In the next few weeks, my first cohort of Masters in Conflict Management students will be submitting their research dissertations. Research in my view is beginning to think about the research topics. For me, this is terrifying exciting. I get to see the hard work and outcomes of the research completed, and help my new students choose interesting topics I get to work with enthusiastic, intelligent and passionate scholars and explore new areas of study.

For the students themselves, I’m not sure anything quite so much as they would describe how they feel: particularly not those in the final stages of editing and proof reading. Research can be a thankless, isolating and frustrating task. One or two students have even been known to have a moment of existential dread while reading the following block of text. Research in conflict and mediation, in particular, poses an unexpected challenge. How will they be able to persuade their peers to be interested in their unique challenge? How will they be able to do this in such a short time? And there are the supervisors to deal with.

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One challenge may come after identification of a research question, and it is related to the ethics of research itself in my experience, while we are most interested in what happens in the mediation room, we are interested in what happens in the mediation room. This is the counter-balancing of the tools that are used in the mediation room. Research in conflict and mediation, in particular, poses an unexpected challenge. How will they be able to persuade their peers to be interested in their unique challenge? How will they be able to do this in such a short time? And there are the supervisors to deal with.

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Finally, and practically, the issue of resources must be mentioned. Conflict studies and mediation are often considered as niche topics or under-funded areas of study. Research in conflict and mediation, in particular, poses an unexpected challenge. How will they be able to persuade their peers to be interested in their unique challenge? How will they be able to do this in such a short time? And there are the supervisors to deal with.

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