

Chapter Four — We Instinctively Build Cultures

An instinctive behavior we see in every setting is that the people in each setting build cultures.

Cultures are, at their essence, sets of behavioral expectations for the people in a group or setting.

We build cultures everywhere.

Every group of people creates a culture for that group of people. The cultures tell the people in the group what to do and what not to do in the context of the group and its culture.

The whole process happens instinctively. We feel an instinctive need to build the key elements of a culture every time we form any kind of group.

The pattern is universal. We create cultures in every setting where we have people in groups. Each group creates its own internal rule set for group functioning.

We feel great instinctive discomfort if we are in a group setting and the group doesn't have its own set of expectations about how people in that group setting should behave.

Our cultural expectations tell us what we should do and what we should not do in each setting.

Our cultures function at a very direct level as a major tool for our instincts. The basic pattern we use is that our instincts set our goals and our cultures then give us pathways to use in each specific setting to achieve those goals. Our cultures actually help us achieve our entire package of instinctive behaviors.

Our cultures have the instinct-linked ability to cause some behaviors to feel right and to cause some behaviors to feel wrong for each person in the culture.

That ability to make specific behaviors feel right or wrong gives cultures great power over our lives.

We build cultures wherever we have groups of people in any group setting. The fact is relevant to his book because the cultures in any setting can encourage and support intergroup Peace in that setting or they can incite and inflame intergroup division or conflict. Both consequences can and do result in various settings today from the cultures that have been built in each setting.

At this point in our history, we need to use our culture building capabilities to guide us in the right paths relative to intergroup understanding and intergroup Peace and we need to use our cultures to help us avoid intergroup conflict and division.

If we don't use our cultures well relative to our intergroup objectives, there is a high likelihood that our cultures will be impediments to Peace and there is a good likelihood that our cultures could even be facilitators of intergroup conflict.

There are many areas of the world where that set of cultural realities is creating major intergroup problems today.

Lines Create Their Own Cultures

We build cultures everywhere.

We clearly need to understand the very strong set of instincts we have to build cultures. The impact of cultures has already been mentioned several times in this book. It is also a key feature of *The Art of InterGroup Peace*, *Peace In Our Time*, and *Cusp of Chaos*.

Each of those books explains that every setting involving a group of people tends to build a functioning culture of some kind for the group and the setting.

We have multiple levels of cultures. Some cultures can be elaborate, fully structured, and complex, and some of those more elaborate cultures can literally last for centuries.

Other cultures can just be the simple set of structural rules that are formed on the spot to accommodate the functional needs of the people who are in some situational group context in a given setting to create a functioning culture for people to use for that particular situational setting.

People standing in line to buy or do something, for example, can form a culture for the line that identifies the set of rules and the expectations that exist in that time and in that space for that particular line.

Line cultures are everywhere that lines form. That is universal. The line cultures that are formed are not, however, all identical.

Different countries and different settings tend to have somewhat different line behavior patterns and tend to create slightly different expectations for their line cultures.

In some settings, a person in line can “hold a place” for another person in a way that functionally allows the other person to arrive later and still join the line. Some settings allow that rule. Other settings can have line members become angry and even inflamed and situationally violent if someone tries to “hold a place” for someone else and can be angry and even

enraged if a person who arrives to the line later attempts to enter the line in a way that is out of context with the relevant line rules.

Rules on “bio breaks” vary from line to line. Rules on sitting, standing, or lying down can also vary from line to line.

In any case — when a line culture has formed — there tends to be a situational collective expectation by the people in that group setting that the people in the line will abide by that culture. That process tends to be self-reinforcing. Members of the line enforce and reinforce the culture for other people in the line.

Cultures In Each Setting Tend To Be Self-Reinforcing

That same basic pattern of collective reinforcement and collective, mutual internal cultural expectation enforcement is true for larger and longer lasting cultures as well as for situational cultures.

The pattern is that cultures in most settings generally tend to be self-reinforcing. People in each culture who know the culture tend to reinforce compliance with the expected behaviors of the culture.

Complex cultures tend to enforce and reinforce themselves in complex ways and simple situational cultures tend to enforce and reinforce themselves in simple and situational ways.

Each group of people tends to build some level of culture to help the group interact with itself and each set of people creates its own mechanisms for teaching and enforcing the rules that exist for the relevant group “us” to the people who are subject to the culture.

Multiple Categories Of “Us” Can Form Cultures

We clearly have a wide array of ways that we use to identify ourselves to ourselves as members of one group or another. We can be family members, clan members, tribe members, community members, school or education site group members, social club members, or worksite and work force members.

We can be members of a profession. We can be members of a work group. We can be members of a union. Each of those groupings creates its own culture components and expectations.

We can identify ourselves as an “us” for a number of group alignments. Sometimes the categories we use to define “us” overlap and sometimes the categories are entirely independent of on another.

We can be citizens of a nation or citizens of a state or we can be citizens of a town or we can be members of a particular community. We can hold each of those distinctions in our minds fairly easily — and we tend to

have the ability to determine for each decision we make which relevant culture should guide our decision making process for that decision.

We have a well-developed ability to be able to figure out which culture is relevant to the situation and to the setting we are in at any point in time — and we use that relevant rule set to guide our behaviors in the context of that setting.

We can be very adept at figuring out which culture set applies to every given relevant situation. We can each relate to the culture of multiple categories of “us” in the right context for each culture... and we can do that relating to our culture relatively easily because creating that sense of alignment to the relevant culture in any setting is a skill we all instinctively have.

That particular flexibility to use situation relevant cultures to guide our group behaviors and thought processes is functionally very useful when we form teams, hunting parties, or war parties and when we want the members of those groups to act in accord with the cultural and behavioral expectations of the war party, hunting group, or team.

In each case — when there is a defined set of people who have a shared alignment through the relevant collective definition of any group — the group almost always ends up with a set of functioning rules that become

and are the defining culture for the group. We all tend to use that set of rules to guide our interactions in that group context.

We Use Cultures Because They Work To Meet Our Needs

We use that approach of building cultures for each setting because it works. Creating a basic level of cultural alignment is an effective way for each of us to figure out how we should each behave in each setting.

Having a relevant culture to use in each situation is functionally much easier to do than it would be for each of us to have to somehow figure out each of our behaviors in each setting based on our own individual and entirely situational judgment, our own personal database, our own history, and our own individual life experience.

We can much more easily identify and know what our expected behavior are for any situation when we have a group culture that creates a relevant context and a clear expectation for the behavior.

We tend to use labels for our cultures that tell us which set of cultural expectations is relevant to us. The group names we invoke tell us which set of rules and expectations are relevant.

A person can say — “I am a Marine. In this setting this is what Marines do.”

Or a person can say, “I am a Minnesota Lutheran. In this setting, this is what Minnesota Lutherans do.”

The labels we use to define our group tell us what the relevant set of expectations and identity elements are for each of us as we make our situational behavioral decisions.

Our cultures help us make situational decisions about what to do and we make those decisions in the context that makes sense to us and is most relevant at the time we make them.

Context and setting is a crucial element in the decision making process for each person in each culture. A Marine, for example, would have one set of behaviors in a war zone and another set of behaviors that are culturally appropriate for a simple Peace setting where the Marine might be feeding his or her children.

Both our instinctive behaviors and our cultural guidance point us in separate directions for those two very different behavioral situations.

Cultures for nations can be very complex. Tribal cultures and ethnic cultures can be very complex as well. All of those cultures usually involve layers of rules, laws, and expectations.

Cultures for schools or work places can be somewhat less complex — but even those less complex cultures can easily end up with layers of rules, regulations, and behavioral expectations.

Skillful Leaders Shape Their Cultures

Leaders tend to lead in the context created for them by their culture. Leader behaviors tend to be defined by each culture. A number of leaders in various settings try to shape their cultures as well as utilize them.

Many of the most skillful leaders of businesses, religious organizations, schools and other similar organizations spend some of their time as leaders directly shaping, enforcing, reinforcing, enhancing, and utilizing their organization's culture.

Chapter Eight addresses some very basic issues about building and using cultures in more detail. Cultures can be created, shaped, amended, and changed by people who know how to achieve those goals.

Cultures can be actually used as a tool to run or steer a group. The most skillful leaders in many settings will work to define, install, instill, embed, and direct the culture that is used by whatever group they lead. Cultures can be a very useful leadership tool for leaders who know how to use them.

Cultures can be used as tools because all cultures are invented.

Cultures everywhere are simply invented by the groups of people who use them. People decide in each setting what the right set of behaviors should be for each setting — and then those sets of behaviors became the expected behaviors and the cultural norms for the group.

Cultures Have No Inherent Legitimacy — They Are All Invented

Cultures are created by a blend of historical events, belief systems, and shared behaviors — and range from extremely flexible in some settings to absolute cultural rigidity in others.

Enforcement of cultures ranges from laws and police imposed behaviors at one end of the continuum to simple peer pressure and interpersonal verbal or non-verbal suasion at the other end of the continuum.

Every tribe, group, and setting has its own cultural expectations — and people everywhere tend to feel right when their behaviors are aligned with the expectations of their culture.

Cultures are simply tools used to create behavioral expectations for groups of people and they have power over us because we have instinctive thought processes that cause us to feel right when we act in alignment with the rules and values of our culture.

Building cultures can be a very creative process, and it can be an extremely rigid and even stifling process. In worst-case situations, cultures can very clearly become a limiting and fully constraining factor relative to thought processes, beliefs, and behaviors.

Cultures Are All Invented

We need to all understand the key fact that cultures are all invented. No culture ever springs intact, fully defined, and fully functioning, from our DNA or even from our relevant group definition, or from our specific group history.

Our cultures can feel like they are embedded in us. They tend to feel inherent to each setting. They are not, in fact, either inherent or inherited. Cultures do not emerge intact from our instincts. We have instincts to build cultures — but the actual cultures we build are not defined in explicit terms by our instincts.

Our instinctive need to build cultures means that every group in any setting creates its own functioning culture for that setting. We each then tend to relate at a very personal level to the cultures we create.

That linkage and that bonding with our own culture is a very powerful instinctive thought process. We all instinctively tend to identify ourselves with our basic culture.

We Feel Right Acting In Accord With Our Cultures

That sense of embedded cultural identity does not mean that any culture in any setting actually is inherently and functionally what defines any individual human being in that setting.

That point about our cultures not really being inherent to themselves or to any of us can both confuse and concern people. It can also make some people unhappy — even angry. It doesn't feel right.

It often feels to us as though our most basic and primal cultures do and should define us. We all do tend to instinctively relate very closely to whatever culture raised us, for example.

That is the normal pattern for cultural bonding. We tend to have very strong bonding instincts relative to our birth cultures.

We each tend to go through bonding processes. We each tend to go through a normal imprinting process with our most immediate cultures that is a major part of the process of growing up. We also tend to learn, internalize, and identify with the cultures of any groups we join over our lifetime.

We have strong instincts to internalize the cultural values that exist in each setting where we feel that we are part of the culture. We bond with our

cultures and then we instinctively tend to want to protect and defend our cultures.

Some People Are Willing To Die For Their Culture

We tend to be both protective and defensive relative to the key and basic parts of our key cultures. Group loyalty is clearly an instinctive behavior.

Some people feel so tightly aligned to their culture that they are willing to shed blood or even die to protect their culture. Cultures are all invented — but some people feel such a strong loyalty to their culture that those people will die to defend the culture invented by their group.

That level of intense cultural bonding is highly likely to happen when the culture has a link to a specific language.

We tend to use our language as a very primal and basic factor for defining our personal sense of “us.” Languages are often tied very directly into our cultural loyalty bonding and imprinting package.

Some People Are Willing To Die For A Language

Our tribal instincts also tend to be linked with the language process. Tribes tend to each have their own language.

Countries with dozens of tribes tend to have dozens of tribal languages. Languages are often tied very tightly to tribal and ethnic cultures.

People often identify and link their own culture and their own personal cultural identity with their tribal language — and people can feel intense loyalty to both their language and their culture. That loyalty can be very strong.

People are actually sometimes willing to die for their language. The power of that instinctive loyalty link to our language and to our culture to influence people's thoughts and behaviors should not be underestimated.

In times of tribal warfare, the victorious tribes have sometimes eliminated or tried to eliminate the language of the losing tribe. Several empires that have been created across the planet in various settings have attempted to eliminate the local languages of the various tribal peoples who were conquered and who were incorporated into each empire.

Those attempts by the conquering tribes to squash the tribal languages of the tribes they have defeated have had mixed success. Some have succeeded, but many have failed.

The languages of some tribes have survived intense persecution for very long periods of time because people in that tribe feel such fierce loyalty for their language.

Some people have been willing to die if that sacrifice of their life were to mean that the language of their culture or that other key pieces and components of their culture were more likely to survive if they made that sacrifice.

All Cultures and All Languages Are Invented

The key point that we all need to understand intellectually as we look for the impact of instinctive behaviors on the creation of intergroup Peace is that all cultures are invented. So are all languages.

All languages — and all language dialects — are also simply and purely invented. We make them all up. They are not actually who we are.

Languages actually are just a tool that we use to communicate. They are each situational artifacts of each group's specific and highly situational linguistic history. The tribal languages that exist for each group each just happen for each tribe through various sets of situations and circumstances.

That fact about all tribal languages simply being situation-linked inventions by each group may be intellectually true. It may be historically true. It may be functionally true.

It does not, however, feel instinctively and emotionally true and right to many people.

Many people instinctively identify with their language at a very basic level, and many people believe that they owe their language both a deep loyalty and intense protectivity.

Wars have been fought over both culture and language. Blood is shed today in many settings for those temporal, situational, societal inventions. The people shedding the blood of other people who speak another language too often “feel right” because they believe they are instinctively defending their “us” in that blood shedding process.

Cultures Can Be Lovely and Functional

Cultures can be lovely. Cultures can be beautiful. Cultures can be highly functional. Cultures can do very effective and useful things.

But we need to recognize at a basic level that they are all invented and we need to understand at a basic level that shedding blood to preserve each situational legacy cultural invention can be a real barrier to achieving intergroup Peace in settings where significant elements of an old culture work against the creation of intergroup Peace or against enlightened behavior.

Some sets of people create very official and rigid linkages between their ethnic group, religion, tribe, and their basic group language.

France, as a nation, has had a longstanding and explicit commitment to preserving the French culture. Preserving the French language has been a key part of that cultural strategy.

France has created very explicit national laws about the words that can or cannot be included in the official French language. It has actually been against the law to use non-approved words in some French settings.

That deliberate legal process was set up to protect the French language because some people who are French and who feel very strong linkages to their language and to their culture believe that protecting their language is an important and entirely legitimate role, assignment, and function for their National government to accomplish.

There are people in France who are highly motivated to protect the culture and language of France. Those people believe that the French culture is — at a very fundamental and inherent level — who they personally and individually are. Some people feel defined at a very basic and core level as being French.

The truth is — if the children of those cultural zealots in France were stolen from their families at birth and if those stolen children were then raised entirely in Ireland or in India or in Iran, none of those French-ancestry children who were raised exclusively in those other tribal settings and who

were taught those local languages from the moment of their birth would have or feel any of that “inherent” link to their ancestral French heritage, culture, or language.

No set of basic genetic factors that is somehow inherent and embedded in each child would cause the children with French ancestry to spontaneously recreate any real or specific part of the French culture or to spontaneously recreate any of the French language grammar rules or vocabulary in their new isolated Irish or Indian or Iranian setting.

The children of French ancestry in each setting would each be directly linked in their lives and in their personal identity to the specific culture that actually raised them — and there would be no link at any functional, genetic, inherited, or inherency-driven level to the French culture that their parents were part of.

Each child with that ancestry would feel that their own personal and actual native tongue would be the new language they were personally taught at birth. That language would feel right to those children and they would not have any linkage to speaking French words at any level.

People need to understand that the cultures we see in each tribal setting are not genetic. They are not inherent. They are not biologically embedded. They are learned. They are all invented as local languages by

people in each setting and then they are all learned as languages by the people who live in that setting.

Bonding Is An Instinctive Process

We are where we were raised. We tend to bond to the culture that was available to us at the important and highly formative time of our life when we did our basic group level bonding.

Bonding, itself, actually is very much an inherent behavior and an instinctive process. Bonding is a basic instinct created functionality.

We all have both the inherent need and the inherent ability to bond. The specifics of the language or the culture we bond with, however, are not inherent or genetic to any of us.

Each culture is an accident of history in its own creation and each culture that we are linked to or that we are somehow involved in is another pure accident of history in being directly linked to each of us.

That is an important and relevant point to understand as we go forward to create a new culture for America. As we create an overall culture for America that is based on our best values, our best processes, and our most enlightened beliefs, we need to understand that both the new culture and each of our old cultures were all functionally and situationally invented.

We don't need to feel tied to the specific package of values for any part of our old culture — particularly if the values of the old culture were racist or sexist or ethnically discriminatory in any way.

We Need To Bond To A Culture Of Peace

The very best thing we can do now to tie our instinctive behaviors to intergroup Peace is to build a new culture for this country that is based on the enlightened beliefs that are described and outlined in the last chapter of this book.

We do not need to erase or eliminate any of our basic ethnic or racial or even religious cultures. We should, in fact, all celebrate and embrace our lovely cultural diversity as a country.

But we should make sure that we modify each of our existing cultures in any areas where those cultures have sexist or racist or hate-based values that are explicitly and clearly negative and dysfunctional beliefs that contradict and oppose the enlightened values and the collective enlightened beliefs that are outlined in the final chapter of this book.

We need to very intentionally and explicitly embed enlightened values into our cultures at this point in our history. We need to be flexible in the context of our current cultures in using those new values to replace less enlightened beliefs and less enlightened values where those less enlightened

values exist and steer our thoughts and behaviors in ways that we do not want to be steered.

We Need To Free Our Legacy Cultures From Unenlightened Beliefs

We each need to make our own cultural choices. We each should make our own belief system decisions about our own cultures and behaviors. We should and can free ourselves individually and collectively from any unenlightened and dysfunctional beliefs that have been built into any of our legacy cultures.

This is the time for us all to remember that all cultures are invented and this is the time for us to modify dysfunctional component parts and negative beliefs and behaviors built into of our legacy cultures as needed to incorporate the explicit and specific enlightened sets of values that will benefit all of us at this point in our history as a nation.

We instinctively create cultures. We should understand and appreciate that process. We should use that process and the cultures we create as a tool for our enlightenment rather than have our cultures dictate important and substantive life choices to each of us in negative ways that can damage us all.

Cultures can be a great tool.

Let's use them effectively and well to give us a nation at Peace with itself and supportive of the goal of having us all succeed.

We need a culture of Peace For America.

We can make that happen if we each choose to make that happen.