



International Centre of Excellence for
Conflict and Peace Studies

MIND THE GAP: Policy Development and Research on Conflict Issues

Cheyenne Church



The United Nations
University

www.incore.ulster.ac.uk

INCORE's vision is of a world with an increased understanding of the causes of conflict; improved methods of resolving conflict without recourse to violent means; and advanced reconciliation processes

INCORE

University of Ulster
Magee Campus
Aberfoyle House
Northland Road
Londonderry
Northern Ireland
BT48 7JA

Tel: +44 (0) 28 7137 5500
Fax: +44 (0) 28 7137 5510
Email: incore@incore.ulst.ac.uk
www.incore.ulster.ac.uk

INCORE

INCORE (International Conflict Research) is an international centre of excellence for peace and conflict studies. INCORE is a joint project of the United Nations University and the University of Ulster. Combining research, education and capacity-building, INCORE addresses the causes and consequences of conflict in Northern Ireland and in other global conflict zones and promotes conflict resolution strategies and peace-building processes. It aims to influence policy-makers and practitioners who are involved in peace and reconciliation issues while also contributing to academic research in the broad international peace and conflict studies area. INCORE works in partnership with a variety of institutions and organisations at local, national and international levels. Partner organisations include community groups, civil society organisations, peace and conflict-oriented NGOs, think-tanks and academic institutions. INCORE's work is interdisciplinary in nature and is comparative in focus.

Within the University of Ulster, INCORE coordinates the varied peace and conflict-related activities, projects and research that occur across the University. Such work encompasses a wide range of disciplinary areas including politics, international studies, social policy, social work, education, geography, architecture and sociology, as well as in peace and conflict studies. These activities, projects and research are carried out by INCORE staff and by INCORE Associates. For further details, please refer to INCORE's website: www.incore.ulster.ac.uk

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	3
Preface	4
List of Acronyms	5
Executive Summary	6
1. INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 Methodology	10
1.2 The influence of research on policy making	11
2. REALITIES OF THE POLICYMAKER’S WORLD	15
2.1 Expectations to stay abreast of research	15
2.2 Catalysts to commissioning or seeking out research	16
2.3 Sources of research	17
2.4 Functional use of research outputs	18
2.5 The constitution of researcher credibility	19
2.6 The need for neutrality as a conflict researcher?	20
3. WHY THE GAP?	
IMPEDIMENTS TO INTERACTION AND INFLUENCE	22
3.1 Gaps between the two worlds	22
3.2 Inhibitors for policymakers	23
3.3 Frustrations with research	24
4. TACTICS FOR IMPROVING RESEARCH UTILISATION	26
• Select a strategy appropriate to the policy goal	26
• Design the research project with policy influence in mind	27
• Develop an understanding of the policymaker’s working context	29
• Engage with potential users	30
• Develop an actionable option analysis	32
• Disseminate and present user-friendly research results	32
• Capitalise on windows of opportunity	35
5. CONCLUSION: RESEARCH – POLICY INTERACTION: A TWO-WAY STREET	37
Appendix 1: Interview List	38
Appendix 2: Civil Servant and Advisor Interview Outline	40
Bibliography	42
About the Author	46

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Appreciation is extended to a number of individuals whose patience and research creativity were tested by this project. Thanks go to Eimear Hayden, Malin Brenk and Corona Joyce for assistance with research, and to Helen Barnes for research assistance and persistence throughout the production process. INCORE gratefully acknowledges the support of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for this research project.

Our sincere thanks go to all those we interviewed or who participated in the course of this study. Without your co-operation, time and openness this study would not have been possible. We hope that this report will contribute constructively to our search for peace internationally.

Responsibility for the content and presentation of the work presented here, however, rests with the author.

Cheyenne Church
January 2005

PREFACE

This study is the second publication under INCORE's research theme of the connection between research and policy in violently divided societies. The first, *Research and Policy – An INCORE consultative review of research processes, research priorities and the usefulness of research to policymakers at the United Nations and other international agencies*, was published in 1999 by Sue Williams and Gillian Robinson.¹ Among its many conclusions was that research was relatively unimportant in decision-making processes on issues related to conflict situations at the United Nations.

This second project focused on a different type of policymaker: civil servants at various levels within governing structures in Europe – including Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the European Union. It sought to examine governments' use of research in the policy process within the realm of ethno-political conflict and to identify potential tactics that policy-oriented researchers could adopt to enhance the utilisation of their findings in the policy arena. Where possible, the findings from the INCORE consultative review of the United Nations mentioned above are compared to the results of this investigation.

¹ This paper can be found on the INCORE website at www.incore.ulster.ac.uk.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CPN	Conflict Prevention Network
DFID	Department for International Development
EU	European Union
NI	Northern Ireland
ROI	Republic of Ireland
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
INCORE	International Conflict Research

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1950's, a steadily increasing amount of research and scholarly attention has been paid to the resolution of violent conflict. Today this has become the foundation of a robust body of knowledge focusing on non-military approaches to preventing, managing and ending conflicts. Despite this, the public and political perception of force as the primary response to conflict remains.

This research project examines the relationship between the research and policy worlds, attempting to ascertain if and then how research informs policy development. It also provides a series of tactics that policy oriented researchers can adopt to increase their influence.

FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH QUESTION

The fundamental question addressed in this paper is: to what extent, if any, is research on conflict issues being used in the development of policy?

The Influence of Research on Policymaking

Conflict-focused research's primary use is one of a *conceptual/enlightenment* function for policymakers. The research influences the context within which policy is developed by illuminating new trends, offering different paradigms, improving the understanding of a problem or coining new and improved terms.

In a distant second place, research was found to perform a *symbolic/legitimative* role where it is used to confirm existing notions or to support a decision that has already been made. Finally, in the rarest of cases, research is used in an *instrumental/engineering* way, informing decisions and actions that would not have been taken without this input.

Understanding what constitutes 'use' is still a highly problematic construct and for this study was defined in the broadest sense. Further it is important to acknowledge the methodological problems in proving or measuring cause and effect in research utilisation.

FINDINGS

Realities of the Policymakers World

- **Expectations:** By and large, the working culture in which civil servants function does not expect them to stay current with the latest research. One source indicated that 'staying current' is more about the ability to 'get somebody who can talk to the minister about it' than being knowledgeable about the latest thinking individually.
- **Catalysts:** Ironically one of the few catalysts indicated by policymakers to seeking out research is the need to develop policy. Research was seen to contribute in a few specific ways: through refining or furthering departmental thinking on an issue, by interpreting the relevancy and applicability of international approaches to local situations and by identifying relevant data and information. However, approximately half of the sources who indicated

policy development as a catalyst for using research, pointed out in the same breath that real strategic policy development through research was a rarity.

- **Research Sources:** A clear hierarchy is evident, in order of preference; sources tend to be personal contacts, journals, events, the Internet and finally books.
- **Reviewing Publications:** Where information is abundant, submissions are rarely read in full due to lack of time. A ‘skim and dip’ pattern emerged, where policymakers skim the executive summary looking for new stuff and then dip-in to the main report to find out more.
- **Credibility:** The majority of interviewees stated that the researcher’s track record is the most important determinant of that researchers’ credibility.
- **Neutrality:** Few researchers are deemed to be truly neutral and it would appear that assessments of neutrality are based on a mix of researcher reputation and the content of the research output.

The Impediments to Interaction and Influence

- **Differences:** There are a number of differences between the research and policy world that act as impediments to effective utilisation of research. Different concepts of acceptable timeframes, where the notion of short, medium and long term represent significantly shorter periods to the policy community, can minimise interaction. Contradictory values, differing approaches to conflict resolution and fear or perceptions of one’s role also deter influence.
- **Inhibitors for Policymakers:** Policymakers have their own personal inhibitors that prevent them from initiating effective interactions with researchers. A sense of ownership of policies was deemed by a small proportion of the interviewees to cause a resistance to change. A lack of time further dictates policymakers’ actions and limits willingness to cast a wide net in looking for relevant research.
- **Frustrations with Research:** Why is research not utilised once received? The four main complaints, in order of significance, as indicated by the frequency with which they were mentioned in the study, were lack of quality, poor presentation, timing problems and lack of contextual understanding.

Seven Tactics to Improve Research Utilisation

1. Select a strategy appropriate to the policy goal.
2. Design the research project with policy influence in mind.
3. Develop an understanding of the policymaker’s working context.
4. Engage with potential users.
5. Develop an actionable option analysis.
6. Disseminate and present user-friendly research results.
7. Capitalize on windows of opportunity.

METHODS

A multi-pronged methodology was adopted for this project: a review of social science literature, a questionnaire to academic/researchers, and 21 interviews with policymakers in the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, European Union and Northern Ireland in 2002. The majority of the analysis is based on the interview data due to the subjective nature of the topic, the importance of nuance in language and the paucity of literature specific to conflict issues.

CONCLUSION

The assumption that governments at all levels will improve their ability to handle situations of conflict in step with scholarly advancements may be far from the reality. Yet the onus does not lie entirely on the shoulders of the academic/research community, as no matter how policy-oriented a researcher may be they are still on the outside of the policy labyrinth. It is not only the responsibility of the researcher to insure that their findings appear on the right desk at the right time, but also for policymakers to look for the newest work to inform better decision making.

1. INTRODUCTION

The academic study of the resolution of violent conflict began in the late 1950s. Since then, academic interest in this area has expanded exponentially, with conflict and peace studies degree programmes or their near cousins - development, aid or international relations - found in universities in most countries worldwide. This increase in scholarly attention and research into strife, violence and war has led to the establishment of a robust body of knowledge focusing on non-military approaches to preventing, managing and ending conflicts. Yet the persistent perception of force as the primary response to conflict (as illustrated by the number of wars currently being waged) begs the question: To what extent is this knowledge being used by those who formulate policies?

The unfortunate reality is that, on the whole, the body of academic knowledge and expertise remains unused by those in critical policy positions. As Williams and Robinson discovered in their 1999 consultative review of the usefulness of research to conflict-related policymakers '[the] staff at the United Nations and other international agencies responsible for policy with respect to situations of conflict rarely read or take into account academic research in making policy decisions.' (Abstract)

The current investigation showed that research related to conflict is not generally considered an important component of policy formulation or decision-making, although a few policymakers at various levels of government did demonstrate more nuanced usage. Accordingly, in times of crisis, these policymakers devise policy options in isolation without drawing on the knowledge and expertise that could broaden their options and guide policy development and implementation.

Researchers/academics,² as the information suppliers in this relationship, vary in terms of how comfortable they are with stepping outside the academic world and becoming actively engaged in the policy environment. Unfortunately for the development of comprehensive and sophisticated policy, many researchers do not push the utilisation of their work beyond classic academic media. This may be due to the never-ending demands of grant proposals, class workloads, committee responsibilities and publication requirements. It also may be caused by the sentiment that policy engagement is not acceptable behaviour for a researcher if his/her work is to remain neutral and credible.

This notion is now being challenged, particularly in America. As Porter and Hicks argue, 'advocacy³ is not necessarily at odds with intellectual integrity' (1995, p.20). He goes on to state that if the academic community wishes to influence policy it needs to 'abandon the posture of the neutral technician and embrace the more actively committed role of the advocate' (p10). Some advocates go further, arguing not only that it is harmless to engage with policymaking but also that researchers have a moral obligation to do so. Bertrand de Jouvenel summed this idea up well when he stated:

'This has been a century of total wars, totalitarian governments and genocide. This is a world when most governments are born of violence or maintain

² Throughout this publication, the term 'researcher' will be used to refer to researchers and academics interchangeably.

³ The paper defines advocacy as the act or process of supporting a position, cause or proposal.

themselves by coercion, and where even the most fortunate countries are plagued by the rise of criminality and the forming of domestic differences into conflicts.

Therefore a moral obligation falls upon social scientists to guide their fellow to more amicable relations for the common good. It is not enough that they seek knowledge for itself, they must be prepared to apply it themselves.’

This publication makes the assumption that the final goal of research-policy interaction is the influence of research and resulting expertise on policy decision-making and as such begins with this discussion. It considers the ways in which conflict-related research is currently utilised by policymakers. Drawing on the categories developed by Pelz (1978), it appears that research on conflict suffers from the same limited direct application as the rest of the social sciences. The discussion then moves to a consideration of the realities of the policymaking world with respect to research engagement. By exploring such issues as sources of research, how publications are utilised and the establishment of researcher credibility, the paper attempts to increase the policy-oriented researcher’s understanding of the dynamics of research utilisation.

The gulf that exists between the researcher world and the policy world is explored as a possible reason for the under-utilisation of research. The unique inhibitors to using research that policymakers possess and the specific problems that policymakers have with research on conflict issues are then discussed. The final section of this report focuses on seven tactics that policy-minded researchers can exploit to enhance the probability that their work will be utilised by policymakers.

1.1 Methodology

A multi-pronged methodology was adopted for this project: a review of the social science literature, a questionnaire to researchers, and interviews with policymakers in the United Kingdom (UK, including Northern Ireland (NI)), Republic of Ireland (ROI) and the European Union (EU). The majority of the analysis is based on the interview data due to the subjective nature of the topic, the importance of nuance in language and ideas, and the paucity of literature specific to conflict issues,⁴ as well as the limited success of the researcher questionnaire. For the purposes of this project, ‘ethno-political conflict’, ‘conflict-related issues’ and ‘the conflict field’ are used interchangeably as umbrella terms encompassing issues ranging from effective conflict prevention techniques to victims/survivors to post-settlement constitutional structures.

Semi-structured interviews, lasting between 45 and 90 minutes, were carried out in person with 21 policymakers. The list of interviewees can be found in Appendix 1, and the interview questions in Appendix 2. The category of policymaker was narrowed down to civil servants and advisors to allow for comparability across

⁴ Significant literature on social science knowledge utilisation is available, although mostly derived from Western European or American sources. Some disciplines – primarily education and health – have taken it upon themselves to delve deeper and look for unique aspects of utilisation relevant to their field. A minimal amount of literature can also be found on knowledge utilisation from an international development perspective but the majority of that material focuses on the traditional development areas of agriculture and food-aid. Resources related to peace and conflict studies are very limited.

locations. Interviews were sought with those civil servants or advisors who were working directly on conflict issues and held mid to senior level positions. The majority of participating civil servants chose not to be quoted and so no attribution of statements has been made. As interviews were not taped, quotes are as accurate as possible based on the researcher's notes.

The research is based on four assumptions. The first of those is that some form of democratic governance exists within the target political body. Those conflicts within quasi-states have unique circumstances that are beyond the scope of this work. Second, it is assumed that some percentage of the research community wants to affect policy and is willing to devote time and effort towards this outcome. This project is aimed at that portion of the research world. Third, the project relies on the premise that knowledge is used in decision-making and that an increase in information will lead to better decisions. Finally, although all conflicts, political systems and countries differ to some extent, the assumption is made that generalisations are possible.

A limitation of the study is that the majority of literature sources and interviewees were drawn from a Western European or North American background. Interviews in other regions were not feasible due to lack of time and funding. To compensate for this shortcoming, a small number of structured conversations about the potential differences between the sample group and developing states were conducted. In addition, draft conclusions were presented to four international audiences and each group's comments and clarifications were taken into account in the final analysis. Where differences were identified, they have been raised in the text. Given the limited access to policymakers and researchers in developing nations, further research in these countries is obviously needed to ensure the validity of these findings within those particular contexts.

1.2 The Influence of Research on Policymaking?

'In spite of the useful research findings of some of the institutes and the valuable capacity building projects of others, the overall contribution and potential of the research institutes remains largely under-utilised by the United Nations Community.'
(Kofi Annan, 1997, paragraph 62)

Many factors impede the accurate measurement of how much influence conflict-related research has on policy. One of the first challenges is determining what constitutes policy. This study utilised a broad definition, including such elements as acts of legislation, party platforms, government official positions, policy statements and unofficial decisions on both domestic and foreign policy. As Molas-Gallart *et al.* comment: 'When compared with the physical, engineering and medical sciences, [social science research's] contribution is likely to be more indirect, and more difficult to observe.' (2000, p.1).

The language of social science discourse about 'influence' is still crude, with the usual suspects – 'use', 'impact' and 'dissemination' – all proving slightly misleading or inaccurate. For this study, the terms 'influence' and 'use' are applied interchangeably, thus defining 'use' in its broadest sense, as advocated by many academics in this area. Weiss and Bucuvalas, two of the leading scholars on social

science knowledge utilisation, describe the wide range of ways in which social science research can be of influence:

‘People can use social science research to clarify the relative advantages of alternative choices, but they also use it conceptually: to understand the background and context of program operation, stimulate review of policy, focus attention on neglected issues, provide new understanding of the causes of social problems, clarify their own thinking, reorder priorities, make sense of what they have been doing, offer ideas for further directions, reduce uncertainties, create new uncertainties and provoke rethinking of taken-for-granted assumptions, justify actions, support positions, persuade others, and provide a sense of how the world works’. (1980, p.305.)

Pelz (1978), who attempted to clarify the notion of influence by categorising the ways in which research may be utilised, also advocated a broad definition. He argued that the use of social science research falls into three categories: conceptual/enlightenment, symbolic/legitimative and instrumental/engineering. He defines them as follows:

- *Conceptual/Enlightenment*: some change in awareness, thinking, or understanding by a policymaker without putting the information to a direct, documented use.
- *Symbolic/Legitimative*: the use of research as a substitute for a decision, to support a decision that has already been made, as political ammunition to discredit a disliked policy, or to confirm existing notions.
- *Instrumental/Engineering*: a specific decision or action that can be directly linked to research input, which would not have occurred without that input.

The evidence gathered in this study on the influence of ethno-political conflict research on policy validated these categories. The vast majority of policymakers interviewed believed that research primarily performed a conceptual/enlightenment function. Many of them said that research influences the context within which policy is developed by illuminating new trends, offering different paradigms, improving the understanding of a problem or coining new and improved terms. An illustrative example of this type of usage was given by a policymaker in Northern Ireland: work commissioned on Protestant alienation provided valuable information that improved their understanding of the causes of the problem as well as refining the problem definition (Personal Interview, 2002).

The *symbolic/legitimative* category appears to be the second most likely way for research to be used by policymakers – albeit a distant second. References were made by interviewees to buying time through commissioning research when departments were uncertain as to what actions to take, thereby substituting research for a decision. Instances were also cited in which research was used simply to validate decisions that had already been made internally. In one example, the policymaker spoke of writing a policy brief and then searching for supporting statements or evidence from the academic world to be inserted into the document because it was felt that this would add credence to the choices advocated in the document (Personal Interview, 2002). In

the conflict-related departments of the UN, it was also found that ‘research was often needed to confirm prior preconceptions’ (Williams and Robinson, 1999, p.8).

*‘Policy innovations are often much less specific than innovations in technology. A century later, historians may still dispute, when, or whether, they occurred.’
(Donnison, 1972, p.521.)*

Finally, the study found that the least common use of research was *instrumental/engineering* – the third category. Only one individual in this study self-identified an instance where they had utilised research directly in the policy process. That said, when policymakers were asked to provide examples of research that had been important to their work, several provided examples that illustrated a direct effect. Several years ago in the Republic of Ireland, for instance, the Anti-Racism Awareness Programme, which seeks to combat racism and encourage a culturally diverse society, commissioned a variety of research projects. The results primarily helped them to understand the extent of the problem – a form of enlightenment – but were then also used to establish the benchmarks for assessing policy impact – an instrumental usage (Personal Interview, 2002).

Attempting to prove irrefutably ‘the pattern of cause and effect’ poses particular methodological problems for the analysis of research utilisation (Wyn, 1995, p.125). Within the policy process there are multitudes of inputs, actors, agendas and political considerations that feed into one decision. Rarely does one entity substantially dictate a policy.

‘[P]ositions and ideas are often conglomerations of what they [policymakers] read – academic journals, newspapers, specialised press – what they attend – meetings, seminars, conferences – and advice and discussions they have with colleagues and experts. From all of this, positions become formed and refined with information merging together and resulting in research “creeping” its way into the policy dialogue’. (Molas-Gallart et al., 2000, p.7.)

One interviewee in Northern Ireland estimated that research accounts for only 5% of the influence in decision-making (Personal Interview, 2002).

Another measurement difficulty is generated by crises or politically sensitive issues, such as those scenarios created by violent conflict. Institutionally enforced privacy regulations can block access to information that is essential for tracking use. This lack of transparency is standard in Defence or Foreign Policy departments, which would also often hold the most relevant decision-makers for conflict researchers to approach.

Policymakers themselves recognise the difficulties in assessing the influence of research. As with anything subjective, there is room for error. Concern was raised by a few interviewees that policymakers consistently underestimate the amount of influence that academic research has in the policy world – ‘Influence is much wider than we expect’ (Personal Interview, 2002) as research not only follows a direct channel but can also reach policymakers through other mechanisms such as media, opinion-makers or community leaders. Moreover, simply because one does not know exactly which report or conversation an idea came from does not mean it did not originate in the research world. ‘When a civil servant has to write a speech or draft a policy document you may not know where something came from, but it has come to

your understanding from somewhere – maybe FEWER, Saferworld, or International Alert’ (Personal Interview, 2002).

2. REALITIES OF THE POLICYMAKER'S WORLD

Influencing policy is the end goal in the research-policy engagement. Both the ways in which policymakers incorporate research into their decision-making activities and their associated perceptions of the value of research contribute to the degree of influence research can have. Therefore a deeper understanding of each of these factors can help to encourage use. The first part of this section explores policymakers' realities with respect to four aspects of incorporating research into their decision-making and policy formation processes.

- 1) Expectations to stay abreast of research.
- 2) Catalysts in seeking out research.
- 3) Sources of research.
- 4) Functional use of research outputs.

One aspect of the institutional culture within which policymakers operate, in this case the expectation for them to stay abreast of the latest relevant research, is considered first in order to provide a context for understanding influence, attitudes and usage. Within that understanding, the catalysts to seeking out research during policy discussions or formation are identified, as are the sources of this research, including policymakers' ranking of the sources they use. Finally, the section considers how research is utilised in the most practical sense once it is 'in-house'.

The second half of the section considers two more subjective issues:

- 5) The constitution of researcher credibility.
- 6) The need for the conflict researcher to be neutral.

These areas, dealing far more with the policymaker's perceptions than the more practical aspects discussed in the first section, are significant when a policymaker is considering using research findings. The section first explores what makes researchers – and therefore their outputs – credible in the eyes of the policymaker. It then covers the question of whether there is a need to remain neutral as a conflict researcher in order to produce results that will be of use in the policy world.

As noted in the Introduction, where possible, comparisons have been made between the realities of United Nations staff as described in the INCORE Consultative Review and the civil servants involved in this study. One similarity that is important to consider when discussing research's influence on policy is that 'research' in the policy world does not exclusively refer to the academic concept of research but also incorporates evaluation exercises, pre-programme surveys, or NGO programme reports. Interestingly, in this study, the publications of NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations) and think tanks, such as Saferworld or International Crisis Group, were cited significantly more frequently than university-based research publications.

2.1 Expectations to stay abreast of research

It is unhelpful to assume the existence of a culture that expects civil servants to stay abreast of the latest in research. The majority of interviewees in this study indicated that no such expectation exists. In fact approximately 25% of those involved in this study never look outside their own institutions for research findings. One senior civil

servant who claimed he never actively seeks to determine what exists in the research realm on an issue stated, 'we would see the bulk of material already' (Personal Interview, 2002). Others rely solely 'on their own [internal] information and analysis' (Personal Interview, 2002) production and thus do not look outside the organisation.

It appears that instead of being up-to-date on the research matter itself, it is assumed that policymakers need only be generally aware of current issues and developments in their allocated area, and that they are able to find out specifics if requested. One source indicated that 'staying current' is more about the ability to 'get somebody who can talk to the minister about it' (Personal Interview, 2002) than being knowledgeable about the latest thinking.

Those who did feel an expectation existed to hold up-to-date information were definitely in a minority. The difference appears to result from management approaches, with performance expectations set by departments or ministers. For instance, in 2002, the Senior Management within DFID issued a directive stating that all staff must be aware of the latest research work in their fields. Even where the expectation exists, a number of individuals in this latter group indicated that reality differs from expectations. A lack of time or motivation and the balancing of reactive versus proactive demands hinder individual ability to comply.

2.2 Catalysts to commissioning or seeking out research

Despite the low expectation to keep abreast of research, there are some scenarios where existing research was sought or new research commissioned by governments. The most frequently stated catalyst was the need to develop policy. Research was seen to contribute to policy development in a few specific ways: through refining or furthering departmental thinking on an issue, by interpreting the relevancy and applicability of international approaches to local situations, and by identifying relevant data and information. The Forum for Peace and Reconciliation⁵ in the Republic of Ireland, for instance, needed ideas and concepts to act as a catalyst and basis for discussion and debate within the Forum. Consequently, the body actively sought new research and position papers to feed this need (Personal Interview, 2002).

However, approximately half of the sources who indicated policy development as a catalyst for using research, pointed out in the same breath that real strategic policy development through research was a rarity. Some of the more cynical, informal, at times apparently jesting comments may be a closer indication of the reality. The identification of appropriate research to justify policy decisions that have 'already been formed or as post-hoc policy justifications' (Personal Interview, 2002) is apparently not uncommon. External validation can be very useful in politically-driven situations where a department can not be seen to be the source of an idea or the provider of the evidence to support a position (Personal Interview, 2002).

Another of the more cynical responses depicted the commissioning of research as a strategy for buying time. In scenarios where civil servants do not know what to do

⁵ Established in 1994, the Forum provides an important means for representatives from North and South to receive submissions from a wide range of interests, consider the present crisis and to hear progress reports on the agreement as a whole.

next but need to be seen to act, commissioning or seeking out research can be a common response. Commissioning research appeases demands for activity and in the process buys the policymakers more time to deal with the issue or wait for it to fade away.

These findings about why policymakers seek out research are consistent with the earlier reflections on how research is utilised. It is not surprising that symbolic/legitimative use of research is prevalent if the impetus to access research is to buy time or seek external justification for predetermined actions. Moreover the rare instances of instrumental use reflect the sentiment noted above that research rarely catalyses real strategic policy developments. The question therefore arises as to which came first – the sentiment or the lack of research with the potential for instrumental use.

2.3 Sources of Research

In those instances where policymakers do wish to identify external research to assist in the policy formation process, where do they go to find it? A clear hierarchy was evident in the answers given. In order of preference, sources tend to be personal contacts, journals, events, the Internet and finally books.

Policymakers sources, listed from most to least used, are:

- Personal contacts
- Journals
- Events
- Internet
- Books

Diagram 1. Policymaker Research Sources

Echoing the sentiments of policymakers in the UN, the overwhelming majority of interviewees in this study stated that personal contacts, both internal and external to the relevant agency, are the most important avenue for identifying needed research. Contacts outside the government were cited most frequently and included people in universities, specialised institutes and networks. As one interviewee stated: ‘I have a little cadre of academics to touch base with [on important issues]’ (Personal Interview, 2002). Slightly less important are internal government contacts, where word of mouth or purposefully soliciting feedback from colleagues is a common approach. Interestingly, Northern Ireland policymakers appear to rely on personal contacts in this way significantly more than others, which could be a product of the small size of the relevant research and policy communities.

Professional or academic journals are a distant runner-up to personal contacts. This type of source is closely followed by events such as seminars, speeches and conferences. Events are considered a useful means to keep updated on the latest ideas as well as to develop and maintain the personal contacts that are so clearly essential.

Very low in the hierarchy of sources one finds the Internet. Commonly referred to as the information super-highway, it is more of a dirt back-road in the policy world. It was only independently offered as a source in three instances; all of whom use it as a primary research tool. With prompting, the remaining participants exhibited the full

range of frequency of Internet use, from those who never access the Internet to those who utilise it regularly. This is slightly misleading however, as this latter group most commonly uses it only to check a select set of predetermined websites. Open-ended searches using engines such as Google or Yahoo simply do not occur. As one interviewee confirmed: 'I have never used a search facility in the office' (Personal Interview, 2002).

There are two probable causes for this surprising lack of Internet use. First, it is considered to be extremely time-consuming. Second, despite the Western European basis of this study and contrary to expectation, direct desk access to the Internet is relatively new for many people in policy positions. The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office was only connected to the Internet in early 2001 (Personal Interview, 2002). The Department of Foreign Affairs in the Republic of Ireland received its connection in mid-2001 and the majority of their field offices are still without Internet (Personal Interview, 2002). At the time of the research, one individual's department in Northern Ireland still did not have direct desk access to the Internet (Personal Interview, 2002). Internet use may increase in the future once individuals become accustomed to incorporating it as a daily tool in work life.

Finally, books – arguably the researcher's favourite output – are the least used source of new information, with only two references during the interviews. They were also one of the few sources that received significant negative feedback. A senior individual stated with respect to one of her primary areas of responsibility: 'I have only read one book on this topic and I don't think I will ever have the time to read another' (Personal Interview, 2002). Overall, books were considered too long and out-of-date to be useful in the highly stressed and time-sensitive policy world.

A caveat accompanies these conclusions, however, as equally ranked with events as a source utilised for information-gathering is the internal agency library, which clearly stocks books. Services differ between internal libraries, ranging from simply stocking relevant material to long-term research support of project teams. The Northern Ireland Assembly librarian conducts literature reviews, for instance, while the DFID internal library offers a press-cutting service and circulates all new book and journal article titles to staff on a regular basis. It would appear, therefore, that in those internal libraries that do offer a more comprehensive service, conclusions expressed in books may be incorporated into the briefing pack(s) produced for policymakers.

2.4 Functional Use of Research Outputs

When research outputs do make it onto the desk of a relevant policymaker, they are just one of a multitude of information outputs vying for attention. Overall, policymakers have a sense that there is a 'phenomenal amount of information available' (Personal Interview, 2002). One interviewee stated that she often felt like a 'hamster in a wheel' trying to keep up with the current thinking (Personal Interview, 2002). Information overload, however, is not a universal phenomenon. It is characteristic of affluent, technologically advanced societies with sound communication infrastructures such as those included in this study. Those in

developing countries and/or countries in, or recovering from, violent conflict often feel ‘underwhelmed’ with information – unable to access what they need or want.⁶

Where information is abundant, however, submissions are rarely read in full. There is simply not enough time to read and digest everything that crosses a policymaker’s desk. A ‘skim and dip’ pattern emerged in the way in which policymakers manage publications, whereby they skim the executive summary looking for ‘new stuff’ and once found, they ‘dip in [to the body of the publication] to find out more’ (Personal Interview, 2002).

A small proportion stressed in particular the importance of being able to find evidence or substantial justifications for findings or recommendations when they did ‘dip in’ to find out more. Broadly speaking, the same group also verifies the methodology of the research if they feel they may want to use it. This has implications on how one presents research conclusions, in terms of order, detail and emphasis, which will be considered more fully in the section on Improving Research Utilisation.

2.5 The Constitution of Researcher Credibility

The notion of credibility is a highly subjective one, and the development or constitution of one’s credibility in the eyes of another is context-specific and variable over time. Credibility of the researcher or research outputs is an important factor in the use equation. Understanding what constitutes credibility from the perspective of a policymaker can be helpful for the policy-oriented researcher.

The majority of interviewees stated that the researcher’s track record is the most important determinant of that researcher’s credibility. Track record refers to both the quality of previously published material and current sources of funding. In the case of commissioned research, previous working experiences with the individual, either personally or departmentally, and the manner in which they conducted themselves is also considered. A key component of high-performance conduct is the researcher’s ability to deliver as contracted – in essence to ‘bring home the bacon’ (Personal Interview, 2002).

It is difficult to tell whether the determination of a quality track record depends on the policymaker recognising the researcher’s name. Contrary to the findings of the UN Review, where name recognition was a significant factor, only a few interviewees specifically referred to author name recognition as important to credibility. However, in each case it increased the chance of the document being noticed, which in turn increased the chance of it being read. If the name was unknown to the policymaker then the researcher’s institute or host university was substituted as a variable to be noted.

Another variable considered in the constitution of credibility was field experience. It had been cited as a significant factor by those in the UN system, but this study did not find the same emphasis. Instead, for many, the relevance of field experience was seen as issue dependent. A researcher looking at international human rights standards, for instance, was deemed not to need field experience, while it was considered essential

⁶ This notion was confirmed by several personal conversations exploring researcher-policymaker interaction with researchers and policymakers from West Africa.

for someone working on the political situation in Northern Ireland (Personal Interview, 2002). It should be noted that for a small minority it was not an issue they even considered when determining the credibility of a researcher.

Considering credibility from another angle, policymakers were asked if the medium used to present results affected their perception of its credibility - in essence whether it makes a difference if they obtain a piece of information from a book versus downloading it from the Internet. The overwhelming response was that the medium selected makes no difference to the perceived quality of the information. A few did note concerns with documents found on the Internet, but in response they simply take steps to verify the information if the content is considered interesting, such as carrying out a reputation analysis of the author. This clearly demonstrates that the policy world does not operate under the same hierarchy as the research world with respect to publications.

2.6 The Need for Neutrality as a Conflict Researcher?

It is a standard assumption in the research world that performing one's role in a neutral manner is essential for ensuring that work is credible and therefore utilised. In a conflict context this can require the researcher to remove their values from the often-sensitive material. It appears, however, that this may not actually be required for the work to be taken seriously. As Fitzduff states, policymakers dealing with conflict issues are 'rightly sceptical of so called "neutral" experts' (Fitzduff, 2000, p.8).

In this study, many interviewees strongly believed that when it came to conflict-related issues, 'everyone [researchers] is from one side or another' (Personal Interview, 2002). It would appear that assessments of neutrality are primarily based on a mix of researcher reputation and content of research output. The researcher's agency or organisation was also a factor. In Northern Ireland, for example, certain organisations are perceived to be either 'orange' (Protestant/Unionist) or 'green' (Catholic/Republican) and therefore any research outputs would normally be filtered to account for that colouring before author or content credibility is even considered (Personal Interview, 2002).

Many users approach research findings looking for a political subtext or set of assumptions underlying the work. The amount of conscious effort that goes into bias identification on the part of policymakers varies, with most informally listening for bias or seeking to identify the political subtext. One civil servant stated, 'it is the civil servants job to find the spin on it [research]' (Personal Interview, 2002).

The fact that the identification of such spin does not automatically discount the potential use of the work is important for this discussion. In many cases slant is not seen as a negative attribute, as it can be useful for understanding more about the conflict and the positions of the conflicting parties. This supports Fitzduff's notion that it is useful for academics to examine their values and state them clearly upfront because they will inevitably be a factor for the end-user.

However this does not hold in every situation. Where policymakers wish to utilise research in a more instrumental/direct manner and/or where it will be subject to public or political scrutiny then, similar to methodology, issues of author neutrality and credibility become significantly more important. Regardless of the validity and rigour

of the findings, the politics of contentious issues – often present in conflict situations – will be used to undermine the evidence by challenging the credibility of the authors.

3. WHY THE GAP? THE IMPEDIMENTS TO INTERACTION AND INFLUENCE

The challenge of ensuring that research plays a central part in decision-making is more complex than getting the right research into the right hands at the right time. Differences between the worlds of policy and research can constitute a barrier before a policy-oriented researcher even considers crossing the divide. Policymakers also possess their own unique inhibitors that deter effective interaction with researchers. Finally, even if all of these obstacles are overcome, there are some classic frustrations that policymakers experience with the average research output. These frustrations can effectively prevent even top quality research from having an influence.

3.1 Gaps between the two worlds

Researchers seeking to instigate effective interactions with policymakers for promoting the use of research on issues of violent conflict are faced with a range of hurdles to overcome. The fundamental differences that separate the two groups create a barrier to basic interaction that is hard to bridge. Those scholars who advocate the two-community theory explain this barrier as resulting from the existence of two very different social groupings or communities each with their own operating norms and assumptions. Each community has its own set of values, ideologies, language, perceptions of time, reward systems and communication styles, which are often not complimentary in nature. Consequently, increased interaction without understanding and an attempt to bridge these differences will not improve the relationship or research utilisation (Caplan, 1979; Rothman, 1980).

One of the major differences noted in this study is the different concepts of acceptable *timeframes* that researchers and policymakers often hold. What constitutes short, medium and long term is significantly shorter across the board for the policy community than for researchers. Policymakers felt that extended research time scales failed to meet the short-term needs of the policy world (Rothman, 1980; Sharpe, 1975). One pair of policymakers commented that one year to eighteen months was the longest a long-term research project could take because anything longer would be instantly out-of-date. 'The world and the organisational agenda changes...things move on if you try to operate in two to three year time frames' (Personal Interview, 2002). The time-sensitive nature of violent conflict or crisis scenarios means that timing can become a very important issue and potentially hinder the creation of a constructive dynamic between researchers and policymakers.

In the world of ethno-political conflict, other impediments can also block interaction between the two sectors, such as *contradictory values or approaches to conflict resolution*⁷ and *fear or perceptions of one's role*. The latter was identified in a H.F. Guggenheim Foundation initiative,⁸ which brought together foundation researchers and US government representatives to discuss small-group political violence. Through

⁷ According to Mark Howard Ross there are six commonly utilised approaches to conflict, community relations, principled negotiation, human needs, intercultural miscommunication, conflict transformation and psychoanalytically rooted identity. (Ross, 1997.)

⁸ The Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation is a private foundation that sponsors scholarly research on problems of violence, aggression, and dominance, based in New York, USA. In 1988, they started supporting a series of research projects on small-group political violence and attempting to relate the academic findings to the policy needs of the time. The meeting series lasted for two years and was hosted at regular intervals. See www.hfg.org.

this exercise in researcher-policymaker interaction, the organisers discovered a serious discrepancy in perspectives about the right to make judgements about those involved in political violence. The organisers noted that ‘...the largest stumbling block to communication [between academics and US policymakers] was the reluctance of the participating scholars to judge the actions of their research subjects, while the government agents had no problem with moral evaluation. To them, terrorists were simply the bad guys’ (Colvard, 2001, p.3). These different boundaries can frustrate both parties and inhibit effective interaction between the two groups.

3.2 Inhibitors for Policymakers

In addition to the gulf that separates these two worlds, policymakers have their own personal inhibitors that prevent them from initiating effective interactions with researchers. Three of these inhibitors will be considered: resistance to change, lack of time and lack of receptivity.

When asked about *resistance to change*, a small proportion of the participants in this study recognised the tendency for civil servants to have a sense of ownership of their policies. This causes resistance to new ideas or information that might question existing policies or catalyse change. According to one source, policymakers not only resist research results but while ‘protecting territory’ (Personal Interview, 2002), they sometimes resist the act of research as well. Research often generates fear of unwelcome scrutiny as policymakers worry that it will focus on ‘their’ issues and criticise their handling of them. Individuals in this position are not likely to welcome interactions with the research community. Other drivers behind resistance include the force of custom, which can create inertia and unthinking conservatism, the fear of failure, the perception that research results are veiled criticism and defensiveness caused by the fear that the suggested change could negatively affect status or position (Rothman, 1980; Sutton, 1999).

‘Change is accepted in direct proportion to which potential users recognise that their self-interest is benefited by the change.’ (Rothman, 1980).

The pace of the policy world creates an environment of reaction and immediacy which means that *lack of time* dictates some of policymakers’ actions. As Shove states, the world of the policymaker is ‘...constantly on the move,...which has immediate and practical consequences for perceptions of research relevance’ (Shove, 1996, p.3). Similar to the situation identified in the UN by Williams and Robinson, decision-makers in this study noted that there is rarely time to read even the most relevant documents, while research reports that do not directly relate to ‘live issues’ are invariably set aside (Williams and Robinson, 1999).

Even in cases where research is a consistent ingredient in discussions, when the intensity of the situation increases, research rarely conserves its status. One interviewee noted that research publications were considered prior to the talks that resulted in the Good Friday Agreement,⁹ but that once the talks began in earnest, the

⁹ The Good Friday or Belfast Agreement was signed on Friday, April 10, 1998 in Belfast, Northern Ireland and is the foundation of the peace process.

pace and intensity increased to such a degree that the opportunity to access or utilise research decreased substantially (Personal Interview, 2002).

Finally, there is the issue of policymakers' *lack of receptivity* to more information and inputs in the decision-making process. Some of the older literature in social science utilisation suggests that policymakers do not wish to be well-informed because it further complicates already messy decision-making processes (Rothman, 1980; Sharpe, 1975). With tight deadlines and myriad other issues on their rosters, policymakers are trying to eliminate options, which increased information can make more, rather than less, complicated.

'There is nothing a politician likes so little as to be well informed; it makes decision-making so complex and difficult.' (John Maynard Keynes)

This issue can also take a second form, in which decision-makers adopt the attitude that research does not aid the policymaking process. In this case, although they do not reject more information, they do not feel research has anything useful to offer. While neither of these approaches were directly described in this study, the general tone used by some interviewees certainly suggested that negation of the usefulness of research was not uncommon.

3.3 Frustrations with research

While the previous discussions have looked at issues that impede interactions between the two groups in general and the specific inhibitors of policymakers, what follows is a consideration of why research is often not utilised once received. Policymakers indicated a range of frustrations with research that inhibits their ability to make it of use. The four main complaints, in order of significance (as indicated by the frequency with which they were mentioned in this study) were lack of quality, poor presentation, timing problems and lack of contextual understanding.

The *'lack of quality research'* was cited by a substantial majority of policymakers as their main reason for not using research in their decision-making. Predominately they referred to a perceived lack of focus or depth to the work submitted. Terms such as 'woolly' or 'fluffy' were used to describe work that had caused frustration. To a lesser extent, the phrase signified frustration with either no recommendations, unintelligible recommendations or a lack of evidence to substantiate recommendations. 'Have frequent meetings between departments to improve communication' (Personal Interview, 2002) was given as an example of a recommendation that is so generic that it has no practical application.

The second constraint to influence according to the policy community is the surprisingly banal issue of presentation. Two aspects specifically cause consternation and prove to be significant inhibitors to research utilisation. The primary complaint was excessive length coupled with structures that were not conducive to identifying relevant aspects of the report. The second aspect was the use of overly complicated or complex academic language. The style expected of academics actually inhibits use by policymakers. One individual stated that 'regardless of how good the ideas or findings are, if it is not presented in a way as to be meaningfully used, it will not be' (Personal Interview, 2002).

Given that differing notions of time were recognised as making interaction difficult, it is surprising that *timing problems* were mentioned in less than half of the interviews about why research was not used in an effective fashion. When the issue of timing was raised, the specific problems mentioned included missing agreed deadlines, having out-of-date data or information, not being available when the issue was ‘hot’ and research requiring excessive time periods for completion.

‘The research institutes tend to exist in a world of their own, largely removed from the work and concerns of the United Nations.’
 (Kofi Annan, 1997, paragraph 269)

The final issue, while not frequently mentioned in relation to those noted above, was highly ranked as a way in which research could be improved. As it is likely one of the causal factors for some of the ‘lack of quality’ comments, it deserves consideration. Policymakers often find that impact of research results is limited by the researcher’s *lack of contextual understanding* of the system, procedures, politics, capabilities and limitations of the agency they are attempting to influence. Policymakers have the impression that ‘they [researchers] feel there are no rules, constraints or budgets that must be followed’ (Personal Interview, 2002). Results can also come across as too sterile in the sense that the researcher has not adequately considered the role of politics in the decision-making process. As one interviewee stated ‘you can’t take politics out of the analysis’ (Personal Interview, 2002). This lack of contextualisation may actually be partly behind the lack of quality issue in the sense that if research is not specific or nuanced enough it may be considered to be woolly.

Those civil servants working at the European policy level stressed this point significantly more than others did. This may be due to the difficulties that outsiders experience in trying to keep abreast of the rapidly-changing system and the recent inclusion of conflict prevention and foreign policy as part of the mandate.¹⁰

Given the focus of this volume, a caveat needs to be added to these findings. It is reflective of the sample group that physical distance, communication technology and language were not mentioned as inhibitors or constraints to policymaker-researcher interaction. The sample group was taken from countries that have common languages, are relatively small geographically and have extensive and modern communication infrastructures. There is little doubt that if the sample had gone beyond Western Europe and particularly into the developing world, these other factors would have been more significant.

¹⁰ This point has not escaped the attention of some of those attempting to influence policy on conflict. Several years ago, the now defunct Conflict Prevention Network (CPN) recognised this lack of understanding of systems and structures as a significant inhibitor to having their findings used by the EC Conflict Prevention Unit. In an attempt to bridge this gap, the CPN commissioned a summary of the relevant EU mechanisms and structures that was then distributed to all CPN contributors. The intention was that academics responsible for future submissions would use this knowledge to tailor their work prior to it reaching the relevant policy desk. Whether or not this has enhanced the influence of their subsequent submissions would be an interesting point to follow up on.

4. HOW CAN RESEARCHERS IMPROVE RESEARCH UTILISATION?

Despite the impediments to interaction, there are a number of ways in which the research-policymaker interaction and, subsequently, the utilisation rate of research can be improved. As Fisher and Ury argue differences in beliefs, values and interests can often form the basis for productive relationships, because of the complementarity that these differences create (Ed. Fetterman, 1993) Based on the advice given by policymakers and related literature resources, this section explores seven low cost but potentially high yield tactics that researchers can use in their efforts to enhance research utilisation.

Seven High Yield Tactics:

1. Select a strategy appropriate to the policy goal.
2. Design the research project with policy influence in mind.
3. Develop an understanding of the policymaker's working context.
4. Engage with potential users.
5. Develop an actionable option analysis.
6. Disseminate and present user-friendly research results.
7. Capitalise on windows of opportunity.

Before embarking on this discussion, the two main limitations of these tactics should be noted. First, the conflict context will determine the degree to which these suggestions are applicable. In highly sensitive, violent scenarios, places where communication and infrastructure have been destroyed or conflicts where intermingling between individuals from different conflict parties is forbidden, some of these suggestions may not be appropriate. In general these tactics are most relevant to those working outside situations of conflict or in pre- or post-conflict scenarios such as Angola, or Macedonia.

Second, it is recognised that different cultures, political systems and academic fields will have different acceptable practices or norms. American political society, for instance, is often seen as more sympathetic and open to academics than British society (Sharpe, 1975). As a result, not all of the ideas suggested below will be relevant for all people in all situations. Instead, these ideas should be considered as catalysts for thinking about ways in which to improve the interaction between researchers and policymakers. Many are interdependent, with the adoption of one tactic supporting the achievement of other tactics. The degree to which these suggestions are taken advantage of will vary according to the context of the research and the researcher involved.

Tactic 1: Select a strategy appropriate to the policy goal

Influencing policy rarely happens simply on the basis of the quality of the research output. Instead policy-oriented researchers need to think strategically, the first step of which is to select a strategy that is appropriate for the desired policy goal. A few of the key variables in that selection are discussed in this section.

Advocacy literature makes a broad distinction between insider and outsider strategies of influence. An insider strategy works within the 'corridors of power' to effect change whereas an outsider strategy works in the public domain towards the same end (Wilson, 1984). In *Pressure Groups, Politics and Democracy in Britain*, Wyn states: 'Insider groups are regarded as legitimate by government and are consulted on a regular basis. Outsider groups either do not wish to become enmeshed in a consultative relationship with officials or are unable to gain recognition' (1995, p.22).

In situations of conflict, selecting a strategy can become more complicated. The regime in power may operate from a value-base that offends the researcher – abusing basic human rights, for example. Thus working as an insider may be unacceptable. Conversely, choosing the outsider strategy may have real implications for personal and family safety or career prospects. Being seen to work against the government, for instance, or rallying for change in a public fashion could make the individual a target of the ruling government. If the researcher takes action in an overt and concerted manner, such a strategy choice is often remembered by those one is seeking to influence and one runs the risk of being labelled an insider or outsider accordingly.

There are several variables to consider when selecting a strategy. First the researcher should have a sense of the policy goal. A spectrum of possibilities exists with respect to policy goals, ranging from altering the definition of the policy problem to seeking a determinable change for the end beneficiaries. If the goal is the latter, it is important to consider whether the change desired is within the bounds of what the government or intergovernmental organisation can bring about. As Thomas *et al.* state: 'it is important to identify where policy can and cannot make a difference' (1998, p.27) and to set the policy goal accordingly.

Another variable to consider is the stage the issue has reached in the policy process. If, for instance, the issue is not on the political agenda then it may be that an outsider strategy holds the most chance of success: through the rallying of public awareness the issue could quickly rise to prominence as elected officials seek to answer the demands of their constituents. On the other hand if the policy is already in the form of draft legislation then an insider approach may be more successful in instigating changes to the draft. Finally, consideration of the time, cost, energy and commitment one wishes to devote to the task should affect both goal and strategy selection.

Tactic 2: Design the research project with policy influence in mind

Although the idea is disconcerting to many researchers, the engagement with the policy world should be planned, to the extent possible, from the outset of the research project. This includes decisions about the timeline and the resources requested, as policy engagement often adds time and cost (although minimal in terms of additional financial expense). It also includes decisions about some of the most basic aspects of the research project. When selecting a research methodology, if appropriate to the subject matter, it can be possible to design a methodology that promotes policy interaction. Furthermore, when refining the research question or lines of inquiry it is worth bearing in mind that research that is directly applicable to the established aims, objectives and priorities of existing policy is of most immediate use to policymakers.

Knowing who the potential end-users may be at the beginning of the project allows the researcher to select methodology that incorporates these users into the project. In her Economic and Social Research Council project on social science research and policy interaction, Shove stresses ‘the significance of research methodology in structuring possible roles and forms of interaction between researchers and users/co-producers’ (1998, p.2). Having a sense of the potential end-users also helps with tailoring one’s final products and with developing a dissemination list – both of these issues are covered in more detail below. That said, researchers should not expect to be able to identify the full breadth of potential users for their research at the outset of the project. Instead they should anticipate that the user list will expand as potential recipients are identified throughout the process and should allow for this flexibility (Crosland *et al.*, 1998; Rylko-Bauer, Willigen, Ed. Fetterman, 1993).

With regard to methodology selection, there are a variety of ways that end-users can effectively be incorporated into the research project. One idea to consider is to establish an advisory group of potential users who can provide policy perspective and feedback as the work progresses. Their incorporation provides the academic with access to inside information, policy perspectives and additional end-users to target, and promotes buy-in by those one ultimately seeks to influence. Alternatively, developing a research process that brings interested parties and those with potential conflicting interests into contact can be a mechanism for drawing groups together to share information, viewpoints and maybe even common ground (Shove, 1998). The necessary time, resources and skills to implement this type of methodology must again be built into the research design and proposal.

Finally, germane research enhances decision-making and policy implementation that supports the achievement of an existing policy strategy or goal. Foreign policy in the Republic of Ireland, for instance, is tied to the goals of the EU Common Foreign Security Policy and the EU Security Initiative. Therefore research that provides information related to the process of achieving these policy goals is deemed the most useful (Personal Interview, 2002). Wherever possible, this goal-driven approach should be considered when refining the research question(s) or lines of inquiry.

‘Far better an approximate answer to the right question, which is often vague, than an exact answer to the wrong questions, which can always be made precise.’
(Professor John W Tukey, 1962)

All this implies, however, that research supporting previously determined policy directions is the only work that will be considered. So is there any point in conveying research that directly challenges or contradicts current policy decisions or the institutional status quo?¹¹ The dominant school of thought argues that policymakers will not adopt social science research that is contrary to generally accepted notions and opinions (Sharpe, 1975). More recently, and with specific reference to conflict research, Williams and Robinson concluded that ‘research that did not [confirm prior

¹¹ One should note the difference between challenging the institutional status quo or adopted policy direction and challenging the personal beliefs or values of those in the institutions. The latter could not be considered within this study. However this would be an interesting line of inquiry due to the importance of beliefs and values within this field. Other sectors, such as education, have noted that when evidence contradicts strongly held beliefs, the latter generally dominate (NERF, 2000).

preconceptions] or which generated negative conclusions might not be useful or given any attention [by UN staffers].’ (Williams and Robinson, 1999, p.8).

Many people involved in this study, however, disagreed and affirmed the value of research outside the current policy ‘box’ that challenged existing approaches or presented new, forward-thinking ideas. They suggested that it makes governments question their decisions and introduces fresh thinking into the system, which can affect how priorities are distributed between issues. There is a difference in the way that this type of work is generally used, however, with challenging research contributing more to thinking and the policy context, while research that is pertinent to policy priorities has a more direct use.

How open policymakers are to receiving challenging research is directly related to the way in which that research is communicated. Work that is overtly critical or submitted at the wrong time, such as immediately after the launch of a new policy initiative will often be ignored or even actively buried. Conversely, challenges or innovations that are couched within uncontested issues or the adoption of less critical language can make it significantly easier for the potential user to take such ideas on board.

Tactic 3: Develop an understanding of the policymaker’s working context

Developing an understanding of policymakers’ working context is a foundational step in the policy-interested researcher’s professional development.¹² Working context includes topics such as budgets, legislation, legislative process, reporting hierarchies, systems and procedures and the role of politics. As Carol Weiss, a prolific scholar in knowledge utilisation states: ‘knowledge of government and its practices and knowledge of politics are useful resources for analysts to have. Without such kinds of understanding, they are ill equipped to gauge the latitude they have - how innovative they can be or how practical they must be, how and to when they should communicate, where resistance is likely to arise, and what if anything can be done to counter it’ (Weiss, 1992, p.ix). Understanding the working context also implies staying abreast of current policies and developments as well as knowing the current institutional priorities (Fitzduff, 2000).

The more one understands of policymakers’ working context, the better one is able to conduct policy-sensitive research. Learning the basics can be achieved through a variety of means and can then be added to over time. There are a plethora of books available that discuss the policy process, or more specifically the political structure, systems, and the constraints and benefits of particular political institutions such as Westminster or the European Union. In the Republic of Ireland, for example, *A Guide to Influencing Policy in Ireland*¹³ provides basic information on the different political bodies, practical advice on policymaking structures and institutions in Ireland, and suggestions about how to gain influence. A new publication from the Stimson Centre,

¹² Lack of applicability to the working context did not rank high in policymakers problems with research yet it was one of the first things mentioned when suggestions or tips for improvement were requested

¹³ Harvey, Brian (1998). *Working for Change: A Guide to Influencing Policy in Ireland – Part 2 Directory*. Combat Poverty Agency.

Policy Matters: Educating Congress on Peace and Security provides insight into the American system with a specific bent to peace and security issues¹⁴.

Many governments and intergovernmental organisations also have websites that provide both background (e.g. organigrams) and up-to-date information.¹⁵ The degree of detail and type of information varies between countries, as does the quality of the site. This option may not be as salient for a number of African governments but the situation is bound to change as information technology becomes more stable within the African continent.

Governments also produce a variety of materials to keep interested parties abreast of the debates and members' positions. In the UK and Canada for instance, the official document is the Hansard, which offers verbatim reporting of the debates in both the House of Commons and the UK House of Lords/Canadian Senate. Many departments also issue press releases on new policies, which can be accessed through their websites.

Finally an increasing number of organisations, ranging from pressure groups to civil society organisations, provide up-to-date policy information on specific issues. The source will very often affect the slant of the publication but these sources can still be useful for alerting one to new positions or opportunities. In South Africa, for instance, the 'Chapter 2 Network' has developed a new email product to monitor legislation and bills in parliament that affect socio-economic rights (Electronic Communication, 2002).¹⁶

Understanding the policy environment and staying current is crucial for conducting effective policy-applicable research and establishing the researcher as someone who can have a constructive dialogue with policymakers. Moreover this knowledge is not project-specific and will therefore be useful well beyond the lifespan of the individual study.

Tactic 4: Engage with Potential Users

'Current [social science] literature suggests that the most significant factor in getting research findings used is the development of a collaborative relationship between researcher and clients' (Rylko-Bauer and Willigen, p.140, Ed. Fetterman, 1993). The majority of policymakers involved in this study encouraged researchers to initiate relationships. One policymaker advised once an interested individual [civil servant] has been found: 'be sure to actively keep in touch' (Personal Interview, 2002). This interaction can provide the researcher with information and insights needed for the policy relevant aspects of their work such as awareness of departmental needs, aims and objectives of specific policies, departmental agendas and overarching government priorities. Over time these interactions can lead to productive relationships. As one

¹⁴ Kelly Lorelei and Turpin Elizabeth (2004) *Policy Matters: Educating Congress in Peace and Security*, Henry L. Stimson Centre

¹⁵ For a listing of many of the websites of intergovernmental organisations with conflict components see the Conflict Data Services section of the INCORE website. www.incore.ulster.ac.uk/cds.

¹⁶ The circulars include the latest legislation or policy document, its status in the parliamentary process, up-to-date analysis and a listing of who's who in government on this issue. Further information on the Chapter 2 Network can be found at www.advocacy.org.za.

European official commented: 'effective [researchers] spend time on cultivating the government and contacts through people relationships' (Personal Interview, 2002).

For those outside the policy labyrinth, finding the right person to contact may seem a daunting task. A structured way to identify the appropriate individuals, units or departments and their associated relationships is by mapping the policy community. The goal is to identify critical actors and 'which relationships are likely to have which impacts on the realisation of policy goals and the direction of change' (Thomas, et al., 1998, p.35; Wilson, 1984). Where possible, attention should also be given to detecting internal politics, coalitions and dynamics.

There are a variety of ways to set about mapping the policy community. Some government departments have publicly available directories offering information such as the post-holder's name, contact details and a brief description of duties. Topical stories in the media often cite relevant policymakers. Colleagues and professional networks are also an excellent first port of call for suggestions and contacts. Mapping the relevant actors and organisations is an ongoing process, however, as individuals are promoted or leave agencies, and departments get reorganised. As this information is accumulated it is useful to keep track of relevant names, accurate titles, and departments in a format that is easily updateable and searchable. A basic database or even Excel worksheet will suffice. This database can have multiple uses far beyond the original purpose.

Once the policy community has been mapped, researchers need to decide who the appropriate person to approach is. As Rylko-Bauer and Willigen state: 'advocacy is enhanced if one has identified relevant decision-makers and information users' (Ed. Fetterman, 1993, p.144). There are two different ways to address this depending upon the type of system, specific issue area, degree of conflict crisis, stage in the policy process and size of agency. In some cases the head of the unit or department may be the most effective person to approach. In their study of the conflict-related units of the UN, Williams and Robinson noted that when UN policymakers seek to influence their colleagues one of the effective methods is to go 'above the policymakers. The UN, for example, is hierarchical, therefore, as one interviewee commented, assent at the top procures acceptance at other levels. For this reason, policy people within the UN who want change may seek, directly or indirectly, to present new ideas to the Secretary General or other key people' (1999, p.12).

Others maintain that often it is not the person at the top who has the most detailed understanding of the issue or the responsibility for thinking through multiple options and drafting policy proposals. One interviewee described it as an inverted triangle, whereby those at the top have more areas to cover and their knowledge is therefore spread more thinly than those further down the triangle who have fewer issues to handle and thus greater knowledge and understanding of the details and intricacies of the issue at hand. This would suggest that the people at the mid-level in the triangle may be most influential on policies because they are engaged during the stages of development when change is still an option (Personal Interview, 2002; Wyn, 1995).

There are also options beyond personal approaches to individuals. Committees, for instance, can be a useful medium for accessing interested officials. In the UK, for example, an All Party Parliamentary Group for Peace and Conflict Resolution is being

established to create a forum for learned and informed debate with the aim of developing understanding of the process of resolving conflict through non-violent means and by taking a holistic and creative approach to problem solving (Daffern, T. and Napper, M., 2002). Their meetings are open to anyone with knowledge of the issues. Not only are these a good venue for offering one's opinions to policymakers but they can also, depending on the structure, be instrumental in developing a researcher's set of contacts.

In addition, one should not think only in terms of civil servants and elected officials. There are broader constituencies that may have a stake in the policy problem and may be influential such as members of the opposition or members of the government party not currently in office (Porter, 1995). Information from embassies is also taken very seriously (Personal Interview, 2002).

Tactic 5: Develop an actionable option analysis

Research conclusions should not be the last step in the analysis process for the policy-oriented researcher. Research outputs offering precise, actionable ideas that take into consideration both political realities and the constraints on the relevant political body convert an interesting resource into a potentially politically influential product. The absence of these three aspects – political realities, constraints and precise actionable ideas – were cited as some of the main frustrations policymakers have with research publications.

Contrary to general discourse, this does not mean that researchers should hone their skills on developing practical recommendations, but rather that they should improve their ability to deliver a series of analysed options. Practical recommendations can be 'tricky things for policymakers' (Personal Interview, 2002), particularly in cases where the policy actor has commissioned the research, because if the policymakers do not implement the recommendations they then have to spend time and effort rebutting them.

Ideally, an option analysis should consider:

- the parameters or constraints of the government body;
- the practical applicability of the suggestion;
- the supporting evidence behind each option; and
- the reasons for selecting one option over another.

In a nutshell: *provide the facts, reasons and arguments behind each option.*

An option analysis should not disregard the political reality and should give real consideration to the chances of success for each option. One final point – in cases where the researcher feels that options do not exist then the reasons should be stated, followed by the course of action recommended.

Tactic 6: Disseminate and Present User-Friendly Research Results

Communicating research findings is half the battle with improving research-policymaker interaction. Researchers should be aiming to 'return to [decision-makers] something that is digestible, quick, precise, yet sufficiently comprehensive' (Personal Interview, 2002). There are two key aspects to communicating findings effectively:

user-friendly dissemination and presentation. The latter is cited by policymakers as one of their biggest frustrations with research outputs and one of the key factors in the decision to pick up a publication or not. For both dissemination and presentation, consideration should be given to the level of expertise of the intended user, the particular angle that will be most relevant and the communication medium that will attract the most attention.

Strategic dissemination activities need to be conducted in order to insure the work receives adequate exposure – in effect to get the results into the right hands. The existence of a report has little bearing on whether it will be read or even come to the relevant policymaker's attention. A range of research outputs exist and should be considered for both interim findings and final results (Rothman, 1980; Hughs *et al.*, 2000). When selecting dissemination media, the researcher should consider the needs of the policymaker and feasibility in terms of both cost and time. Reflection upon where policymakers access their research, as outlined in the Sources of Research subsection, should be factored into this decision. Where possible, researchers should not limit themselves to one medium as different potential users access different outputs. Timing also plays a role in dissemination and will be covered in more detail in Tactic 7: Capitalise on windows of opportunity.

Dissemination media divide into two general types: verbal, such as conference presentations or luncheon briefings; and written, such as policy briefs, memos and journal articles. Starting with the latter – written media – there are two key presentation aspects: clarity and brevity. The first aspect, clarity, refers to a number of issues. The lucidity of structure or, as one individual put it, 'ease of navigation' (Personal Interview, 2002) is important. The information should be structured in an easy-to-follow manner, using bullet points, tables and diagrams where possible. The easy identification of the key points and the use of accessible language in place of academic jargon is also important. A further language consideration is the language of the target policy country. If the intention is for the work to be widely accessible in a country of conflict that has a different common language from that of the research findings, consideration should be given to translating the work.

The second aspect, brevity, is simply the need to keep the results short and to the point. The International Crisis Group,¹⁷ was cited as a culprit for producing reports that are too long, with 120 pages considered far too much to digest (Personal Interview, 2002). The need for brevity reflects the time-sensitive and pressurised nature of the policy world. In fact, according to one civil servant 'some [civil servants] will lift and weigh [the document] to decide if they have time to read it' (Personal Interview, 2002).

Broad consensus existed among those who participated in this study that an Executive Summary was essential for effective communication. The Executive Summary should be 'frontloaded', with succinct descriptions of the key findings, their relevance to policymakers, their implications and, where applicable, a summary of the options analysis. The key findings should not stand alone but should be clearly linked to the evidence. Near the end of the submission, a synopsis of the research methodology in

¹⁷ The International Crisis Group (ICG) is a private, multinational organisation working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

the briefest form possible that still allows for illustration of rigorous methods should be included. Finally, the summary should be less than ten pages and accompanied by the full document for referencing purposes.

Briefings in the form of luncheon seminars, workshops or formal presentations are another means of engaging with policymakers. The policymakers involved in this study were split over the value of briefings. For those who will make time to attend research briefings, the style, language, and ability of researcher to engage the audience when presenting the material is also important (Hughes *et al.*, 2000). Researchers should always remember that ‘language is a powerful force that can shape thoughts and influence minds’ (Fetterman, p.3, 1993).

A Few Simple Guidelines: Presentations for Policymakers¹⁸

Presentations

1. *Package your material attractively:*
 - **Handouts:** Professional appearance, well written in an easy-to-grasp style and format. Use the Executive Summary or produce a handout in the Oxford Analytica Format, maximum 2 pages.
 - **Overheads:** simple, aesthetically consistent overheads, produced professionally, spell checked, proofread and confirm that the font is large enough to be seen at the back of the room.
2. *Audience:* Keep relatively small to encourage discussion and reduce feeling of being in a lecture.
3. *Venue/Room setup:* Use a structure that encourages dialogue such as a circle or horseshoe shape. Try to avoid lecture halls.

CONTENT

1. *Understand the audience:* Reflect on the issues of most importance to the audience and tailor presentations to their needs by including only information that really matters to the group.
2. *Keep discussion of methodology or academic framework to an absolute minimum:* It is important to illustrate that work has been academically rigorous but this should be done in a very concise way.
3. *Briefly explain the problem (why) and then discuss your solutions (how):* Clear recommendations or options should incorporate the reality of the policy world.

Style

1. *Language:* Use direct, non-technical, non-academic language.

¹⁸ These guidelines are based on the United Nations University North America Office recommended seminar model for the UN as well as a synthesis of several publications looking at ways to ensure research is more effectively used by policymakers.

2. *Delivery*: Should be brief and to the point, informal and discussion oriented and encourage comments and dialogue. Never read from a paper.
3. *Maintaining interest*: Personal accounts or narratives keep the audience focused and interested.

Having a basic understanding of the culture of the audience will help insure that language style, phrases, examples and metaphors are suitable. Furthermore, assess the level of knowledge and interest area of the audience and adapt the presentation accordingly. If the audience is less informed on the particular topic, then the presenter should ‘think consciously and critically about how to communicate effectively’ (Timmer, p.6, 1998), and not pull out the one-size-fits-all presentation. Finally, criticism of issues that audience members may be personally connected to should be avoided and care should be taken to fill in any gaps in information that may be interpreted negatively and increase resistance to the ideas.

Tactic 7: Capitalise on windows of opportunity

Matching information with immediate need and political will is an important step in ensuring that research is considered by policymakers. Elizabeth Shove has found that ‘the potential for using research depended on the existence of specific situations or “windows” in which the capacities and interests of users temporarily aligned with the capacities and interests of researchers and in which research became momentarily relevant. In other words users only become so under the right conditions’ (1996, p.2. See also Hughs *et al.*, 2000; Fetterman, 1993).

Windows of opportunity close as quickly as they open, with the real challenge being to know when a window exists to be capitalised upon. Elections, cabinet shuffles and a new civil servant in post all provide a window of opportunity. With a new person or political party comes a fresh set of ideas and, in some cases, a clean slate not beholden to previous ideas or policies. In many cases, particularly in civil service systems of regular rotation, new post-holders may have no experience of, or background in, the issue at hand. As one newly appointed civil servant stated: ‘everything that comes across my desk is new [to me]. I am on a steep learning curve and am very impressionable as everything [I have read] so far has had an impact on me to some extent.’ This window does not last forever as the same person noted: ‘I am becoming slowly more selective after being in post four months’ (Personal Interview, 2002).

In addition to the opportunities that arise with fresh faces, windows can open up when a crisis acts as a catalyst for change and forces people to look beyond the standard approaches for new ways of dealing with issues. Finally a fleeting window may open during policy formulation. Researchers who committed to having their ideas included in the decision-making process need to be conscious of such openings. They need to be ready and willing to pull results off the shelf when the target audience is willing to listen rather than expect the audience to have listened when the report was published because publication and reception windows rarely coincide. Dissemination, therefore, does not only occur at project completion.

These seven tactics were selected as foundational steps that all policy-minded researchers could incorporate into their work with minimal effort and few additional

skill requirements. Tactics 2-7 in this section all support the adoption of an insider strategy and are not a comprehensive listing of the ways and means to effect this approach. Of equal validity are those tactics that would support an outsider strategy, such as raising public awareness on an issue through strategic engagement with the media or leading a public campaign. However, these tactics can require significant investment of time and effort to develop the skills to implement them effectively. There are numerous books and guides on using the media or campaigns that would better serve an interested researcher. For those who are particularly politically savvy, a combination of both insider and outsider strategies is possible.

5. CONCLUSION: RESEARCH - POLICY INTERACTION: A TWO-WAY STREET

Governments and international organisations have not been blind to the possibilities of including research in the policy process, stating its importance and the need to use it several times over the past few decades. Over thirty years ago, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recommended 'that the organisation take the leadership in stimulating the development of the social sciences as tools of policy on a multi-national basis' (Donnison, 1972, p.518). More recently, David Blunkett, the UK Home Secretary¹⁹ stated in a speech: 'We need to be able to rely on social science and social scientists to tell us what works and why, and what types of policy initiatives are likely to be most effective. And we need better ways of ensuring that those who want this information can get it easily and quickly.' (2000)

Despite these symbolic declarations, however, the fate of attempts to use ethno-political research to influence policy is rather bleak, with most policies formulated without the insight or evidence that research could provide. Consequently the expectation that governments at all levels will improve their ability to handle situations of conflict in step with the advancements in scholarly understanding of these issues may be far from the reality. In addition to the cultural gulf that exists between the researcher and policymaker communities, specific problems are perceived by policymakers that inhibit their willingness, and even their ability to utilise research. Quite clearly, the impediments do not lie entirely on the shoulders of the academic/research community.

Throughout the discussions with policymakers on the use of research, many were quick to add the caveat that, regardless of the policy relevance, practical applicability or presentation of the document submitted, at the end of the day the researcher is not the decision-maker. In this they are absolutely right. Conversely, however, it is not only the responsibility of the researcher/academic to insure that their findings appear on the right desk at exactly the right moment. No matter how policy-oriented a researcher may be, they are still on the outside of the policy labyrinth. Those people with the responsibility for drafting the policy proposals and making the final decisions also have the responsibility to insure that those decisions reflect the latest knowledge. This is even more the case in situations of conflict, where poor policy and oversights are not only reflected in ballooning budgets and bad press but also in lives lost, trauma and structural damage to a country that can leave it devastated for generations to come.

The steps required to shift the thinking of the policy community are a subject for a separate project. In the meantime, policy-minded researchers can incorporate some or all of the tactics presented as a means to bring them closer to their policy goal. If the research world takes the first step and trains itself to be better able to provide consistent, practical and relevant advice to the policy world on the ever-growing list of complex conflict crises, the gap could start to close.

¹⁹ David Blunkett was appointed Home Secretary on 8 June 2001.

APPENDIX 1: Interview List

- Ashdown, J. - Head of Conflict Prevention Section, United Nations Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Bell, E. - Deputy Leader of the Alliance Party, North Down Assembly Member, Northern Ireland Assembly
- Blake, H. - First Secretary, Anglo-Irish Division, Department of Foreign Affairs, ROI
- Boyle, M. - Director, Parades Commission, Northern Ireland
- Burgess, N. - Policy Unit, Council of the European Union, General Secretariat
- Conolly, L. - Principal, International Security & Defence Policy, Department of Defence
- Duncan, D. - Senior Advisor: Conflict Reduction, Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department, Department for International Development
- Dwyer, G. - Assistant Principal Officer, Department of Defence, ROI
- Gallagher, T. - Graduate School of Education, Queen's University Belfast
- Hoffman, M. - Dean of Undergraduate Studies, The London School of Economics and Political Science
- Lapprand, D. - Expert National D  tach  , European Commission – DG External Relations
- Mansergh, M. - Special advisor to the Taoiseach on Northern Ireland, Economic and Social Matters, ROI
- McCoy, D. - Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure.
- McCutcheon, N. - Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, ROI
- Meyer, P. - Principle Administrator, European Commission Directorate General for External Relations, A/4
- Rahman, B.M. - Head, Global Issues Research Group, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Ritchie, D. - Community Relations Unit, Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
- Roberts, D. - Lecturer in Politics, School of History, Philosophy and Politics, University of Ulster
- Simmons, M. - Head, Conflict and Security Policy Section, Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department, Department for International Development, UK

Sisk, R. - Assistant Conflict Reduction Adviser, Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs
Department, Department for International Development, UK

Suliman, M. - Chair IFAA Council, UK

Todd, S. - Head of Victims Liaison Unit, Northern Ireland Office

Structured Conversations

Agyeman, D.K. - Professor of Sociology, Former Dean, Graduate Studies and
Chairman, Distance Education Committee, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

Ahadzie, W.K. - Research Fellow, Centre for Social Policy Studies, University of
Ghana

Alata, S.A. - Chairman, House Committee on Public Finance Budget and Planning,
Oyo State House of Assembly, Ibadan, Nigeria

APPENDIX 2: Civil Servant and Advisor Interview Outline

A. Introduction

B. Role of research

1. Do you have a role in commissioning research?
2. What makes some research more useful than other?
3. What happens internally that makes you seek out existing research or commission research on an issue?
4. What do you do with the research reports you commission? How do you use that research?
5. What are your main frustrations/concerns with the research results that come across your desk?
6. Besides research what are the most important things that influence your decisions?

C. Where do you look for research?

1. Is there an expectation that civil servants keep up with research? If so, where do you go find the latest work? If not, why not?
2. Do you attach different value or credibility to different mediums that contain research? For example would information in a book have higher credibility than that in the newspaper?

D. Factors regarding the researcher

1. What makes a researcher or research institute particularly credible or useful? What are the critical factors?
2. What role does reputation, name recognition or status of the researcher or institute play in value allocated to research?
3. Do you believe researchers and academics are neutral?

E. Views on researcher strategies

1. Has a researcher or institute involved you in the design and implementation of a research project? If so, how, and did you find it useful?
2. In an ideal world, what is the best way for research results to be communicated to decision-makers?

3. Do you feel there is a closed shop of academics?
4. Does conflict create a different political process?

F. Can you give me a personal example of a time research was critical to a policy decision or changed your viewpoint on a policy issue?

G. Tips or suggestions for researchers

1. What would you recommend researchers who wish to do policy relevant work do?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Annan, K. (1997, 14 July). 'Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform.' Report of the Secretary General A/5/950.

Blunkett, D. (2000, 2 February). *Influence or Irrelevance: Can Social Science Improve Government?* Secretary of State's ESRC Lecture.

Caplan, N. (1979). 'The two-communities theory and knowledge utilization.' *American Behavioural Scientist*, Vol. 22: pp.459-470.

Casullo, C. and Thakur, R. (2001, 5-6 June). *Second UN Research and Policy Dialogue*, Geneva, United Nations University.

Cave, M. and Hanney, S. (1996). *Assessment of Research Impact on Non-academic Audiences: Consultants' Report*. Uxbridge: Faculty of Social Sciences, Brunel University.

Center on International Cooperation, NYU. (1999, 12-14 September). *Knowledge for What: Policy Research on Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building*. Workshop, Pocantico Conference Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Colvard, K. (2001, October). *The Policy Uses of Research on Terrorist Violence*. Speech at HF Guggenheim Foundation, New York, USA.

Crosland, P., Deakin S., Gelsthorpe, L., Jones, G., Quince T. and Sutherland, H. (1998, May). *Using Social Science, A pilot audit of non-academic exploitation of social science research in The University of Cambridge*, Economic and Social Research Council.

Daffern, T. and Napper, M. (2002, September). Letter of Invitation - All Party Parliamentary Group for Peace And Conflict Resolution.

Donnison, D. (1972). 'Research for Policy', *Minerva*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp.519-536.

Fetterman, D. (1993). *Speaking the Language of Power: Communication, Collaboration and Advocacy – translating ethnography into action*. Taylor and Francis, Inc., Oxford.

Fitzduff, M. (2000, 14-16 December). *From Shelf to Field – Functional Knowledge for Conflict Management*. Speech at Facing Ethnic Conflicts: perspectives from research and policymaking. Bonn, Germany. Available Internet: [www.incore.ulster.ac.uk/home/policy/policy/Shelf to Field 3.pdf](http://www.incore.ulster.ac.uk/home/policy/policy/Shelf_to_Field_3.pdf) .

Gaber, I. (2001, January). Television and radio: a best practice guide. *Economic and Social Research Council*. Available Internet: www.esrc.ac.uk/esrccontent/PublicationsList/4books/tvframeset.html .

Glover, D. (1993, December). *Policy Researchers and Policymakers: Never the Twain Shall Meet?* Ottawa, Canada: International Development Research Centre. Available Internet: www.eepsea.org/publications/specialp2/index.html .

Hughs, M., McNeish, D., Newman, T., Roberts, H. and Sachdev, D. (2000). *What works? Making Connections: Linking Research and Practice*. Barnardo's, London.

Kingdon, J.W. (1984). *Agendas, alternatives and public policies*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Landry, R., Amara, N. and Lamari, M. (2001). 'Utilisation of social science research knowledge in Canada.' *Research Policy* 30, pp.333-349, University of Laval, Quebec.

Langford, S. (1998, November). *The Process of Influencing Social Policy*. Paper for the Working for Change Seminar of the Combat Poverty Agency.

Lindblom, C.E. (1980). *The Policymaking Process*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall

Lindblom, C.E. and Woodhouse, E.J. (1993). *The Policymaking Process*. (3rd Ed.). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall

Manaev, O. (1998, October). 'Independent Research and Public Policy Impact: Belarusian Variant.' *Analytic Bulletin of Independent Institute of Socio-Economic & Political Studies*, Issue 3 (9).

Molas-Gallart, J., Tang, P., Sinclair, T., Morrow, S. and Martin, B. (2000, February). *Assessing Research Impact on Non-Academic Audiences*. Economic and Social Research Council – Policy and Evaluation Division, Swindon.

National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research. (1997). 'Improving the Usefulness of Disability Research: A Toolbox of Dissemination strategies.' *Guides to Improving Practice, Number Two*. Available Internet: www.ncddr.org/du/products/guide2.html .

National Educational Research Forum. (2000, December). *The Impact of Educational Research on Policy and Practice*. Sub-group report, London.

O'Neil, M. and Tschirgi, N. (2001). 'The Role of Research and Policy Analysis.' In Hampson, F.O. and Malone, D.M. (Eds.) *From Reaction to Conflict Prevention: Opportunities for the UN System*. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Pelz, D. (1978). 'Some Expanded Perspectives on Use of Social Science in Public Policy.' In Yinger and Cutler (Eds). *Major Social Issues*. The Free Press.

Porter, R. with Hicks, I. (1995). *Knowledge Utilisation and the Process of Policy Formation – Toward a Framework for Africa*. USAID. Available Internet: http://sara.aed.org/publications/cross_cutting/knowledge_utilization/html/utilization.htm

Porter, R.W. and Pryor-Jones, S. (1997, July). *Making a Difference to Policies and Programs: A Guide for Researchers*. USAID. Available Internet: www.usaid.gov/regions/afr/hhrraa/guide/guide.txt

Queen's University, (2001, 2 February). *Influence in High Places? The roles of the voluntary and community and academic sectors in public policy formation and governance*. Working Seminar, Belfast.

Secretary-General of the United Nations. (1997, 14 July). *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*. Report of the Secretary General, A/5/950, para. 62.

Rist, R. (1994). 'Influencing the Policy Process with Qualitative Research.' In Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* Sage Publications, London.

Ross, M. (1997) *Why do they do what they do?* Paper for the European Conference on Peace and Conflict Resolution, Belfast.

Ross, M. (forthcoming). 'Adding Complexity to Chaos: Policymaking in Conflict Situations.' In Fitzduff M. and Church, C. (Eds). *NGOs at the Table: Strategies for Influencing Policy in Areas of Conflict*, Rowman & Littlefield.

Rothman, J. (1980). *Using Research in Organisations - A Guide to Successful Application*. USA: Sage Publications.

Sharpe. L.J. (1975). 'The Social Scientist and Policymaking: Some Cautionary Thoughts and Transatlantic Reflections.' *Policy and Politics*, 4:2; 7-34.

Shove, E. (1998, December). *Researchers, Users and Parachutes*. Report, Second workshop on researchers and users as mediators and translators, Centre for Science Studies, Lancaster University.

Shove, E. (1996, December). *Researchers, Users and Window Frames*. Report, First workshop on researchers and users as mediators and translators, Centre for Science Studies, Lancaster University.

Stone, D., Maxwell, S. and Keating, M. (2001, 16-17 July). *Bridging Research and Policy*. Workshop. Warwick University, UK: DFID

Sutton, R. (1999). *The Policy Process: An Overview*. Working Paper #118, Overseas Development Institute, Chameleon Press Ltd.

Telgarsky, J. and Ueno, M. (Eds) (1996). *Think Tanks in a Democratic Society: An Alternative Voice*. Washington D.C.: Urban Institute Press.

Thomas A., Chataway K. and Wuyts, M. (1998). *Finding Out Fast - Investigative Skills for Policy and Development*. Sage Publications in association with the Open University, London.

Timmer, P. (1998, October). *Adding Value Through Policy-Oriented Research: Reflections of a Scholar-Practitioner*. Impact Assessment Discussion Paper No. 4, International Food Policy Research Institute.

Tukey, J.W. (1962) *Annals of Math Statistics*, vol.33, pp.1-67

Vaitilingam, R. (2001, January). *Developing a Media Strategy*. Economic and Social Research Council. Available Internet:
www.esrc.ac.uk/esrccontent/PublicationsList/4books/medframeset.html .

Walker, D. (2001, January). *Heroes of dissemination*. Economic and Social Research Council. Available Internet:
www.esrc.ac.uk/esrccontent/PublicationsList/4books/heroframeset.html

Weiss, C. (1992). *Organisations for Policy Analysis - Helping Governments Think*. Sage Publications, London.

Weiss, C. and Bucuvalas, M. (1980). 'Truth Tests and Utility Tests: Decision-makers' Frames of Reference for Social Science Research.' *American Sociological Review* Vol. 45 (April), pp.302-313.

Williams, S. and Robinson, G. (1999). *Research and Policy, An INCORE consultative review of research processes, research priorities and the usefulness of research to policymakers at the United Nations and other international agencies*. INCORE. Available Internet: <http://www.incore.ulster.ac.uk/publications/needs.pdf>

Wilson, D. (1984). *The A-Z of Campaigning in Britain*. Heinemann, Portsmouth.

Wyn, G. (1995). *Pressure Groups, Politics and Democracy in Britain*. (2nd Ed.). Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cheyenne Church is the Director of Institutional Learning and Research at Search for Common Ground, an international conflict transformation NGO in Washington, DC, USA. She has published on evaluation and conflict resolution, single identity work and most recently co-edited *NGOs at the Table: Strategies for Influencing Policy in Areas of Conflict*. She was a member of the Advisory Group for the Reflecting on Peace Practice Project. Cheyanne received her MSc from The London School of Economics. This study was conducted while she was the Director of the Policy and Evaluation Unit at INCORE in Northern Ireland.



**The United Nations
University**

Our Partners and Fellow Affiliates within the UNU System - UNU Research and Training Centres and Programmes (RTC/Ps)

UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER)

Based in Helsinki, UNU-WIDER seeks to undertake multidisciplinary research and policy analysis on structural changes affecting the living conditions of the world's poorest people. UNU-WIDER also provides a forum for professional interaction and the advocacy of policies leading to robust, equitable and environmentally sustainable growth. UNU-WIDER promotes capacity strengthening and training for scholars and government officials in the field of economic and social policy making.

<http://www.wider.unu.edu/>

UNU Institute for New Technologies (UNU-INTECH)

Based in Maastricht, The Netherlands, UNU-INTECH conducts research and policy-oriented analysis and undertakes capacity building in the area of new technologies, the opportunities they present, the vectors for their generation and diffusion and the nature of their economic and social impact, especially in relation to developing countries.

<http://www.intech.unu.edu/>

UNU Institute for Software Technology (UNU-IIST)

UNU-IIST is based located in Macau, China. UNU-IIST's mission is to help developing countries strengthen their education and research in computer science and their ability to produce computer software. UNU-IIST collaborates with research institutes on research projects - helping them to develop contacts within the wider international research community.

UNU-IIST helps companies and other public and private institutions design and develop high quality software using advanced software development techniques.

<http://www.iist.unu.edu/>

UNU Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU-INRA)

Based in Accra, Ghana, with a Mineral Resources Unit in Lusaka, Zambia, UNU-INRA's mission is to strengthen the capacity of Africa's universities and research institutions to conduct research and produce well-trained, well-equipped and motivated individuals capable of developing, adapting and disseminating technologies that advance food security and promote conservation and efficient use of the continent's natural resources for sustainable development.

<http://www.unu.edu/inra/index.htm>

UNU Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS)

Located adjacent to the UNU Centre in Tokyo, UNU-IAS is one of the newest research and training centres in the UNU system.

UNU-IAS undertakes research and postgraduate education on issues at the forefront of knowledge, policy development and learning.

UNUIAS is committed to contributing creative solutions to pressing issues of global concern.

The term advanced studies refers to a multidisciplinary approach to research problems. UNU-IAS engages experts from traditional disciplines such as economics, law, biology, political science, physics and chemistry and ask them to pool their specific knowledge in an attempt to understand and resolve key challenges to sustainable development and the most pressing global problems.

<http://www.ias.unu.edu/>

UNU Programme for Biotechnology in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNU-BIOLAC)

Based in Caracas, UNU-BIOLAC conducts research into biotechnological issues in the Latin America - Caribbean region.

<http://www.biolac.unu.edu/>

UNU International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH)

Based in Hamilton (Ontario) in Canada, UNU-INWEH's mission is "to contribute, through capacity development and directed research, to efforts to resolve pressing global water problems that are of concern to the United Nations, its Member States and their Peoples". UNUINWEH promotes capacity building for countries affected and a more participatory approach based on North-South co-operation in dealing with global water issues.

<http://www.inweh.unu.edu/unuinweh/>

UNU International Leadership Academy (UNU-ILA)

Based in Amman, the UNU Leadership Academy was established in April 1995 by agreement between the United Nations University and the Government of Jordan. The UNU Leadership Academy's mission is to promote, encourage and facilitate leadership development for a secure, just and equitable, humane and democratic world."

<http://www.la.unu.edu>

UNU Programme on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS)

Based in Bruges, Belgium, UNU-CRIS seeks to contribute towards achieving the universal goals of the UN through comparative and interdisciplinary research and training for better understanding of the processes and impact of intra- and inter-regional integration.

To do this, UNU-CRIS builds policy-relevant knowledge about new forms of governance and co-operation, and contributes to capacity building on issues of integration and co-operation particularly in developing countries.

<http://www.cris.unu.edu/>

UNU Food and Nutrition Programme for Human and Social Development (UNU-FNP)

Co-ordinated from Cornell University in the US, UNU-FNP seeks to:

- strengthen international capacities in food and nutrition in all developing countries by promoting institution building with special emphasis on facilitating advanced professional training
 - identify research needs and opportunities to improve the health and well-being of individuals and communities in all countries
 - serve as an academic arm in the area of food and nutrition for the United Nations System and to work in this capacity with other agencies in the public and private sector.
- <http://www.unu.edu/capacitybuilding/foodnutrition/cornell.html>

UNU Geothermal Training Programme (UNU-GTP)

Based in Iceland UNU-GTP seeks to assist developing countries with significant geothermal potential to build up or strengthen groups of specialists that cover most aspects of geothermal exploration and development.

<http://www.os.is/unugtp/>

UNU Fisheries Training Programme (UNU-FTP)

Based in Iceland, the Fisheries Training Programme (FTP) of the United Nations University (UNU) was established at the Marine Research Institute in Reykjavík in 1998.

<http://www.unuftp.is/>

UNU Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS)

Based in Bonn, UNU-EHS examines and researches on issues relating to the effects of environment change on human security issues.



The United Nations
University



INCORE

University of Ulster
Magee Campus
Aberfoyle House
Northland Road
Londonderry
Northern Ireland
BT48 7JA

Tel: +44 (0) 28 7137 5500
Fax: +44 (0) 28 7137 5510
Email: incore@incore.ulst.ac.uk
www.incore.ulster.ac.uk