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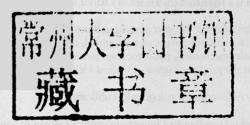
LINDA R.
TROPP

The Oxford Handbook *of* INTERGROUP CONFLICT

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Edited by

Linda R. Tropp

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The *Oxford Library of Psychology*, a landmark series of handbooks, is published by Oxford University Press, one of the world's oldest and most highly respected publishers, with a tradition of publishing significant books in psychology. The ambitious goal of the *Oxford Library of Psychology* is nothing less than to span a vibrant, wide-ranging field and, in so doing, to fill a clear market need.

Encompassing a comprehensive set of handbooks, organized hierarchically, the *Library* incorporates volumes at different levels, each designed to meet a distinct need. At one level are a set of handbooks designed broadly to survey the major subfields of psychology; at another are numerous handbooks that cover important current focal research and scholarly areas of psychology in depth and detail. Planned as a reflection of the dynamism of psychology, the *Library* will grow and expand as psychology itself develops, thereby highlighting significant new research that will impact on the field. Adding to its accessibility and ease of use, the *Library* will be published in print and, later on, electronically.

The *Library* surveys psychology's principal subfields with a set of handbooks that capture the current status and future prospects of those major subdisciplines. This initial set includes handbooks of social and personality psychology, clinical psychology, counseling psychology, school psychology, educational psychology, industrial and organizational psychology, cognitive psychology, cognitive neuroscience, methods and measurements, history, neuropsychology, personality assessment, developmental psychology, and more. Each handbook undertakes to review one of psychology's major subdisciplines with breadth, comprehensiveness, and exemplary scholarship. In addition to these broadly conceived volumes, the *Library* also includes a large number of handbooks designed to explore in depth more specialized areas of scholarship and research, such as stress, health and coping, anxiety and related disorders, cognitive development, or child and adolescent assessment. In contrast to the broad coverage of the subfield handbooks, each of these latter volumes focuses on an especially productive, more highly focused line of scholarship and research. Whether at the broadest or most specific level, however, all of the *Library* handbooks offer synthetic coverage that reviews and evaluates the relevant past and present research and anticipates research in the future. Each handbook in the *Library* includes introductory and concluding chapters to provide a roadmap to the handbook's table of contents and to offer informed anticipations of significant future developments in that field.

An undertaking of this scope calls for handbook editors and chapter authors who are established scholars in the areas about which they write. Many of the nation's and world's most productive and best-respected psychologists have agreed to edit *Library* handbooks or write authoritative chapters in their areas of expertise.

For whom has the *Oxford Library of Psychology* been written? Because of its breadth, depth, and accessibility, the *Library* serves a diverse audience, including graduate students in psychology and their faculty mentors, scholars, researchers, and practitioners in psychology and related fields. Each will find in the *Library* the information they seek on the subfield or focal area of psychology in which they work or are interested.

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In summary, the *Oxford Library of Psychology* will grow organically to provide a thoroughly informed perspective on the field of psychology, one that reflects both psychology's dynamism and its increasing interdisciplinarity. Once published electronically, the *Library* is also destined to become a uniquely valuable interactive tool, with extended search and browsing capabilities. As you begin to consult this handbook, we sincerely hope you will share our enthusiasm for the more than 500-year tradition of Oxford University Press for excellence, innovation, and quality, as exemplified by the *Oxford Library of Psychology*.

Peter E. Nathan
Editor-in-Chief
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ABOUT THE EDITOR

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Linda R. Tropp, PhD, is associate professor of psychology and director of the Psychology of Peace and Violence Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She has received the Erikson Early Career Award from the International Society of Political Psychology, the McKeachie Early Career Award from the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, and the Allport Intergroup Relations Prize from the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. Tropp is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, the Society of Experimental Social Psychology, and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. She has collaborated with national organizations to present social science evidence in US Supreme Court cases on racial desegregation, worked on state and national initiatives designed to improve interracial relations in schools, and partnered with varied nongovernmental organizations to evaluate applied programs designed to reduce racial and ethnic conflict. With Thomas Pettigrew, she coauthored the newly published book *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact* (March 2011, Psychology Press), and with Robyn Mallett coedited the book *Moving Beyond Prejudice Reduction: Pathways to Positive Intergroup Relations* (February 2011, American Psychological Association).

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Introduction

Understanding and Responding to Intergroup Conflict: Toward an Integrated Analysis

Linda R. Tropp

Abstract

Conflicts based in ethnic, religious, and racial differences continue to erupt around the world, despite decades of intervention and scholarly research. It is difficult to assess precisely what contribution social science has made to an adequate diagnosis of the sources of violent conflict. Harder still to know is how best to move forward to alleviate conflict, promote reconciliation, and achieve sustainable, peaceful relations among diverse groups. A primary goal of the present volume is to bring together social psychological and peace perspectives, and to encourage a more integrative approach to the study of intergroup conflict and peace as we look toward the future.

Key Words: conflict, intergroup conflict, ethnic conflict, conflict resolution, reconciliation, peace, social psychology

Conflicts based in ethnic, religious, and racial differences continue to erupt around the world, despite decades of intervention and scholarly research. With conflicts ranging from genocide and mass killings in Darfur, to political and religious divisions in Northern Ireland, heated tensions between Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka, to the most recent outbreak of violence between Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza, it is difficult to assess precisely what contribution social science has made to an adequate diagnosis of the sources of violent conflict.

Harder still to know is how best to move forward to alleviate conflict, promote reconciliation, and achieve sustainable, peaceful relations among diverse groups. Theoretical and empirical efforts by social psychologists and peace scholars have amassed a great deal of knowledge regarding factors that enhance or inhibit conflict, and the likely effectiveness of practices and interventions that address such conflict. Early on, their work became intricately connected in a joint effort to develop an

interdisciplinary community of researchers devoted to the scientific study of peace; these scholars drew on the strengths of their respective disciplines to link the perceptions, motivations, and emotions of individuals to concrete strategies that could promote conflict resolution and reconciliation (Christie, Tint, Wagner, & Winter, 2008; Kelman, 1965). Over the last several decades, however, contributions from these scholarly communities have grown apart and lack the integration and sense of shared purpose that helped to create the interdisciplinary investigations of early peace research. Each has continued to develop its own conceptual models and publication outlets as new generations of scholarship emerge, and correspondingly, scholars from social psychology and peace research tend to have limited knowledge or awareness of the frameworks and underlying principles that guide the other's work. Although some contend that it may be difficult to reunite these divergent traditions (see Clemens, in press), emerging perspectives recognize a great deal of potential for integration

across these approaches (see Vollhardt & Bilali, 2008). A primary goal of the present volume is to bring these perspectives together, and to encourage a more integrative approach to the study of intergroup conflict and peace as we look toward the future.

Commonalities and Differences in Social Psychological and Peace Perspectives

With the goal of facilitating further conceptual integration among scholars involved in social psychological and peace research, we were fortunate to be able to convene a meeting at the University of Massachusetts Amherst for exchanges of perspectives among contributors to this volume, with generous support from the UMass Amherst Research Leadership in Action Program. This meeting afforded an opportunity for contributors to learn from each other and identify commonalities and differences in their views and scholarship on intergroup conflict. This effort was greatly enhanced by the enthusiastic response of the contributors themselves, who graciously shared insights, actively sought to establish links across perspectives, and incorporated new knowledge into their own thinking and writing on the issues at hand.

Although contributors came from somewhat distinct disciplinary approaches, a common thread that emerged from our discussions was a focus on people's lived experiences in intergroup conflict. Adopting a largely phenomenological approach (Allport, 1954), contributors explored how people's perceptions, interpretations, and emotions may be influenced by conflict and transformed through processes that reduce conflict and promote reconciliation and peace. We also found fertile ground for integrating perspectives in our shared focus on the psychological needs of individuals and the key roles that needs and motivations play in intergroup conflict. Consistent with earlier theorizing on the functional nature of conflict (e.g., Coser, 1956; Simmel, 1955), both social psychologists and peace scholars have stressed the importance of focusing on the psychological and sociological needs and motivations that underlie conflict dynamics (Christie et al., 2008; Pruitt & Kim, 2004; Wallensteen, 2007), including needs for recognition, acceptance, respect, security, and justice (see Nadler, Malloy, & Fisher, 2008). Through understanding people's needs and motivations in response to conflict, we can enhance our ability to develop effective strategies to reduce and resolve conflict, and to work

toward sustainable peace (Kelman, 1978; Nadler et al., 2008; Zartman, 2000).

By emphasizing these themes, the present volume complements other recent volumes that adopt a largely social psychological approach to the study of conflict and reconciliation (e.g., Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2006; Nadler et al., 2008; Pruitt & Kim, 2004), paying particular attention to how people construe, experience, and are affected by intergroup conflict. Focusing on such "psychological" dimensions of conflict, the handbook highlights the ways in which individuals' perceptions, emotions, and motivations contribute to instigating and perpetuating intergroup conflict, and how these factors relate to strategies that can resolve or alleviate conflict, thereby integrating perspectives on these issues from social psychologists and peace scholars.

A number of additional issues emerged as recurring themes in our discussions, reflecting both commonalities and differences in our approaches to studying intergroup conflict and peace. One such issue concerned the dual goals of working to improve relations between conflicting groups on the one hand, and working to promote intergroup equality and social justice on the other. Although these goals are often construed as being incompatible with each other (see Albin, 2009), many at our meeting expressed the belief that both are necessary to minimize the potential for outbreaks of violent conflict and to build sustainable peace. Consistent with this view, peace scholars have long argued that welfare and justice are basic human needs, and a common cause of conflict when they are not met (Burton, 1990), such that peace and justice should be construed as joint goals to be pursued in tandem (Lederach, 1995).

Another key issue involved the recognition that intergroup conflict and violence manifest themselves at multiple levels of analysis, and in turn, possible approaches to reducing conflict and building peace must be considered at multiple levels as well (see also Christie et al., 2008; Kelman, 1965). Depending on the level (or levels) that constitute the focus of our analysis, we may envision different strategies to reduce or resolve conflict, ranging from working with individuals and communities to promoting broader social policies (see Lederach, 1997). Also, strategies implemented at one level of analysis may have negligible or unintended consequences at another level of analysis. For example, efforts to improve interpersonal relations between members of