming code written by the researcher, adhering to guidelines appropriate for the package selected. Subsequently, the outcome of the diagnostics, model specification, and the statistical analysis itself should each be presented according to disciplinary norms, commonly accompanied by explanatory notes or interpretative commentary (Slootmaeckers et al., 2014).

## **8.3. Integration of qualitative and quantitative findings**

For some studies, the researcher may employ sequential explanatory, convergent parallel, or transformative designs in combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

In a convergent parallel design, qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis proceed concurrently. A researcher who adopts this approach collects the two types of data at approximately the same time, then proceeds to analyze them separately in parallel. Triangulation is the main integration point in this model, whereby the researcher compares findings from the two data types to determine whether they corroborate or contradict each other. A unified interpretation illuminates the relationship between the two data strands and establishes the larger significance of the findings. Convergent parallel designs produce an overarching interpretation of the issue under study as well as a more nuanced understanding of its multiple dimensions.

Transformative designs emphasize equity for disenfranchised social groups. Researchers may choose qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods depending upon the needs and interests of the relevant stakeholders, whether they be individuals, organizations, communities, or institutions. Pragmatic designs offer similar latitude by allowing the researcher to adopt any approach necessary to address a particular problem. Both transformative and pragmatic frameworks therefore underscore methodological flexibility and adherence to stakeholder relevance.

## **9. REPORTING AN DISSEMINATION IN PEACE STUDIES**

Although peace research has long been concerned with dissemination processes, little acknowledgement has been given to the reporting practices and dissemination strategies adopted by peace researchers themselves. Dissemination can encompass many forms of reporting, including text and non-textual media, informal reporting through conversation, and formal reports to funding agencies, professional bodies or the state. Among written resources, the conventional peer-reviewed article remains a highly regarded means of disseminating research findings, despite the emergence of various alternatives (Sullivan and Brockington, 2004).

A first step in any dissemination strategy should involve identifying the actors or agents of dissemination and the message to be delivered to them. The stakeholders who receive research messages may fit various types of organization, and they themselves may exhibit significant variations. The range of actions that can be taken to deliver those messages may also be very broad. Broadly speaking, a dissemination approach may default to either the explicit or implicit delivery of messages (Crang, 2002).

### **9.1. Structuring research reports**

Research reports present investigations of complex problems and communicate findings to stakeholders, including scholars, practitioners, policy-makers, and funders. Well-structured reports promote comprehension and facilitate evidence evaluation by clarifying how relevant data relate to the objective. Various ordering schemes exist, and field-specific conventions apply, but reports typically introduce the research problem, frame the driving question and knowledge gaps, state objectives, provide background context, justify the adopted methods, outline the principal findings in relation to the key question, and summarise the implications for policy and future work.

The generic model accommodates diverse disciplines, and many social science inquiries incorporate problem analysis, question articulation, and objective specification (Sullivan and Brockington, 2004). A coherent progression from reasons for addressing peace issues, through the comprehensive and interdependent character of the investigation, to the set of interrelated questions that constitute the central research problem adheres to this pattern (Crang, 2002).

### **9.2. Policy relevance and stakeholder engagement**

Policy relevance involves clear translation of research findings into terms and formats meaningful for practitioners and policymakers (Aristea Papadopoulos, 2018). Stakeholders need guidance concerning why findings matter for current policies. Research reports should illustrate practical implications for peacebuilding, such as how understanding local systems or integrating responses to societal grievances shapes democracy promotion. Education on when methods issuing insights is crucial, as models deemed relevant on methodological grounds can still fail to speak to peace processes.

Translation demands identification of suitable channels for conveying results. Engaging policymakers, practitioners, and affected communities enhances relevance. Targeted efforts should address desired-level and link to prominent actors, systems, or platforms. Finding and fitting the right wording remains challenging, particularly the degree of meticulousness in drawing lessons from one context to another. A heuristic for keeping translations on target involves focussing on four areas: implications for democracy assistance and peacebuilding; proposed research questions that remain open; major dynamics, links, or configurations influencing persistence or resolution of violent conflict; and sociopolitical pressure points candidates for various forms of intervention.

### **9.3. Ethical dissemination and open science**

Openness and transparency in research practices remain essential for promoting scientific integrity and safeguarding against misconduct. Several concrete measures can enhance the ethical dissemination of findings. First, establishing a repository for data, syntaxes, notebooks, and computational scripts facilitates sharing with peers or even public dissemination. Synchronized data sharing enables the pitch of broader projects without publishing intermediary findings. Second, events like workshops or webinars help signal the completeness of material for the wider research community. Moreover, qualitative and quantitative researchers can also overcome obstacles to methodological development and broaden the impact of peace studies by embracing open science initiatives in line with national and international open-access policies.

Establishing an open-data repository allows sharing of data, syntaxes, notebooks, and computational scripts with project partners or the entire research community, thereby enhancing ethical dissemination and protecting against objectionable practices (Vuong, 2017). A comprehensive data-sharing approach also promotes the dissemination of research material between projects while alleviating disclosure concerns. For example, opening a data repository for discussion invigorates project pitch through broader collaboration and encouragement of fresh scrutiny, motivating the communal establishment of further repositories. Qualitative projects, however, may face challenges in open data-sharing owing to privacy considerations and limited relevance of textual materials beyond idiosyncratic patterns. Establishing a repository of fieldwork consent forms and ethical reviews signals commitment to safeguarding confidentiality and accelerating reflexive thought on qualitative appropriateness at peace-studies junctures (von Unger, 2016).

## **10. CONCLUSION**

This chapter aims to support researchers engaged in peace studies by outlining fundamental methodological dimensions and considering relevant methodological frameworks. While rigorous empirical analysis is vital for advancing meaningful agendas, the experimentally tractable aspects of peace research are often narrowly delineated. Such constraint spurs the proposed thematic exploration that elucidates

pertinent methodological issues and frameworks capable of enhancing understanding of peace processes across diverse contexts.

The discussion unfolds by establishing the overarching philosophical and theoretical grounds that underlie the chapter and direct the choice of coverage relating to the peace research agenda. The selection of peace is anchored to prominent philosophical concepts – notably, security and conflict theory – which in turn dictate arrangements concerning specific aspects of peace taking centre stage in inquiry. The question of what constitutes research then shifts into focus, with the potential for a broad plurality of research positions introduced. Nonetheless, the conversation strives toward explication of qualitative research positions from which deepened comprehension of prevailing peace processes, among other concerns, may be pursued.

From the articulation of research, exposition subsequently turns to the distinctive characteristics of qualitative inquiry and the delineation of appropriate contexts for qualitative engagement within peace studies. In light of prevailing epistemological and ontological positioning, qualitative modalities align naturally with particular inquiries akin to the search for, and investigation of, prevailing process and a desire to appreciate how events unfold across time. The discussions then proceed to outline specific qualitative approaches, commencing with ethnography and participant observation, and direct entry into further prominent individual methodological frameworks.

Ethnography and participant observation manifest as formative approaches that enable rich and insightful comprehension of processes unfolding over time; such approaches may facilitate, respectively, acute engagement at local societal nodes and entry into broader yet still localized patterns. Field immersion constitutes a critical, yet often underplayed, attribute of such engagement that affords distinctive opportunities for insight into peace processes spanning the intricate local, societal, and transnational operating regions. Attention is drawn to a range of associated considerations: gatekeeping and access, reflexivity, ethical reflection, and analytic expectations.

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