

Chapter Five — Our Cultures Can Be Used As Anchors For Peace Or As Triggers For Conflict

We need a culture of Peace for America.

We also need a culture of inclusion and a culture of equal opportunity.

We need a culture that celebrates freedom at its most basic levels — including freedom of speech, freedom of beliefs, and freedom of religion.

We need the culture of our country — and the cultures of the various groups and communities that make up America — to be cultures of caring, compassion, and collaboration — cultures rooted in mutual achievement and shared success.

Our cultures guide our behaviors every day. They give us basic sets of standards that guide our decision-making and guide our interactions with one another.

To have the right set of cultural components be a key part of who we are as a nation, we need to understand both what our cultures do and how to get our cultures to do what we want them to do.

We need to make our cultures a tool for our beliefs — and we need to have enlightened beliefs that will create a country for us all that gives us all

the best opportunity to achieve the American Dream and to achieve the enlightened values that we all share as an American “us.”

We are heavily reliant on our cultures to steer our individual and group behavior today.

We use our cultures in all settings to steer, influence, and to guide our individual and collective behaviors. Our cultures tell us what we should do and our cultures tell us what we should not do in each group context and setting.

Our Cultures Are Tools For Our Instincts

We are all creatures of instincts. We all have core sets of instincts that give us our basic patterns of behaviors and our basic goals and objectives as groups and as individuals.

Our instincts actually set our overall goals for any setting — and our cultures then tend to be used as tools in each setting to help our instincts achieve our goals.

We have hierarchical instincts, for example, so every culture creates its own rules and its own expectations for hierarchies.

We have territorial instincts, so every culture creates its rules and expectations about turf.

We have instincts to be on teams and to have loyalty to the groups we are part of. Each culture creates its own loyalty expectations and each culture creates its own basic team related behaviors and approaches.

We feel very right when our behaviors are in alignment with our instincts. Our instincts generate much of their power by making certain behaviors feel very right.

Our maternal behaviors feel very right because they are directly aligned with our maternal instincts.

Our child protection behaviors feel right because our behaviors that protect our children are clearly aligned with our child protection instincts.

Our cultures actually have some of their power over us because our cultures have the same power that our instincts have to make some behaviors feel right and to make some behaviors feel wrong. Our cultures, like our instincts, can also trigger a sense of stress and even anxiety when we behave in ways that are not instinctively or culturally aligned.

For us to succeed in creating intergroup Peace in America, we need to have behaviors that encourage and support Peace embedded in our cultures — so that we feel right when we act in ways that support and create Peace.

Rules, Guidance, And Expectations

To use our cultures effectively as tools, we need to understand what our cultures do and we need to understand how our cultures do what they do.

Rules are a key part of the culture tool kit.

Our cultures impose and enforce their guidance in large part through creating group expectations, group rules, and basic behavior guidances for each group. Our cultures often support their guidance with basic — and sometimes very explicit — instructions to group members about expected behaviors.

Cultures often enforce their guidance and functionally mandate their expected behaviors with a blend of rules, regulations, guidelines, expectations, and laws.

Cultures also often enforce and support their guidance through peer pressure — with other members of a culture putting pressure on people in various ways to comply with the expectations of their culture.

When a culture is in place in any setting, that culture tends to be taught, articulated, enforced and reinforced by other people in that culture in that setting.

People clearly can feel right acting in accord with a culture, and people can tend to feel wrong acting out of alignment with a culture.

People Can Feel Direct Loyalty To Cultures

For many group cultures, people tend to feel a level of direct and personal loyalty to the culture. Those loyalty instincts can be very powerful. Many people are willing, in a wide range of circumstances, to take various kinds of individual and collective action to loyally defend and protect their culture.

Some people have been willing to die for their cultures — perceiving their cultures to be a key part of their personal “us” alignment and their personal identity.

Our basic instincts have used our cultures and their supporting features and functions well as a tool for a very long time.

Those relationships between instincts, behaviors, and beliefs all make our cultures extremely relevant to the Art of Intergroup Peace. We need to use our cultures in very intentional ways as a way of teaching, supporting, implementing, and reinforcing Peaceful intergroup behaviors and beliefs so that we can achieve intergroup Peace in each of our relevant settings.

We Need Enlightened Values And Enlightened Behaviors

Embedded In Our Cultures

To achieve the Art of Intergroup Peace, we need to make the deliberate and intentional intellectual choice as both groups and individuals at this point in our history to have this country be a country of both enlightened beliefs and enlightened behaviors.

We need to make intellectual choices about our key shared values. We then need our intellect to use our cultures as tools for our enlightenment and as a functional process for making our most enlightened ethical and moral values a functional reality for us all.

That particular process needs to be anchored on a core set of shared enlightened beliefs about who we are and about how we should all interact with one another.

We need to achieve a level of collective enlightenment that needs to be anchored in a set of clearly articulated and clearly understood core beliefs so that we all know, understand, and can commit to as a shared set of key values.

We need to become an “Us” as a values-focused country based on those core beliefs. We also need to become an “Us” in each relevant setting — so that we can achieve Peace in each relevant setting.

We need to achieve intergroup Peace, piece by piece — in each group and community — and we need to anchor the core values we create in each setting on the same core values we agree to as a country.

Those key values that we can use and embed in our cultures to anchor Peace and enlightened intergroup and interpersonal behaviors are described in the final chapter of this book.

We need to ground ourselves as a nation on that key set of shared enlightened beliefs. We all need to commit to those beliefs and we all need to act in alignment with those beliefs so that we can actually be an “us” who is unified by our belief in those key values.

We Will Not Eliminate Our Old Categories Of “Us” In The Alignment Process

We will not eliminate our other levels of basic group identification as we become a values-based “us.” No existing levels of “us” will be erased in the process.

Our basic birth groups and our most primal personal alignment levels will continue to be real and relevant to us. We will continue to be diverse after we achieve alignment — and that is a very good thing because our

diversity strengthens us and empowers us in many ways that are described by the Intergroup Trilogy of books.

What we need to do now as a key component of the Art of InterGroup Peace is to add a layer of “us” on top of those basic alignments. That additional layer can be created by our intellect — and it can be used strategically and functionally to do what we need it to do.

Our instincts give us the ability to add overarching layers of “us,” in addition to our core sets of “us” — so we need to use that ability to be flexible that is given to us by our instincts to generate an “us” that unifies us all as an American “us.”

We then need to use our cultures to do the things that will implement those enlightened beliefs in the context of our lives.

We need that particular unifying “us” that creates alignment at the highest level for all of us to be based directly on our core beliefs.

Instead of being a people primarily connected with other people by our race, our tribe, or our ethnicity, we need to be a people connected at an overarching level as a people by our shared beliefs.

We need to agree on a set of shared beliefs and we need to embed those beliefs both into an overarching culture for the country and into the cultures for each of our other relevant definitions of “us.”

We need to use that strategy of forming an overarching “us” at the largest national level — and we also need to use that strategy very intentionally and very consistently at each local group setting and community setting.

We Need To Embed Those Values And Those Behaviors In Every Culture

We need to be a values-based “us” with ourselves in each setting. We need to do that in a way that creates both trust and shared benefits in each setting between the existing groups in each setting.

We need our various group cultures to all accept and include the overarching culture of inclusion, openness, and equal opportunity that we have set up as our overarching values for our country.

If the cultures we set up for each group in each setting go down different patterns and paths and have values that are based on distrusting the other groups or somehow doing damage to the other groups in their setting,

then Intergroup Peace will obviously be extremely difficult — if not impossible — in those settings.

But if we deliberately embed values in each basic group culture in each setting that says we very much want to be at Peace with ourselves in each setting and that we want to support and celebrate each other's success, then Peace is much more likely to be the model for intergroup interaction in those settings and in the country as a whole.

We can create that set of values if we do what we need to do to make that strategy work, and if we do that work using the intergroup Peace skill set that we need to use to do that work.

Cultural issues, values, and guided behaviors are clearly extremely important for both Peace and war.

Sun Tzu Believed The Culture Of An Army Is A Key To Success

Sun Tzu believed strongly in culture as a key tool for war. In *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu made the point directly and well that the culture of an army was a key factor in the success or failure of an army. He stated clearly and persuasively that the leader of each army should think of the culture of the army as a tool that can help achieve victory for the army.

Sun Tzu stated very directly that a major role for the leader of each army is to create the culture of the army.

He called for each military leader in each setting to personally exhibit specific behaviors and values as a leader, relative to issues like discipline and basic ethics, in ways that would cause the army to follow the leader and to perform and act in an effective and aligned way as a collective entity that shared a belief system about specific sets of behaviors.

He believed that an army with a unified culture was more likely to succeed.

Sun Tzu also believed that armies who had weak cultures and armies that had a divided sense of direction would be significantly more likely to fail.

The same is true for Peace.

Creating and sustaining Peace is also much more likely to fail if we don't align both our collective culture and the culture-linked behaviors of our people in ways that will cause Peace to succeed.

Clearly, if we want to see behaviors that create and sustain Peace, we need to embed those behaviors in our cultures in each setting as beliefs and as expectations. We need to agree on Peace as a goal and we need to have

Peace be a shared value for the people who are part of the values-based American us.

We need to make sure that each of the other group cultures that we align with do not have values that work against Peace and steer us toward intergroup conflict.

We Tend To Have Cultural Expectations “Feel Right”

Even though there is great variation from culture to culture on a wide range of key issues — like the selection of a leader or our various ways of creating weddings and marriages — we tend to internalize whatever approach our own relevant culture uses for each of those areas. It generally feels very right for each of us to behave in alignment with the specific approach that is used by our culture.

We tend to be loyal to the solution approach that is used by our culture for each set of instinctive behaviors and we generally believe the solution used by our culture for each behavior is “right” at a basic level.

We feel the process to be “right” at a very basic instinctive level. We tend to be loyal at a very instinctive level to the approaches used by our own culture and we tend to believe that our approaches are the right approaches — at least for our own group.

Cultures Help Groups Achieve Goals

Every organization uses its cultures for the purpose of achieving its own goals. Village cultures are created to protect and enhance the success of villages. The culture of a school is set up to support the basic processes and the key goals of the school. The culture of a business is used to achieve the goals of the business.

The cultures of our communities are all set up functionally and incrementally to achieve what we perceive to be the collective goals for each community.

For each group, the culture is a tool. In some cases, the tool is very carefully designed and implemented. In other settings, the culture grows almost organically from our instinctive group need to identify expected behaviors for people in any group situation.

We have instincts to create cultures for every group — so every group builds the culture that fits its needs for behavioral guidance.

We Can Use The Culture Relevant To Each Context And

Setting

We also have very flexible instincts that allow us to have layers of culture that are each relevant to a layer of our group reality and group functionality.

We can, for example, be part of a family culture and relate to that culture as though its guidances and edicts are, in fact, “right.”

We also can, at that same time, relate to a clan culture that overshadows our family culture and creates its own set of behavioral expectations. In most cases, families try to build their cultures in ways that meet the expectations set by their clan or tribe for family cultures.

We can each relate to a tribal culture or to a community culture that overarches our family and clan cultures.

We can each relate at a more immediate and micro level to a team culture and we can also relate at a much more macro level to a national identity and a national culture.

We have the basic packages of instincts that lets each of us align at those multiple levels and we have the intellectual ability for each of us to situationally figure out which culture is relevant to each behavior and each decision in our life.

We Have The Ability To Relate To Multiple Cultures

We have the ability to relate to each of the relevant layers of culture in our lives — and each of those layers have the ability to shape, guide, and influence the other layers in ways that allow them to function simultaneously without giving contradictory guidance at various levels to the people in them.

We need to take advantage of that ability to have layers of instincts activated as we work to achieve intergroup Peace in each setting.

We need to set up cultures in each work-site, school, and community setting that have values embedded in the culture that support intergroup Peace.

When we have cultures in any setting that encourage conflict and that work in dysfunctional ways against intergroup Peace, then we need to change the aspects of that culture that work against Peace. We usually don't need to change entire cultures to get them to support Peace, but we sometimes need to change negative, dysfunctional, damaging, or unenlightened components of a culture.

Culture Change Can Be Difficult

Changing a culture can be difficult. Cultures themselves often have an inherent rigidity. Once they are created and once they are in place our

cultures, in our most fixed group settings, tend to both enforce and reinforce themselves in perpetuity — with people in a culture who believe in the culture and who know the culture well, telling other people in that setting how to act in accord with the guidance, rules, and beliefs of the culture and even penalizing people who act in violation of the culture in some way.

Group disapproval can be a very effective penalty and enforcement tool in some settings. We instinctively do not like to have our group disapprove of us. Group disapproval can create effective cultural compliance and even — in some cases — cultural rigidity.

Under some circumstances, cultural rigidity can be an asset. In other cases, it can be dysfunctional and damaging.

Excess Flexibility Could Weaken Performance

For basic logistical reasons, we should not change the cultures that work well lightly.

Cultures would have less functional long-term value in many basic settings if the cultures used were so flexible that they could be changed, in significant ways, by minor whims or by incidental, situational, and basically circumstantial events.

When the culture of a group calls for harvesting wild rice in October every year, then deciding to skip a year of harvesting for incidental reasons could create an unintended famine for the group. Unintended famines are not good for group survival.

So we tend to be fairly rigid in following cultural practices that seem to have worked for us in the past.

Cultures that work to meet the needs of a functioning group can be major assets for the success and survival of that group. Putting a major culture guidance asset at risk in any setting by changing the asset for less than stellar reasons can have a bad outcome for a group. Culture change can sometimes put successful processes and effective approaches at risk.

So we tend not to change cultures once we create them and once we embed them in a permanent group or setting of any kind.

Once developed and once implemented, cultures tend to stay in place.

Cultures tend to become embedded as working beliefs in the minds of the people in each culture — and changing beliefs for people in a culture can be extremely difficult once those beliefs are fully embedded in the people in that culture.

Cultures Function As A Mental Model Or Paradigm

Cultures often function as a category of Paradigm. We do much of our thinking about all topics in the world in the context of paradigms.

Our minds are designed to build paradigms about all major topics and to hold on to our various paradigms once we have developed them.

Paradigms are hard to change once we have them in our minds as our functioning belief system for any area of belief or behavior.

Paradigms can be changed, but paradigm change can require a careful and intentional process to make any significant changes.

Cultures follow that same pattern. We can change cultures, but we need to do it with some skill in order to achieve the most positive results.

Cultures, Strategies, And Missions Work Best When They Are

Aligned

For leaders of various organizations, the functional reality is that the culture, the strategic direction, and the mission or purpose of the organization needs to be aligned for maximum organizational success.

Sun Tzu understood that reality clearly. He believed the culture and the strategy of an army worked best when they were clearly and intentionally aligned with each other.

In our times, experienced leaders knew that if the leaders in any setting attempt to implement a strategy that is out of alignment with the culture of the setting, the non-aligned strategy that they attempt to accomplish is highly likely to fail.

“Culture defeats strategy” is an adage that many experienced leaders understand. Another common management theory adage is — “Culture eats strategy for lunch.”

The truth for businesses is that leaders in work settings who seek overall organizational success are often well served by working to put specific and carefully chosen cultural beliefs in place that reinforce and support their organization’s strategic direction. Cultures can be used as tools by businesses who understand what cultures are and know how to use them.

The same is true for communities and for intergroup Peace.

Some Cultures Celebrate Conflict And War

Leaders who want to achieve Peace in any setting — large or small — clearly need to understand that the cultures of the groups in each setting need to value and support Peace in order to actually achieve and sustain Peace.

That is a highly relevant issue. Unfortunately, some cultures today celebrate conflict and war. Some cultures are built on a history of intergroup negative and damaging intergroup interactions.

Those cultures often celebrate the heroes who have done damage to the other group in their setting. Some cultures have rich histories of celebrating warriors and honoring the acts of war that were key factors in each warrior's life.

We need our cultures in all settings to very clearly celebrate and support Peace and to not just honor and celebrate the icons of war.

We can embed a set of beliefs about Peace into each of our relevant cultures if we do it intentionally and do it well. We need people to believe in Peace. We need to convince the people in each relevant culture and setting that Peace is a good goal and a good value in order to embed Peace in the culture itself.

We need to call for people to rise above the cultural call to be embattled and to function as warriors, and we need to ask people to choose instead to aspire as individuals to a life of mutual support and Peace.

We need individual people to help their own cultures change in favor of Peace by making personal commitments to live in Peace and to support achieve and protect Peace for their group and their settings.

We need to very intentionally include, in each culture in each setting, the specific beliefs and the specific behavioral expectations that support and achieve Peace.

Culture change is clearly needed for those settings where the current culture celebrates conflict and focuses on conflict relative to other groups of people. Some cultures pride themselves on being warrior cultures — with all of the dysfunctional intergroup behaviors that can result from warrior behaviors and priorities.

Those beliefs and values that encourage intergroup conflict obviously need to be modified for those groups by those groups in order to increase the chance of those groups succeeding at Peace.

We need to celebrate the icons of Peace — the Ghandis and Mandelas who have shown that we can reach out across groups and bring people together to mutually create and sustain Peace.

People Grant Cultures Inherent Validity

To make culture change possible, we all need to clearly understand how much power our cultures can have over each of us and over all of us relative to how we think and how we feel.

That power is significant. Even our highly situational and almost circumstantial cultures can have a major impact on our behaviors and our thoughts and feelings.

A group of people standing in a line will create a culture for the line. The culture of the line will generally have rules for who can leave the line, who can “butt in” to the line, and whether the members of the line can take a bio-break and still retain their old position in the line.

The rules and the expectations of that line culture tend to be communicated fairly efficiently in a very setting specific way for each line culture.

We give our cultures so much inherent credibility at an emotional and intellectual level that people can become angry at a very visceral level when someone violates even the situational culture of standing in a line. People can respond with significant anger if anyone violates the culture that exists for a particular line. People tend to feel right acting in accord with the culture that exists for each line.

On our highways, road rage sometimes occurs when people in cars are perceived by other people in cars to be in violation of the rules of the situational culture that is perceived by those people to exist for that particular road.

Schools, Businesses, And Communities Create Cultures

Every setting creates cultures. Schools create cultures. Businesses create culture. The very best business leaders understand the role that cultures play in running an organization and those leaders carefully script, design, communicate, endorse, and enforce the cultures of their businesses.

The best educational leaders design, implement, and enforce the cultures of their schools.

The best community leaders shape the culture of their communities.

Communities all tend to develop cultures that are self-reinforced by the communities. Community leaders typically play a major role in creating and defining community cultures — and community leaders are often the best vehicle to use if we need to change a community culture in some way.

We instinctively act in accord with our cultures. We also instinctively follow people who we perceive to be our legitimate leaders in any setting even when we are unhappy about who those leaders might be.

When those instincts to follow cultures and our instincts to follow leaders blend, and when leaders who have solid instinctive standing with us decide to change cultures, the cultures that are most relevant to the leaders can often change fairly easily.

As an architect of cultural change in any setting, one of the most effective tools for us all to use is to convert the leader of that setting to believe in and support the relevant cultural changes. Leaders can actually change many cultures, but that process requires the leaders, themselves, to be believers and advocates for the new culture.

Historically, Leaders Have Made Religious Choices For Entire Tribes

Historically, we have seen the religious conversion of leaders in various settings cause entire tribes of people to follow their leader to the new belief.

The world is full of believers whose personal religious beliefs were inherited by them as the result of a historical event where the leader of their group converted to a new sect or a new religion.

Germany had Catholic tribes and Protestant tribes — because the leaders for each local section of that country made that decision about

alignment at some point in history on behalf of all of their people. Those belief alignment decisions that were made at that point in history by those leaders for their people continue to this day to determine the inherited belief system for the people in those relevant portions of that country.

Likewise, the Shiite tribes and the Sunni tribes in each multi-tribal country can all trace their allegiances to their specific sect based on a historical conversion to that belief at a point in the past by their own ancestral tribal leader.

Those tribes in those countries continue to have those same exact religious alignments as tribes to this day. Leaders made those commitments at a point in history for each of their people in all of those settings and people today inherit their personal connection to that specific alignment simply by being born.

In those settings, individual people do not make individual belief choices. Their beliefs are assigned, not ascertained, and the assignment process is so rigid that people can be executed as traitors if they choose to connect to another religion in some settings.

Leaders clearly have a major impact on cultures at historic levels. Leaders today also can have a major impact on local cultures at very

situational levels. People follow leaders and that fact gives leaders an opportunity to actually lead in some key areas.

Leaders actually can change cultures today in many situations and settings.

Groups Can Change Their Own Cultures

Culture change can also happen in various settings and situations as the result of various kinds of formal culture change processes. There are a number of deliberate and legislative settings where leaders for various groups formally and officially debate the rule sets and the expected behaviors for a group of people. When legislative or governmental bodies are the vehicle for culture change, the new expectations that result from the change are often embedded in laws and regulations in ways that cause those expectations to become part of people's belief systems.

Our country made major culture changes relative to who could vote that were based on very explicit legislative changes. Once those sets of changes were actually made in the law, the new process became the new expectation and the new expectations become the new belief system for our people. We now believe in voting for all. There are no cultural pressures today for taking voting rights away from women or from minorities.

Culture change can also happen through various forms of perceived consensus where people in a culture reach a collective sense of what expectations are for people in that setting in a collective way.

Those levels of culture change all have the impact of giving people different behaviors systems for the relevant sets of issues.

Cultural behavioral expectations and belief systems can change for groups based on both following leaders and on creating some kind of collective consensus on the part of the people who are subject to the expectations.

Cultures Can Be Externally And Internally Enforced

Cultural compliance enforcement can be based on rules and laws, and culture compliance can be based on an array of group behavioral expectations.

Family members are expected to honor the culture of their family. That generally isn't an actual legal requirement — but it tends to be functional at several levels because family members put pressure on other family members to be aligned with those specific expectations for their family.

External reinforcement for each of us as individuals relative to family cultures happens when other family members enforce the family rules in one way or another. Internal reinforcement for those behaviors happen when a person in a family knows personally that it feels right to act in alignment with the family culture behavioral expectations and knows that it feels wrong to act in opposition to those expectations — and then behaves accordingly.

The culture in each setting tells us what behavior is acceptable in that setting and the culture tells us what behavior is not acceptable in that setting with that group of people — and we tend to have a sense of feeling right when our behaviors coincide with the expectations of our culture.

Our Cultures Are Embedded — Not Inherent

We need intergroup Peace to be a culturally expected behavior. We need Peace to be a culturally expected behavior so that people will feel both right and safe acting in accord with those sets of behaviors.

Feeling safety, comfort, and cultural fulfillment are all good things for people to feel. We need people to feel safety and comfort acting in ways that enhance and support intergroup Peace.

Cultural Loyalty Can Trigger Intercultural Conflict

One problem that we can face for Peace today in some settings, however, is that people sometimes feel cultural loyalty to their own culture to the point that their personal loyalty level to a culture triggers conflict in various ways with people from other cultures.

As a key part of the agenda to create Peace, we very intentionally need to take steps to not have our cultures be a source of conflict based on issues of cultural loyalty.

We need to be sure that people's perceived need to loyally defend their own culture doesn't cause conflict, anger, and division between groups at key intergroup levels.

We feel an instinctive need to defend our people and we feel an instinctive need to sustain and protect our group values — so we need to not have our various separate cultures somehow trigger behaviors in support of each culture in ways that can result in intergroup conflict, violence, division, or even death.

Some People Believe Their Culture is Embedded In Them And

Defines Them At A Core Level

Some people will die for their culture. Some people will kill to protect their culture. We see those behaviors at multiple settings in the world today.

People are willing to both die and kill to support their own culture and to do damage to the people they perceive to be “Them” relative to their culture.

Some people feel personally defined by their culture.

Some people believe strongly that the specific elements of their basic culture are somehow inherent at an almost purely genetic level in them personally. Some people believe that their cultures are also inherent at a core level to the other people in their group of people who share their culture, and that any deviation from that culture by people in their group means that the person who varies from the culture is a traitor to the group.

Our loyalty instinct and our sense of cultural identity can both be very powerful.

Those are people who believe that one of their own personal highest individual priorities as a person, needs to be to both defend and perpetuate their own culture. People say they need to protect and perpetuate the Irish culture or the French culture or the Black culture in various ways — and people are often willing to do battle in support of the culture they accept as the focus for their personal allegiance and personal loyalty.

All Cultures Are Invented

That set of beliefs, thought processes, and behaviors can create significant barriers and impediments to intergroup Peace.

People who have that set of powerful feelings about defending their own cultural group at those levels can often benefit very directly from understanding more clearly what “their culture” actually is and how it originated. Knowledge is power on that issue. We need the people who love their cultures at those levels to understand that our cultures are all situationally and circumstantially invented.

Some people believe today — very strongly — that their own cultures are not simply invented but are, in fact, embedded in some very fundamental and basically genetic way in themselves.

“I am Irish,” someone might say, “So I am Irish to the core of who I am. I am in synch with the basic Irish culture. I do Irish things. It is what I do. I am Irish at my most basic level. I will do battle and I will even die to defend the Irish culture because that culture is who I am at my very essence. I have Irish blood. Irish is who I am and Irish is what I am, down to the bone and the core and the center of my being.”

That is an extreme example, but there are significant numbers of people who hold beliefs about their cultures at those extreme levels. There

are also significant numbers of people who have those same basic loyalty patterns and those same types of feelings and beliefs about their cultures, but have those beliefs at less extreme levels.

We Have Strong Instincts To Be Loyal

We have strong instincts to be loyal. We can be loyal to our family, our group, our community, or to any other group that creates a sense of “us” that is clear enough to trigger loyalty. Once our loyalty instincts are activated, we feel a need to defend whatever grouping that has activated those instincts.

Our cultures are often the target, object, and subject for our loyalty instinct set.

People make clear statements about the importance of their personal cultural linkage and about the intensely perceived personal inherency of their culture to them as individuals as a motivating and behavior-influencing factor for their lives.

Those kinds of culture loyalty commitments and feelings and the personal and intergroup behaviors that result from those commitments exist all over the planet.

Many people from many cultures believe that they personally need to support their culture, defend their culture, and perpetuate their culture. There are a significant number of people who believe that their culture is more important than their own lives. Some people will die to protect or defend whatever they define or perceive their culture to be.

We clearly can be significantly influenced by our instincts to be loyal. The focus of our loyalty can be our group, our family, our team, our leaders, or our culture. Those instincts can create major motivational energy in each of us when they are triggered.

Those loyalty instincts can cause us to do good, heroic, positive, and reinforcing things for our own people. Those instincts can cause us to act in ways that create value and benefit for our people. Those instincts can trigger good and productive values, beliefs, and behaviors.

That same set of loyalty-based behaviors can, however, impede Peace. They can impede Peace if we feel that our direct loyalty to specific elements and components of our culture needs to be a higher priority for us than helping both our group and other groups achieve intergroup Peace. They can also be a problem if we feel that loyalty to our culture requires us to execute negative, divisive, and damaging actions relative to people from other cultures.

Being Irish Is A Learned Behavior — Not A Genetic

Functionality

We need to reduce the negative impact of those instincts as a key strategy for The Art of Intergroup Peace.

We need to begin by helping people to understand at an intellectual level that being culturally and functionally Irish at an embedded and inherent level actually isn't an accurate or true descriptor of the situationally created cultural determinants and the behavioral influences that do exist for that person.

Being Irish actually is a learned set of behaviors — not a gene. Being Irish is not a biologically defined, individually inevitable, and personally inherent set of behaviors, attributes, or beliefs for any person, regardless of their personal sense of intense cultural loyalty to being Irish.

Being Irish is behaviorally and experientially imprinted — but it is not biologically embedded or built into actual processes or behaviors of any kind.

Being Irish Is Imprinted — Not Embedded

We need people to understand the fact that if a thousand Irish children were lifted at birth and brought to Fiji and raised entirely in Fiji — and if a

thousand children from Fiji were simultaneously brought to Ireland at birth and raised there — with no contact of any kind by either group of children with any part of their ancestral land or with any piece of their ancestral cultural heritage, then the likelihood of any of the Irish children who are now living in Fiji somehow inventing and implementing the specific pieces that define the current Irish culture in that new setting and completely spontaneously and collectively using either shamrocks or green beer as an icon for their group on that lovely Pacific island is pretty close to zero.

Any similarity between the details of the two cultures would be accidental.

Cultures are learned and cultures are invented. Cultures are not biologically embedded. We don't acquire them by birth. We do, however, begin to acquire them at birth. We each embed our cultures into our thought processes through our life experiences and our environmental influences.

Our key cultures do clearly feel inherent. They are not inherent. We acquire them situationally. The children from one culture who would be transplanted at birth to an initially new setting would simply and directly invent a new culture that is specific to that environment and to the actual context they are in.

There would be nothing “Irish” in the specifics of the culture that the children with Irish ancestors would invent on Fiji.

Likewise, the children who were transported to Ireland from Fiji would not build a culture in Ireland that would be anchored and tied in any way to the value patterns, belief systems, and the lifestyle factors of the Pacific Ocean Islanders. There would be no link to those cultural factors if the children from Fiji who grew up entirely in Ireland had no actual links at any behavioral or experiential level to Fiji.

Cultures would absolutely exist in each new setting. Each transplanted child would be part of a new culture in the new setting.

All of the children in each setting would definitely have, acquire, and create a new culture in their new place. The new group culture that they would collectively create as people in each setting would actually be unique and specific to the culture that they would collectively and situationally define and invent in the new place.

That new culture that the children form those old cultures built on their own in each new setting would not be echoes of an older culture that was somehow biologically scripted and sculpted in each of them by their direct ancestral, genetic tribal roots.

Cultures, However, Feel Inherent To Each Of Us

Cultures are learned and cultures are invented. Every single one... All cultures are invented and all cultures are learned.

That is not how the culture linking process generally feels to us, however. We each relate very directly to our embedded culture and that embedding feels very much like it defines us at a core level.

That feeling does tend to trigger our personal loyalty instincts to our current cultures at a core feeling level, but it is only a feeling — not an inherency.

To succeed in the Art of Peace, we need to understand both how the culture building and culture embedding process actually works and we need to remember and understand how that process almost always feels to people.

We need to understand those issues because we need to be able to modify our cultures in some important ways to achieve Peace. Cultural rigidity on key intergroup issues can easily impede Peace. We very much need to modify our cultures when any current elements of our cultures cause us to hate and harm other people, for example.

We can each make choices.

We do not actually need to hate the people our culture tells us to hate. The fact that our culture tells us to hate someone does not mean that we should or must actually hate them. We each need to rise above our cultures and we each need to make our own individual and intellectual decisions about who or what we should actually hate.

We each need to make those decisions about other people in light of the specific sets of ethical values we each choose to use to guide our lives. We need to make enlightened personal decisions — and we also need to act in enlightened ways to change the culture we are in to change the values that need to be changed. Instead of having our cultures tell us who to hate, we need to change our cultures so they don't tell us to hate anyone.

Modification of cultures is possible. We can choose to change our current cultures. Both change and choice are possible. Both change and choice are highly desirable.

We each have both the right to change negative elements of our cultures and we each have the accountability to change negative elements of our cultures when those elements of our cultures need to be changed.

We Need To Change Cultures That Cause Us To Dislike Other

Groups Of People

We need to understand that if our current culture causes us to detest, fear, and harm another set of people, it is entirely legitimate, appropriate, and functionally correct and right and even imperative for us to change that part of our culture.

We can choose in our own lives not to have those feelings and beliefs for ourselves — and we can do what we can to both change the beliefs of other people in our culture, and to change the culture itself.

We do not need to feel that kind of change if what would be a clearly dysfunctional, negative, damaging, and corrupt part of our old culture represents a betrayal at any level of who we are or even represents an attack at any level on the group who comprises our original culture.

Our goal is to improve the world for our group — not damage our group in any way.

Those changes to act in more positive and enlightened ways can make our culture better — and they can cause our culture to serve us all more effectively in the long run.

We need to anchor those behaviors on an enlightened set of core beliefs.

We need to be people who believe in our common humanity and who believe both in our common values and in a common commitment to real Peace.

We need true believers who shape cultures rather than being true believers who are sent down dysfunctional and evil paths by our cultures.

We Need Our Cultures

Cultures do important work. Cultures have great value. We need our cultures. We should respect our cultures and we should honor and celebrate the people who built them. We should each enjoy the creativity that is embedded in our cultures and we should simultaneously enjoy the creativity that has been built into other cultures.

We need to learn to appreciate other cultures even if we don't choose to have them run our own lives as our personal culture of choice.

The Art of Intergroup Peace calls for each of us to help our own cultures to evolve as we create better and more effective ways of having groups of people interacting Peacefully with one another.

Culture change can make new sets of behaviors and beliefs feel right. When we become more enlightened on any given set of behaviors, we can embed those new behaviors into our expectations and our laws and it will

feel very right to act in those enlightened ways. That will be a positive thing for us all.

Embedding Enlightenment Into Laws Can Protect Progress

We made our own culture as a nation significantly more enlightened by granting all adults the right to vote, regardless of race, ethnicity or gender. We embedded that right to vote into our laws.

Embedding that right explicitly into our laws protected that new set of values against attack by people who might want to return us all to less enlightened voting behaviors.

Making that new behavior both a cultural practice and a legal requirement helped make that behavior a new belief.

We generally each incorporate our cultural beliefs and our cultural practices directly into our personal set of beliefs. People in our country now tend to personally believe in those inclusive voting-related values of our new culture. People no longer believe in the values of our old culture, or in the old and restrictive practices relative to who can and should vote.

We can make similar changes as needed on the other key values of enlightened interactions that are outlined in the final chapter of this book. A dozen core beliefs for us all to share are outlined in that chapter.

To achieve InterGroup Peace, we need to adopt those 12 values as our new collective set of American values.

We need each of our group and community cultures to accept those beliefs and we need to embed those beliefs in each culture to the point where we don't have dueling value systems relative to those beliefs or behaviors.

Some Cultural Labels Can Be Misleading And Even

Inaccurate

We also need — in our very diverse country — to understand that our cultural labels can sometimes be confusing and even misleading.

If someone says that a person needs to be in synch with and loyal to a White culture or needs to be in synch with and loyal to a Black culture, the truth is that the world is a very complex place and those labels are often not as useful as functional labels need to be to steer our thoughts or behaviors.

That terminology relating to those kinds of groupings may feel very right to the people who say it at the point in time when people actually say it, but those statements and those aspirations are sometimes not a very good functional fit for the real world we live in.

Some of those particular broad group culture alignment goals tend to be unachievable in fact, in our country today, much of the time.

Why are they unachievable?

There is far too much variation now inside the groups of people who fit both of those labels for any sets of people with those labels to have a rigid loyalty to a specific culture that is defined in any clear way by those categories and labels.

People who make those generic group-aligning statements generally feel like they have a clear sense of what they mean by those words at the time those statements are made. Someone might say, “I feel a deep loyalty to the Black culture on those issues.”

The Black culture of Mississippi, however, is not the same as the Black culture of Chicago — and both of those cultures are clearly not the same as the Black culture of London, or the Black culture of Kampala, or the Black culture of Jamaica.

Likewise, the White culture of New York City is not the White culture of San Francisco — and neither of those cultures are the White culture of either Moscow or Copenhagen.

There is actually no universal White or Black or Hispanic or Asian or Native American culture. Each Native American group has its own culture.

Those cultural specifications for each of those cultures are not cloned or even interchangeable.

So people from each group do tend to feel loyalty in a generic way to their group, but the actual group we feel loyalty to in those situations is usually a specific subset of people that is relevant to our own specific situation and our own setting.

Feeling loyalty to a more generic group name like White or Black or Hispanic — that actually reflects clusters of groups rather than a simple and clear set of people with an actual shared culture and a specific value set — can be confusing and functionally hard to do.

Being loyal to a collective group culture and expecting other people to also be loyal to that same culture using those broad skin color-based or ethnicity-linked labels, is impossible.

The actual cultures that do exist in those categories are actually setting specific cultures, and the basic cultures in each setting that exist underneath those labels are very group specific.

Those cultural categories aren't universal by ethnicity, by skin color, or by race as a label for an actual existing culture.

Each culture for each group is situationally and circumstantially invented in the specific context that the people who invent the culture live in.

The Black Culture Of Kampala Is Not The Black Culture Of

Watts

Each culture has its own specific legacy elements that reflect its historic roots, and each culture modifies its behaviors and expectations to respond to the environment and setting each culture is in.

It is a very complex set of circumstances and realities. We all want it to be simple — and we all want to know which culture we are part of — but that is often not an easy thing to do.

At a very core level, group cultures are situational and group cultures change. Using generic labels for clusters of cultures can be confusing at multiple levels. Feeling loyalty to a generic label can be difficult at best and dysfunctional at worst.

The Black culture of Chicago — to the extent that all of Chicago could be perceived to have one Black culture — clearly is very different than the Black culture of Havana, Cuba or the black culture of Kampala.

Even in Kampala, that specific label is useless, because the Black cultures that exist in that city vary significantly by the 40 clearly different ethnicities that comprise that very diverse country.

Each cultural group in Uganda takes great pride in the specific and unique aspects of their own group culture. Blending does not happen. There actually is no “Black” culture even for Kampala or for Uganda as an overall group of people.

Likewise, the White culture of London is significantly different than the White culture of San Francisco and the White culture of Mobile, Alabama. Those labels feel right in some settings to some people who use them in those settings, but they are not helpful in identifying a set of either consistent behaviors or specific beliefs for the people in those groups between and across those kinds of settings.

When we call for loyalty to our culture, and when we use those kinds of labels to call for group loyalty, it can be useful to understand exactly which specific cultures and what specific sets of expected behaviors we mean when we use those sets of generic labels for our culture.

As we look at intergroup issues in each setting, it is most useful to get a sense in each setting of which groups are relevant to each setting and to get

a sense of what are the shared identity functions and the shared beliefs and realities for each relevant group in that setting.

When there are overarching reasons for groups in various settings to act in alignment with one another in response to common threats, common enemies, common beliefs, or common opportunities, those factors can be used to create alignment and collaboration in the context of those issues.

Our Instincts Defend Our Us — Our Cultures Define Our Us

Our cultures in each setting and for each group are tools that exist because they have generally served us well as a group in each setting.

We should honor the people who built the culture we are in. We should respect the values that our cultures have embedded in them.

But we also need to know that our cultures are not worth dying for as an act of pure instinctive cultural loyalty. Intense loyalty to a culture can ruin lives of people in defense of a functional behavioral artifact that was situationally invented, and that has no inherent value on its own.

All cultures are just inventions. We should not give our lives to protect those inventions. We also should re-invent our cultures in any setting when that re-invention more effectively meets the current and actual needs of our group.

We need our cultures to serve our groups. We do not want our groups to serve our cultures.

That does not mean that we should damage, disregard, or even randomly change our local group culture or our own primal group “us”-linked cultures or identities. Cultures can be very good things. We can and should celebrate and enjoy our cultures.

The key to remember is — we invented them. They did not invent us.

We should enjoy the creativity that turned our basic package of instincts into shared rule sets used by the people whose culture we share.

We Should Celebrate The Diversity Of Our Cultures

We should also celebrate and enjoy the great diversity of cultures that exist. We should learn to appreciate the great and positive impact that various cultures can have on each other when cultures interact with each other in Peaceful ways.

In the United States, our music, food, apparel, art, and thought processes are all obviously much better and richer because we are so multi-cultural in our learning and in our communities, and because we are open and flexible in our willingness to benefit from the best features of other cultures.

The blending of our cultures in a wide range of American settings has given us great diversity in our food, our clothing, our art, and our music.

Some countries have absolute rigidity and uniformity on almost every cultural point. People in some settings wear only very basic uniforms that are approved by the culture. People in some settings are only allowed to experience the art, music, and food of their own local cultures.

We are blessed with the ability in our country to share a wide range of cultural inventions and functions. Our cultural diversity makes life in this country more interesting, and the fruits of that diversity have improved life in multiple ways for all of us.

That is a very good thing. We should appreciate the value of our extensive American intercultural experience.

In each community, organization, work place, school, or group setting, we should celebrate our diversity of cultures and we should simultaneously agree to embed in each culture some key and enlightened beliefs about who we are and how we should interact with one another.

We need to use our cultures as tools for enlightened behaviors — not have our cultures push us into unenlightened behaviors and beliefs.

We should take control over our destiny by using our cultures to help us succeed.

The next chapter of this book explains how that can be done.