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Open to Negotiation: Phenomenological Assumptions and Knowledge Dissemination

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Abstract

Phenomenological assumptions—assumptions about the fundamental qualities of the phenomenon being studied and how it relates to the environment in which it occurs—affect the dissemination of knowledge from subfields to the broader field of study. Micro-process research in organizational studies rests on implicit phenomenological assumptions that vary in the extent to which micro-processes are viewed as parts of larger systems. We suggest that phenomenological assumptions linking micro-processes to organizational contexts highlight the relevance of micro-process research findings to broader organizational questions, and therefore increase the likelihood that the findings will disseminate to the larger field of organizational research. We test this assertion by analyzing studies of negotiation published in top peer-reviewed management, psychology, sociology, and industrial relations journals from 1990 to 2005. Our findings reveal a continuum of open systems to closed systems phenomenological assumptions in negotiation research. Analysis of the citation rates of the articles in our data set by non-negotiation organizational research indicates that more open systems assumptions increase the likelihood that a negotiation article will be cited in organizational studies, after controlling for other, previously identified effects on citation rates. Our findings suggest that subfields can increase the impact they have on the broader intellectual discourse by situating their phenomena in rich contexts that illuminate the connections between their findings and questions of interest to the broader field.

Keywords: Citations; Knowledge Dissemination; Negotiation; Research;

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