

book's strongest chapters. It offers a historical overview of the topic—which in this case includes a list of 25 influential research syntheses in literacy, a very useful resource in itself—and a practical guide of steps to advance research synthesis that suits very well the needs of a researcher psychologist.

In summary, *Methods of Literacy Research* is a practical and informative book. It will especially benefit undergraduate or entry-level graduate students in educational or school psychology. It provides an open review of different ports of entry to the world of literacy and a stimulating discussion of the multiple political and contextual variables that impact both the research process and definition of literacy itself. Although some chapters balance their discussion of epistemological and practical concerns better than others, the book as a whole transmits a sensible and clear message on the impact of culture, society, and context on literacy-related processes. Its one significant topical oversight remains research on the acquisition of writing, an area that has developed extensively outside the Anglo-Saxon world and that uses its own methodologies (Ferreiro, 1999; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1979; Pontecorvo, Orsolini, Burge, & Resnick, 1996). Despite these weaknesses, the book succeeds in achieving the editors' goal: exploring the new shapes of literacy research through an inclusive selection of perspectives. □

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## The Social Psychology of Conflict Resolution

### The Handbook of Conflict Resolution

by Morton Deutsch and Peter T. Coleman (Eds.)

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000. 600 pp. ISBN 0-7879-4822-5. \$70.00

Review by Steven E. Stemler

Human beings across the globe differ in a dizzying number of ways, yet there is at least one common link that we all share. Each of us, whether we are Black, White, young, old, rich, or poor, will grapple with conflict at some point in our lives. Some conflicts are interpersonal; others are intrapsychic. Some are intractable; others are manageable. Morton Deutsch and Peter Coleman, two leading experts in the field of conflict resolution, have assembled an impressive array of researchers whose charge was to create a volume illustrating how key social psychological theories can be used to understand conflict and to facilitate its resolution. *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution* successfully fulfills this charge.

### Theoretical Orientation

The editors state up front that their goal is not to review the empirical research on conflict resolution per se,

but rather "to enrich the field by presenting the theoretical underpinnings that throw light on the fundamental social psychological processes involved in understanding and managing conflicts at all levels" (p. xi). Toward this end, the chapter authors discuss the relevance of a wide variety of theories in areas, such as personality, communication, trust, power, justice, attribution, conceptual change, and decision making. One particular strength of the volume is that the chapter authors are diligent in adequately defining and briefly describing the mechanisms they dis-

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*Editor's Note.* Elenà L. Grigorenko served as action editor for this review.—RJS

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cuss, making the book accessible to both the novice and the expert.

Perhaps the key weakness of the book is that in their ambitious efforts to cover a wide range of topics, the editors drift slightly, though not fatally, from their intended purpose. The volume includes three chapters that describe practical conflict resolution programs and one chapter that presents the results of an empirical study related to conflict resolution. Although each of these chapters is interesting in its own right, they seem out of place with the theoretical orientation of the remaining 23 chapters in the volume. Nevertheless, the book is held together by two major themes: framing and perspective taking.

### Framing

Most people tend to view conflicts as a zero-sum game, meaning that for one side to win, the other must lose. What Deutsch and others point out, however, is that conflicts tend to take a much more destructive course when parties view conflict in competitive terms. Framing conflict as a competition tends to lead people to overcommit to a particular position (e.g., "Iraq is evil"), rather than committing to a course of action based on particular interests (e.g., the safety and security of citizens). Overcommitment to a position is especially dangerous because it undermines hope and preempts the search for common interests. The authors point out that overcommitment forces a dichotomy (agree or disagree) and may lead to actions that are bad for both sides, even when creative solutions exist that could preserve the individual interests of each side. This notion fits in well with work by Tanen (1998), who has observed that the United States, and the media in particular, seem to be obsessed with framing difficult conflicts in ways that emphasize polar dichotomies, as if there were only two possible sides to any issue (e.g., abortion, the death penalty). When framed in this way, people tend to focus on positions

rather than on interests, thereby impeding efforts at creative conflict resolution. Many of the chapter authors in this volume point out that when conflicts are reframed and approached as mutual problems to be solved, the results are typically much better for everyone involved (Coleman; Thompson and Nadler), a finding corroborated by work in other areas as well (Kohn, 1992).

The chapters by Marcus and by Johnson, Johnson, and Tjosvold discuss important implications of framing. They argue that although the term *conflict* has a negative connotation, conflict is not necessarily a bad thing. Conflict implies instability, and although most people and organizations are not comfortable with instability, some level of conflict within an organization, or even an individual, is necessary for meaningful change to occur. Sandy and Cochran corroborate this claim and note that conflicts within the classroom can be advantageous when they are framed as teachable moments for educators. Although this idea is encouraging in the abstract, more examples would have clarified the practical application of the concepts even further.

### Perspective Taking

Although it is important to frame conflict as a mutual problem to be solved, it is equally important for those engaged in conflict to attempt to understand the conflict from the other party's point of view. Coleman points out that one of the biggest challenges in the field of conflict resolution is to get opponents to view

**Conflict implies instability, and although most people and organizations are not comfortable with instability, some level of conflict within an organization, or even an individual, is necessary for meaningful change to occur.**

each other as part of the same moral community. Indeed, one technique used by those interested in escalating conflict and inciting hatred is to refer to one's adversary as some type of "evil other" (see Baumeister, 1999, for a review of the psychology of evil) because it is psychologically easier to remain in conflict with those we perceive as different from us. Opatow, Deutsch, and Coleman each point out that some of the greatest atrocities in human history have been carried out by moral people (e.g., good family people, faithful to a particular religion) who simply excluded the "evil other" from their moral community. The implication is that the capacity to understand the world from the perspective of the "other" is critically important to the successful diffusion of conflicts. The chapter by Raider, Coleman, and Gerson discusses a program they have developed in an attempt to operationalize and test this idea. Their program shares some common features with the work currently being undertaken by Sternberg and his colleagues (1998, 2001).

### Comments and Conclusion

The book's intention of providing a theoretical framework for understanding conflict is successful. Given the theoretical focus of the volume, however, a more apt title for the book might have been, *A Social Psychological Framework for Understanding Conflict*.

The addition of the three chapters related to practice and the one chapter illustrating an empirical study seem to represent momentary lapses in focus, but they certainly do not detract from the volume. Instead, they foreshadow the next logical step in the sequence. I would like to see a second volume in this series that systematically reviews the empirical research in key areas of conflict resolution, perhaps by means of a series of meta-analytic studies. Finally, I would suggest a third volume in the series that would provide a comprehensive overview of existing programs related to conflict resolution, and present

data on their implementation and evaluation and answer questions such as: What are some examples of how to turn conflicts in the classroom into teachable moments? How durable are intervention effects? How are the effects of the intervention measured? The three chapters related to practice found within this volume are a fair beginning, but a broad enough range of conflict resolution programs now exist to warrant a separate volume devoted to practice.

Overall, *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution* is an outstanding reference, and I highly recommend it to anyone who is interested in the arena of conflict resolution. The book makes a major contribution to the area of conflict resolution by translating social psychological theory into a critically important domain. The theoretical framework laid out by this book charts the course for the next generation of research in conflict resolution. After reading this volume, anyone interested in the field of conflict resolution will have no trouble conceiving of dozens of unsolved research questions just waiting to be explored.

The importance of understanding conflict and its resolution is not an academic thought exercise. Wars and terror currently plague our world, as they have throughout history. We need wise strategies for resolving conflict and we need them urgently. The theoretical framework is in place; what is needed is more practical implementation of these ideas. The conflict resolution programs outlined take promising steps in the right direction but only scratch the surface of what remains to be achieved within the field. □

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- Memory for Action: A Distinct Form of Episodic Memory?**  
by Hubert D. Zimmer, Ronald L. Cohen, Melissa J. Guynn, Johannes Engelkamp, Reza Kormi-Nouri, and Mary Ann Foley (Eds.)  
New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. 205 pp. ISBN 0-19-511554-6. \$24.95 paperback
- Review by Lars Nyberg*
- The German scientist Hermann Ebbinghaus is often referred to as the father of the modern science of memory. Ebbinghaus emphasized many important aspects of a scientific approach to the study of memory, including the importance of replication. In addition, Ebbinghaus proposed that to come up with an unbiased measure of memory, the to-be-remembered information should be free from preexisting associations. He therefore claimed that students of memory should use artificial materials in their experiments. Later scientists argued against this claim and suggested that an inherent quality of memory is linking what is to be remembered with what is already known (i.e., preexisting knowledge). Therefore, it was argued, the information in memory experiments should be meaningful, and the majority of experiments during the second half of the 20th century involved words, sentences, and pictures. The present volume may be seen as taking this argument one step farther by arguing for the importance of studying memory for actions. The basic argument is that actions, by definition, have an output component, whereas traditional memory information is limited to input into memory, and a central tenet in the book is that output components may contribute in important ways to memory performance.
- Kinds of Actions**
- There are many kinds of actions. Some of the kinds of actions that are not discussed in this book are cognitive and motor skills, and general knowledge about actions considered is not discussed either. Instead, the focus is on laboratory studies of episodic memory for actions. Although this may be seen as a very narrow perspective on memory for actions, it is clear from the book that there are indeed a number of different approaches to the study of episodic action memory.
- One approach that has been used in quite a number of studies is to instruct participants to perform mini-tasks like break the match or open

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Social psychology is the scientific study of how people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others (Allport 1998). By this definition, scientific refers to the empirical method of investigation. The terms thoughts, feelings, and behaviors include all of the psychological variables that are measurable in a human being.

Social psychology: Learn all about the fascinating branch of psychology devoted to the study of how social factors influence people's thinking, feelings, and behaviors. ALL-ABOUT-PSYCHOLOGY.COM. A Comprehensive Guide To The Wonderful World of Psychology. Menu. Home. ABOUT PSYCHOLOGY. Become A Patron. What is Psychology? Social psychology is the scientific study of how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, and implied presence of others. In this definition, scientific refers to empirical investigation using the scientific method, while the terms thoughts, feelings, and behaviors refer to the psychological variables that can be measured in humans. Imagined and implied presences refer to the internalized social norms that humans are influenced by even when alone. Social psychology is a branch of psychology that studies cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes of individuals as influenced by their group membership and interactions, and other factors that affect social life, such as social status, role, and social class. Social psychology examines the effects of social contacts on the development of attitudes, stereotypes, and so forth.