

Christie, D. J., Wagner, R. V., & Winter, D. A. (Eds.). (2001). *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Note: Copyright reverted to editors (2007). Permission is granted for downloading and copying.

## **CHAPTER 3**

# **INTRASTATE VIOLENCE**

**Ulrike Niens and Ed Cairns**

Despite the fact that the Cold War has ended, the world faces a new problem that threatens global peace and security. This is because “fierce new assertions of nationalism and sovereignty” have sprung up and the world is threatened by “brutal ethnic, religious, social, cultural, or linguistic strife” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Not all of these are strictly new conflicts, because while the end of the Cold War has spawned many of them, it has also aggravated others, and exposed older ones as essentially ethnic rather than between hostile political ideologies. Unlike international wars, the combatants in ethnic conflicts inhabit the same battlefield. Therefore, even when the actual fighting fades, their lives are intermeshed with those of their opponents. As a consequence, intrastate violence is often characterized by viciousness rather than by the more impassive slaughter of international wars. Group loyalty and the maintenance of group boundaries are dominant features of such conflicts, as are communal memories of victimization. Together they create psychological processes that contribute to further violence and genocide.

This chapter will examine the contributions that psychology has made, and can make, to understanding intrastate/intergroup conflict, through an examination of the three most influential

theories in this area, and in particular the attempts that have been made to use these theories to understand one such conflict—that in Northern Ireland. This will be followed by a brief review of psychology's contributions to the management and resolution of such conflicts. Again we will attempt to set this work within the context of Northern Ireland.

## **THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS FOR INTERGROUP CONFLICT**

### **Background**

In the late 1950s and early 1960s psychological explanations for intergroup conflict were based largely on psychodynamic thinking, tested mostly by researchers from the United States. These theories contained ideas often loosely based on the notion of the displacement of aggression.

Using this basic idea, theories have been developed to explain intergroup conflict involving unconscious processes such as projection and scapegoating. Other more complex schemes have hypothesized the development of a particular personality type, central to which is authoritarianism, which in turn is related to outgroup hostility. Put simply, these theories see the attitudes and behavior of people towards outgroups as “ways of working out individual emotional problems in an intergroup setting” (Tajfel, 1978). One might think of this as a sort of sophisticated group form of “kicking the cat.” These views of intergroup conflict based on some form of individual pathology became very popular, especially after the Second World War when people were trying to come to terms with the horrors of the Holocaust.

In the 1970s, however, European psychologists in particular began to be disenchanted by this approach. While acknowledging that these ideas might play a role in explaining interpersonal conflict, the problem was how to extrapolate directly from interpersonal conflict to intergroup

conflict. These social psychologists suggest that although the primary explanation for intergroup conflict is psychological, anyone who has studied an *identity-based* conflict knows that other factors also play a role. In Northern Ireland, for example, where people derive part of their self-concept from identifying with one of the two rival communities, factors such as religion, history, demography, politics, and economics are also important to understanding the conflict.

The development of a new theory, known as social identity theory, overcame many of the theoretical problems inherent in theories of the displacement of aggression (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social identity theory has several advantages over earlier theories in that it: (1) is firmly based in social theory, (2) makes no assumptions about abnormality or irrationality, (3) leaves room for the role of other disciplines, such as politics, history, religion, and demography, and (4) has informed the debate over cures as well as causes of social conflict.

Before considering these issues in more detail, the present chapter will review two other major theories that psychologists have used to explain intergroup conflict. The first of these is authoritarian personality theory, which is a more sophisticated version of earlier Freudian theories, and the second is relative deprivation theory (RDT). Both of these theories are important for their heuristic value. We will then focus on social identity theory (SIT) in more detail, including some relatively new ideas about how it may be possible to incorporate the other theories into SIT and so develop a unified theory. The chapter will then move on to consider how psychologists have contributed to ideas about peace and reconciliation in the context of intrastate violence and the impact SIT has had on this debate.

### **Authoritarian Personality Theory**

According to Adorno et al. (1950), the individual's personality structure provides the basis for the development of intolerant attitudes. The hypothesis was that there is a link between the development of negative intergroup attitudes and the type of family in which a child grows up. Specifically, an authoritarian upbringing is one in which parental discipline relies upon harshness, few freedoms, strict adherence to social norms, and punishment in case of disobedience. The belief was that growing up in this type of family caused intrapersonal conflict that led to hostile attitudes against the parents and in turn against authorities in general. Adorno and his co-authors believed that the child's hostility is transferred to individuals or groups that appear to be weak, different in terms of social norms, or lower in status (e.g., ethnic minorities). Hence, this offers the basis for intergroup conflict.

Adorno et al.'s theory of the authoritarian personality was undoubtedly one of the most important catalysts for social psychological research in authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, prejudice, and intergroup conflict. However, most scientists today share the opinion that neither the theory nor its operationalization is tenable in the original form.

### **Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT)**

The central thesis of relative deprivation theory (Gurr, 1970; Runciman, 1966) is that relative deprivation is not necessarily equal to actual deprivation because relative deprivation refers to the individual's *feeling* of being deprived. The hypothesis is that this feeling of deprivation is the result of a difference between the individual's expectations of attainment and his/her actual achievement. The individual's expectations of attainment may arise from social comparisons either with other social groups, with other individuals, or with the self in the past. Runciman (1966) refers to feelings of deprivation resulting from a negative outcome, as the result of com-

comparisons with other *groups*, as “fraternalistic” deprivation, and negative feelings resulting from comparisons with other *individuals*, as “egoistic” deprivation. Because fraternalistic deprivation is linked to social behavior, the assumption is that, in contrast to egoistic deprivation, fraternalistic deprivation can lead to outgroup hostility (Brown, 1995).

There are several major conceptual and methodological problems with relative deprivation theory (Walker & Pettigrew, 1984). One is that much of the existing research deals largely with egoistic relative deprivation, ignoring fraternalistic relative deprivation. A second is that research in this area has often failed to operationalize RD at the appropriate levels. Finally, much work in the RD area has often failed to specify the person or groups that individuals are using for comparison purposes, and it has failed to specify the dimension or dimensions along which the comparison process is being made. In other words, do people just feel somehow generally relatively deprived or do they feel deprived in terms of some specific dimension such as power or money?

### **Social Identity Theory**

There has been little interest in either authoritarian personality theory or relative deprivation theory as explanations of the conflict in Northern Ireland. One possible reason is that neither theory appears to account for the psychological forces at work “which intensify the strength of feeling beyond what the real conflict of interest would appear to justify” (Whyte, 1990, p. 102). Only social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1969, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and its more recent version, self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) appear to offer this level of insight. SIT suggests that *individuals use social categories not only to simplify their environment, but also to identify and to define themselves*. By identifying with a specific social category, a person defines him/herself as a group member, thereby developing a social identity.

The central thesis of SIT is that individuals strive for a *positive self-concept*, in part by trying to achieve a *positive social identity*. This positive social identity in turn depends on (social) comparisons with other social groups. The goal of the social comparison process, therefore, is to find comparative dimensions that provide a positive outcome for the *ingroup* (the group the individual identifies with) in order to enhance the group's and the individual's self-esteem.

SIT allows for temporal changes, which gives the theory a vital dynamic quality. In order to cope with both the positive and negative outcomes resulting from comparison processes, the theory proposes that individuals develop *identity management strategies*. Such identity management strategies become most important when intergroup comparison results in a *negative social identity*. When this happens, SIT suggests that an individual may resort to (1) individual mobility (i.e., exiting the group), (2) social creativity (including changing the comparison group or changing or re-evaluating the comparison dimension), or (3) engaging in social competition.

The individual's or group's choice of specific identity management strategy depends on the perception of the existing intergroup context and on the strength of ingroup identification. More specifically, *permeability* of group boundaries, and *stability and legitimacy* of intergroup relations determine the individual's or group's preference for particular identity management strategies. When individual mobility is not possible (because of perceived "impermeable" group boundaries), intergroup identification becomes stronger and the collective strategies of social competition and social creativity become important. Consequently, the situation is more likely to lead to negative outgroup attitudes and in turn to intergroup conflict.

To sum up, SIT claims that people derive part of their self-image from the social groups to which they belong and that individuals strive to maintain a positive self-image, in relation to

their group membership, through comparisons with other outgroups. If this social comparison process results in a negative outcome, SIT argues that the perceived type of intergroup context (in terms of permeability, stability, and legitimacy) will determine the individual's or group's choice of identity management strategy. In certain situations, particularly when group boundaries are seen as impermeable, intergroup conflict is the likely outcome.

## **THE CONFLICT IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

Despite the fact that it is possible to trace the Irish conflict with the English to at least the sixteenth century, Ireland really only came to the world's attention because of the violence that has spanned the last 25 years and which has led to some 3,000 deaths and tens of thousands of injuries due to increasing community divisions. At its most basic, the conflict in Northern Ireland is a struggle between those who wish to see Northern Ireland remain part of the United Kingdom (the Protestant/Unionists) and those who wish to see the reunification of the entire island of Ireland (the Catholic/Nationalists). Complicating this, however, is the fact that underpinning the conflict are important historical, religious, political, economic and psychological elements (Cairns & Darby, 1998).

Several attempts have been made to apply authoritarian personality theory to explain the conflict in Northern Ireland. Various writers have suggested that Irish social attitudes (including those of Northern Ireland) are more conservative than those of Britain. Heskin (1980) for example, claims that people in Northern Ireland "are raised with traditional and conservative political and religious values" (p. 84), making them rather (more) authoritarian in their outlook. Despite this, social psychologists in Northern Ireland did not find this exclusively psychological analysis of the conflict convincing. There has therefore been only one attempt to apply authoritarian per-

sonality theory to the conflict, and that study (Mercer & Cairns, 1982) failed to find a clear relationship between authoritarianism and intergroup conflict in Northern Ireland. Mercer and Cairns suggested that authoritarianism, rather than being an underlying personality syndrome, is probably determined, in Northern Ireland at least, by exposure to conservative ideas which in turn are related to sociocultural variables such as education, social class and religiosity.

Other social scientists have applied relative deprivation theory to explain the conflict in Northern Ireland, which is not an affluent area, given its combination of large families, poor standards of health, high prices, low earnings, high unemployment, and poor housing. This situation was exacerbated by Protestant domination that led to unemployment rates that are higher for Catholics than for Protestants. As a result, most commentators would agree that Catholic aspirations to join their co-religionists in the Republic of Ireland is fueled at some level by their relative deprivation, that is, the way Catholics have been treated in Protestant-dominated Northern Ireland over the last seventy years.

Over the last two decades, significant progress has been made in tackling the inequalities experienced by Northern Ireland's Catholics. Yet disparities still remain, especially in the area of employment. However, despite the apparent face validity of relative deprivation theory as an explanation for conflict in Northern Ireland, few researchers have been sufficiently convinced to actually put it to the test.

Birrell (1972) was the first person to apply RDT, examining in detail economic, social, and political factors in Northern Ireland, concluding that there were widespread feelings of relative deprivation in the Catholic community. However, Birrell focused virtually exclusively on actual inequalities between Catholics and Protestants and made no attempt to show that Catholics actu-



ally *perceived* these inequalities or felt them to be important.

Subsequently, Willis (1991), in an unpublished doctoral dissertation, attempted to test the theory in Northern Ireland more directly. Willis concluded that (1) in Northern Ireland fraternalistic relative deprivation is more strongly related to social protest than egoistic relative deprivation, (2) increasing the perception of inequality does not necessarily lead to an increase in feelings of discontent, and (3) Tajfel's (1978) theory of social identity can be used with relative deprivation theory to shed light on the Northern Ireland situation.

These results were later confirmed by Willis and Cairns (1993) who interviewed Catholics living in the city of Derry in Northern Ireland. Analysis of the interviews produced clear evidence for the existence of feelings of relative deprivation among Catholics. However, what was particularly interesting was that while respondents indicated that they believed that they were not discriminated against individually, they also confirmed that Catholics and Protestants at a group level do practice intergroup discrimination. Willis and Cairns hypothesized that respondents distinguished between individual and group level discrimination in order to distance themselves from the situation in Derry. Once again, this study highlighted the importance of *group* feelings of relative deprivation (fraternal relative deprivation). As SIT is the only theory that persuasively accounts for the fact that individuals act in terms of group as well as self, this suggested a link between relative deprivation theory and social identity theory as a fruitful area for further research.

### **Social Identity Theory and Northern Ireland**

Social identity theory (SIT) has provided a useful underpinning to much sociopsychological re-

search in Northern Ireland (Cairns, 1982; Gallagher, 1989). Undoubtedly this theory's popularity has stemmed from the fact that SIT recognizes that psychology has only a modest role to play in explaining what was happening in Northern Ireland because "the social, historical, political and economic causality of the present situation must undoubtedly remain prior to the analysis of any of its psychological concomitants" (Tajfel, 1982, p. 9). However while the amount of variance accounted for by SIT is modest, it is significant. SIT, as Cairns and Darby (1998) have pointed out

...captures the phenomenon better than individually based cost-benefit analyses of such behaviors as, at one extreme, the hunger strikers, or at a more prosaic level the intense group loyalty represented in election results. SIT is above all a dynamic theory in which the relationship between groups is seen as fluid, and provides insight into the social changes which have occurred in Northern Ireland and which are still underway (p. 756).

In Northern Ireland social categorization (or "telling") plays an important role in everyday life. Burton (1979), an anthropologist, has suggested that people in Northern Ireland are almost obsessed with what he describes as the most fundamental and overwhelming question about someone: Which denomination do they belong to?

To answer this question, people in Northern Ireland have developed the skill of using cues such as school attended, first name, and area of residence. When this information is denied, they may fall back on less reliable cues such as surname, facial appearance, or even type of swear words used (Cairns, 1987). The concept of social categorization has stimulated empirical research to determine the age at which children in Northern Ireland learn to use first names

(Cairns, 1980; Houston, Crozier, & Walker, 1990) or faces (Stringer & Cairns, 1983) to categorize others as ingroup or outgroup members. Generally this work points to the fact that, on average, this skill is not mastered until about age ten to eleven years.

Not only is categorization of others in this way important but so is self-categorization. In survey after survey, when people in Northern Ireland are asked to state whether they are Catholic or Protestant, the majority are willing to answer the question. Indeed people in Northern Ireland see no problem in stating that they are Catholic or Protestant and then stating that they never attend church. This is of course also related to the very old joke—which has some psychological truth in it—about the Jewish person being asked if he was a Catholic Jew or a Protestant Jew. Self-categorization is also a well-researched area, the results of which make it clear that the situation in Northern Ireland is a complex and dynamic one which does not preclude fluctuations in identity salience nor the exclusion of private as opposed to public identities (see Benson & Trew, 1995). Further it provides an insight into the fact that in Northern Ireland the boundaries between the two groups are seen for the most part as impermeable.

The operation of social comparison process in Northern Ireland, which individuals and groups apply to achieve positive identity, has been less well researched. Social comparison processes however are not difficult to observe because the only way to achieve a more positive social identity is to ensure that one's social group, put simply, scores points over the other social group. This explains why people in Northern Ireland are apparently often more concerned with differentials than with ultimate end goals. This can range from arguments about who started the current conflict to which group actually came to Ireland first in prehistoric times. On a more everyday level the flag-flying and marching and the opposition to it, for which Northern Ireland has be-

come a byword on television screens throughout the world, is undoubtedly best understood as part of the exercise to maintain a sense of group superiority.

## **MANAGING AND RESOLVING CONFLICT:**

### **NORTHERN IRISH EXPERIENCES**

Psychology has not only been involved in trying to explain intergroup conflicts but in attempting to manage, resolve or even prevent them. In this context, the *contact hypothesis* has been one of the influential paradigms used by psychology to understand the way in which conflict between groups can be reduced (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969).

The contact hypothesis states that contact between people will allow them to communicate with each other and thus to discover that they share similar basic attitudes and values, and to appreciate each other's way of life. The product of this, it is claimed, will be positive attitudes, not only towards the specific outgroup members with whom contact occurred but towards the outgroup in general and hence a reduction in conflict.

Unfortunately, despite its obvious intuitive appeal, the contact hypothesis has received only limited empirical support. The problem is that even when intergroup contact takes place under what are thought to be ideal conditions, positive attitudes formed towards individual members of the outgroup with whom one comes into contact often fail to generalize to the outgroup in general.

#### **The Contact Hypothesis and Northern Ireland**

Northern Ireland is a relatively segregated society, especially for children, the vast majority of

whom attend denominational schools. For many, this is the problem. Therefore, encouraging some form of cross-community contact, in the main involving children, is often seen as the solution. Initiatives in this area have ranged from more informal contacts in the form of summer camps, to setting up a third (integrated) school system. However, people in Northern Ireland already co-exist individually on a day-to-day level, whereas a social psychological analysis suggests that the conflict exists at an *intergroup* level. A criticism, therefore, that can be leveled at many of these contact schemes, is that they encourage contact on an inter-individual basis rather than on an intergroup basis as suggested by social identity theory.

One of the earliest programs involved bringing children together from the two communities for holidays, often in the United States. These schemes have been criticized because they only reach a small number of children and involve only short-term contact. More recently, in recognition of the fact that most pupils will continue to be taught in segregated schools, the government has introduced a common curriculum for all schools, which includes two compulsory cross-curricular themes with a community relations thrust, Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage. This has been done in the hope that it will end the mutual ignorance which many feel characterizes Northern Irish society. A second strategy has been to encourage and finance (but not make compulsory) interschool contacts between Catholic and Protestant schools. The most radical option involves developing new integrated schools. Since 1980 some 40-plus elementary and secondary schools have opened which share a common aim of reflecting both communities in their pupil and staff compositions while reflecting cultural pluralism in their curriculum (Dunn, 1989). These schools continue to grow in number but only serve a small proportion of Northern Ireland's children.

## THE FUTURE

In this last section we will discuss future developments in the three areas we have examined so far, theoretical explanations for intergroup conflict, the contact hypothesis, and ending with some speculation about intrastate violence in general and psychology's role in combating this dangerous threat to world stability.

### **Theoretical Explanations for Intergroup Conflict: A Unified Model**

As the number of empirical investigations in this area has started to undergo a rapid expansion, the search for a model unifying authoritarianism, relative deprivation, and social identity has now become critical (Kawakami & Dion, 1995). One place to start such a search is to examine the obvious links between social identity theory and both authoritarian personality theory and relative deprivation theory.

### **Authoritarian Personality Theory and Social Identity Theory**

Efforts have already begun to reconceptualize authoritarian personality theory. According to Duckitt (1992), the basic construct underlying the three attitudinal clusters found by Altemeyer—conventionalism, authoritarian submission, and authoritarian aggression—reflect the intensity of an individual's feeling of social identity. Duckitt presumed that with increasing *ingroup identification* and stress on *group cohesion* the individual would show an increase in conventionalism, authoritarian submission, and authoritarian aggression. As a result, he suggested that with increasing ingroup identification the emphasis on behavioral and attitudinal conformity with ingroup norms would increase. Furthermore, this should enhance the emphasis on unconditional obedience to ingroup leaders and the intolerance of not conforming to ingroup norms.

As a result of this, Duckitt has produced a new definition of authoritarianism: "...authoritarianism is simply the individual's or group's conception of the relationship which should exist, that is, the appropriate or normative relationship, between the group and its individual members" (1989, p. 71). Duckitt's new perspective has the added advantages that it is bipolar, with authoritarianism as one extreme and liberalism as the other, and that it views authoritarianism as easily influenced by situations and different group contexts.

### **Relative Deprivation Theory and Social Identity Theory**

Several authors have already commented on the correspondence between RDT and SIT (Brown, 1995; Tajfel, 1981; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984). SIT and RDT both involve social (intergroup) comparisons as the basic mechanisms underlying ethnocentrism and the individual's development of prejudice. However, SIT additionally emphasizes the importance of group identification as a necessary process prior to social comparisons. Furthermore, SIT is more focused on cognitive processes ("How do people think about their ingroup in comparison to the outgroup"). In contrast, RDT, at its best is more concentrated on the emotional aspect of intergroup relations ("How do people feel about their group in comparison to other groups or individuals") (Brown, 1995, p. 202). If a rapprochement of these two positions were possible it would help to overcome one of the main criticism of SIT noted above, namely that SIT is too focused on cognitions, neglecting emotions in intergroup conflict.

The parallels between SIT and RDT are particularly obvious in a more recent version of RDT known as Folger's (1987) referent cognitions model (RCT). According to RCT, individuals compare actual social comparison outcomes between groups (perhaps in terms of power or money) with other possible alternatives. The individual's awareness of these other possible or "referent"

outcomes may arise from social, temporal or imaginative comparisons. The author suggests that those referent outcomes individually perceived as more positive than reality may lead to discontentment and resentment and in certain situations ultimately to intrastate conflict.

Additionally, the variables *justification* and *likelihood of amelioration* are included in the model. Justification is the individual's perception of the legitimacy of the actual comparison process—"is it just/fair that we have less money/power?" The hypothesis is that the individual's resentment against other individuals or groups should increase the more the actual outcome is seen as being illegitimate (i.e., unfair or unjust). Situations where the referent outcome is seen as "obviously" just and the actual outcome as "obviously" unjust are most likely to lead to intrastate conflict.

The concept "likelihood of amelioration" refers to the individual's perspective on the stability of the actual outcome. Folger assumes that the perceived possibility of future change to a more positive referent outcome will decrease resentment. In contrast, no hope for a change to the better will increase resentment. Justification and likelihood of amelioration are conceptualized as mediating the relationship between referent outcomes and resentment.

As noted above, SIT hypothesizes that how the individual perceives relations between his/her ingroup and an outgroup, in terms of permeability of group boundaries, stability of intergroup relations, and legitimacy of intergroup relations, will determine the actual identity management strategies that individual will adopt. In turn, which identity management strategy is adopted will have a major bearing on whether intrastate conflict is likely to arise. In RCT terminology, the concepts "referent outcomes," "justification," and "likelihood of amelioration" determine the degree of resentment. Both theories assume that outgroup hostility (which underlies intrastate con-



flict) is determined by the perceived rightness of the group's position in relation to a comparison group and the perception of future change of the group's position to the better. While SIT suggests identification with the ingroup as a mediating variable, RCT suggests relative deprivation.

In conclusion, there are similarities between SIT and RDT and/or RCT, respectively. Folger's (1987) RCT shares basic assumptions with SIT and RDT (e.g., social comparisons as the underlying process for intergroup hostility and hence intrastate conflict). In addition, the variables claimed by RCT to determine different levels of resentment match well with the variables mentioned by SIT as determining the individual's or group's choice of different identity management strategies.

### **Contact Hypothesis: Recent Developments**

Despite the disappointment engendered by the contact hypothesis, social psychologists have resisted the temptation to throw the baby out with the bath water. As a result, work in this area is leading to promising new avenues of research (Pettigrew, 1998).

In particular, recent research in social cognition, taken in conjunction with some of the ideas on SIT outlined above, has begun to provide clues as to more effective ways that contact can be used to alter stereotypes. What this research has shown is that stereotypes are highly resistant to change, i.e., stereotypic beliefs show considerable inertia in responding to discrepant information. In order for stereotype change to occur, it is necessary for the stereotype disconfirmers to be seen as typical of the *group*, rather than of individuals. This is where social identity theory comes in, because what this means is that contact must take place, not between individuals as individuals, but rather between members of respective groups. In other words, the contact must occur at

the intergroup end of the continuum rather than at the interpersonal end.

Paradoxically therefore, part of the solution may be to make people's group affiliations more salient in the contact situation and not less (Brown, 1988), thereby ensuring that the participants see each other as representatives of their groups and not merely as exceptions to the rule. In this way, contact should ideally aim towards changing people's minds about what constitutes a typical group member (Werth & Lord, 1992).

To summarize, the most recent thinking is that for contact to successfully disconfirm key stereotypic beliefs it not only has to involve interpersonal contact, it must also involve intergroup contact with a member or members of the outgroup who are prototypical in all respects with the exception of the one key factor to be disconfirmed. In addition, the contact should take place over a long period of time and in order for the specific disconfirming stereotyped behavior or belief to be expressed the contact should optimally take place under highly structured conditions in which the interactions may need to be loosely scripted (Desforges et al., 1991).

### **Intrastate Conflict**

As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, intrastate conflicts have become more common in the last decade. There is no reason to believe that this trend will diminish in the near future.

While all such conflicts are to some extent unique, nevertheless they do contain commonalities.

For this reason it is possible to make some tentative suggestions, based on experience in Northern Ireland as to the best way psychologists might contribute to the search for peace.

To begin with, psychologists must understand that in intrastate conflicts their role in the overall peace scheme is a *modest but critical* one. During the conflict itself, they may serve to

give people hope and perhaps lower tensions, while clinicians can of course provide necessary psychological first-aid. As the conflict moves toward a settlement, psychologists may play an important role in facilitating negotiations. Ultimately, however, they depend upon the success of the political process in creating a setting within which peace and reconciliation may be achieved. It is during the post-political settlement period that psychology's role will most likely take precedence.

Another lesson that all psychologists must learn is that, even post-settlement, their goal may be to manage or reduce conflict, not necessarily to eliminate it entirely. For example, the government in Northern Ireland, which for many years encouraged contact between the two communities, has recently come to acknowledge the need for pluralism in Northern Ireland (Cairns & Darby, 1998). This has led to government policies encouraging cultural diversity through support for activities that are traditionally associated with Catholics only or Protestants only.

Finally we can envisage a time when psychology will play a role, not just in helping to intervene in ongoing intrastate conflicts or to reconstruct societies torn apart by such conflicts, but also in preventing intrastate conflicts. As political scientists and political psychologists develop the ability to detect the early warning signs that hindsight tells us precede most conflicts, psychologists must develop techniques to counter and ameliorate intrastate conflicts before they are inflamed and out of control. In doing so psychologists can help to end cycles of violence which have plagued many parts of the world for centuries and in the twenty-first century will be a major threat to world peace.