

Chapter Sixteen — Multiple Issues Create The Stress And

Anger That Triggers The Explosions

Anyone who wants to either believe or pretend to believe that significant, meaningful, and relevant racial and intergroup stress points do not exist in this country today, is having that belief crushed by very visible and clear instances of collective intergroup anger that have happened recently in several American cities.

We have recently seen fairly major and very public explosions of intergroup anger in a number of our communities. Those explosions have generally been triggered by an intergroup death. In each case, large numbers of people from specific communities have gone to the streets in protests and demonstrations that have, in the heat of intergroup anger, sometimes turned from demonstrations and protests into mobs and actual riots.

Intergroup anger was clear in each setting. Each of those sets of protests was triggered by a killing, but the killings were not, on their own merit, the cause of the collective anger in those communities.

The killings in each case actually unleashed the anger that existed in those settings rather than creating it.

The Killings Unleashed The Anger Rather Than Creating It

Those community explosions in those cities each happened because there was a significant level of intergroup tension and intergroup anger in those settings that existed before the trigger events actually occurred.

When people in a community go to the streets in large numbers immediately after a trigger event or incident, it is fairly clear, most of the time, that the actual trigger event did not create that collective anger as much as it uncovered, exposed, and released basic levels of collective anger that already existed in that setting.

The anger in the most recent instances that created national visibility in our news media had a channel for release as intergroup anger for Black Americans, because the person who died in several of those settings was Black and the person in each setting who did the killing was White.

An African American youth was shot and killed by a White policeman in one case. An African American youth was shot and killed by a White neighborhood-watch person in another case. An African American youth was shot and killed by a White police reserve officer in a third case.

In another recent case that also triggered demonstrations and protests, an adult African American was choked to death, on the street by a White policeman.

The communities in each setting where a death occurred reacted to the death immediately with protests and demonstrations.

People were angry in each of those settings. There have also been sympathy marches in multiple other settings around the country that tied back to each of those events. A movement called “Black Lives Matter” is gaining ground in a number of settings as a way to express concern and anger about those events and about what the events, themselves, say about issues relating to police behavior and intergroup stress points in America.

The recent street protests in Oakland, California; Ferguson, Missouri; Miami, Florida and New York City, all showed that those towns have significant numbers of angry people whose anger became evident and visible in those settings in the direct context of those life-ending events.

To understand why those explosions happened and to deal with a wide range of relevant intergroup issues and intergroup behaviors more effectively and well, we need to better understand the overall situation and the functional and perceptual reality that creates those angry and sometimes volatile reactions in those communities.

To create intergroup Peace for communities in America, we need to do a better job of understanding and anticipating those explosions. We also

need to do a much better job of preventing those blow-ups. We need to keep the worst aspects of those events from happening and we need much better approaches for dealing with those kinds of events when they do happen.

Multiple Issues Caused The Explosions

Those are multiple issues at play in each of the communities where those riots and protests happened. Minority citizens who went to the streets in each of those settings clearly felt that they have been damaged in various ways. The demonstrations in those cities gave the people in those settings a mechanism to display their anger.

The demonstrations also gave the people in each setting a way to feel the sense of solidarity and the levels of mutual comfort that can be created by group activity when the group activity is done for a “righteous” cause on behalf of a clear “us.”

When the facts of any particular case seem to be clear relative to the intergroup nature of an event, then the people whose group has been wronged can feel a sense of affirming solidarity as an “us” by publically demonstrating as an “us” against whoever damaged a member of their group.

People who are feeling individual anger about intergroup issues for any number of reasons can find it to be affirming and reinforcing to be able to exhibit that anger collectively with other angry people. People who have felt isolated, alone, and unheard as individuals with underlying levels of anger can find the experience of being in a mass demonstration with other angry people to be a reinforcing and reaffirming experience.

Several sets of instinctive behaviors are relevant to those settings.

Feeling Wronged Triggers Collective Responses

Feeling wronged by “Them” triggers entire packages of behaviors.

Getting together in a collective group setting with people who directly trigger a sense of “us” and a sense that “our us” has been damaged in a way that deserves our collective anger can be an energizing experience. People with those behaviors activated can find the experience of being angry together to be instinctively energizing and even, to some degree, sometimes rewarding.

That anger for the people who are angry existed in each setting before each killing. The killing in each setting gave the anger a focus and the demonstrations in each setting gave the anger a forum.

There are clear reasons why people in those communities feel that on-going collective underlying level of stress and group anger. There are significant problems for large numbers of people in those settings. Those cities tend to have very high percentages of minority youth going to jail for various offences.

High school drop out rates are high. Unemployment levels are high. Learning gaps between groups are significant, and they are not being reduced.

Both the economic issues and the criminal justice issues in those communities create settings and situations where minority group members feel both disempowered and angry.

Police Force Relations Tend To Be Strained

There are strong feelings and strong beliefs in those communities that high levels of discrimination exist and are very real. The relationships of those communities with their police forces tend to range from strained and tense in the better sites, to active conflict, on-going anger, intense distrust, and both dysfunctional and intentionally negative interpersonal and intergroup interactions at multiple levels in the most problematic sites.

Instead of the police force being seen as a protective “us” in those communities, there is a general perception from many residents that the police in their community are a category of “Them” and that the police need to be both distrusted and feared.

When the police are distrusted and when the police are feared by any significant percentage of the residents in an area, any visible police action that seems racist validates that distrust, and any police action that damages or kills someone from another racial group validates that fear.

That can be remedied. There are things that the best police departments do to reach out to communities to create alignment and trust. We need those “best practices” to happen in all of our communities where intergroup challenges exist.

The very best police forces reach out to create community trust. That makes communities safer for all people who live there — and has the police support as “us” rather than being perceived to be a “Them.”

We need those approaches everywhere.

We Have Instincts To Feel Stress When We Are Surrounded

By Them

Those concerns, issues, and local intergroup realities and challenges are all reinforced by a powerful set of instincts that we have that are activated whenever we find ourselves in a minority status in a setting or a situation.

We tend not to be aware that those instincts exist, but they do exist. They have an impact on our thinking and behavior at multiple levels that we usually do not understand or appreciate.

We need to understand the reality that is created by those instincts as well as understanding the other relevant issues and situations that also trigger negative group perceptions and behaviors.

We need to recognize the simple fact and reality of any of us being in situational minority status far too often creates its own very stress provoking links to our own instinctive us/them mind set.

Some Instincts Are Triggered By Minority Status

We need to recognize the fact that we have relevant and important instinctive intergroup reactions that are triggered purely by our situational minority status.

Any time any of us find ourselves situationally in a minority setting, some basic instincts tend to be triggered in our own heads purely by our own situational minority status.

We each tend to feel stress whenever we are surrounded by “Them.”

The simple fact of being in a minority status creates its own level of instinctive stress. That level of stress can create a negative context that we use to interpret other intergroup behaviors or events in our lives.

Simply being in a minority status in any setting generally creates its own set of instinctive reactions for each person who is in that current minority situation.

Those reactions tend not to be pleasant. We instinctively feel personal discomfort and we feel personal stress — usually at a subconscious level — whenever personally surrounded by people who might be “Them.”

We Are All Uncomfortable Surrounded By Them

That is an important point to understand because being surrounded by “them” is a very common occurrence for many people.

As we work to integrate our work places and our schools, the people who are at the front line of that integration — the minority people in any

setting — tend to have those particular protective instincts situationally activated on a daily basis.

That stress level is triggered often by various integrated situations or integrated settings — and we very often do not understand the discomfort and the stress that we often feel in those settings.

When any of us from any group is in a setting where everyone around us is different in some common way from us as an individual — different race, different ethnicity, different religion, different gender, different culture, etc., — the mere fact us of being clearly different from the other people in any setting creates its own emotional and instinctive activation context in each of us for that situation and for that setting. We feel stress. Instinctive stress.

We tend to become basically uncomfortable as individuals in those settings and we often don't know exactly why we feel that way. That stress can cause us to have negative feelings about the situational majority group in that setting that often feels like it is being an intentional trigger for that stress.

Integration Creates Multiple Instances Of Subconscious

Intergroup Stress

The fact that we have made a conscious and well-intentioned decision as a country to integrate our society at multiple levels means that those negative feelings of being a situational minority are being triggered for a growing number of people in a growing number of settings.

We all need to understand the reality that if you are one of the first people to integrate a workplace, or if you are one of the first people to integrate a school, you are likely to feel constant levels of purely instinctive stress that is triggered at a perceptive level by your situational minority status.

Those feelings can make the experience of being the first person of any category to be included in a group of other people in any setting definitely unpleasant.

Those feelings create a complex set of interactions and behaviors.

People who feel situational minority stress often seek out any other people in that setting who might be an “us” in that setting.

People who are the only White face in a room look instinctively for other white faces. People who are the only Hispanic person in a room look for other people with Hispanic heritage.

We feel comfort when we find another “us” in any setting.

People Are Drawn To Us In Those Settings

Once we understand the impact of those instinctive reactions on our thinking and our emotions, it can be much easier to be a situational minority. It can also be much easier to make decisions to be with an “us” in a work or a school setting.

It can very directly help reduce the stress levels for each of us when we recognize that the stress we are feeling is caused by an instinct and not by any truly negative aspect of a situation.

The book *Primal Pathways* explains those issues and those choices in more detail.

Those instincts for each of us to be uncomfortable when we are surrounded by any category of “them” explain why we tend to live in such self-segregated communities and it explains why we pray in such segregated congregations.

We definitely prefer to pray with our “us.” Our religious sites tend to be highly concentrated by ethnic or racial group.

Learning to pray together in more ethnically and racially diverse settings might be a good way for many people to begin to create better and richer levels of interpersonal alignment and understanding.

The Majority People In A Setting Can Be Oblivious To The Stress

Because we don't understand the actual source and the cause of our sense of stress in those intergroup situations, it often feels that the stress is somehow being intentionally created by whoever is the situational majority in the setting.

Some people who feel that particular level of stress in a setting believe that the other people in that setting are being deliberate and intentional in creating the unpleasant aspects of the situation, and that those people are somehow at fault for creating that level of discomfort and stress.

In reality, most of the time, the majority people in the room or in the setting are actually almost completely oblivious to those stress points. The majority people are often totally unaware at any level of the stress being felt by whoever is the situational minority person in that setting. That lack of awareness tends to be the reality for those majority group people because the majority set of people in that setting are personally feeling no intergroup stress at any level in their own minds.

The majority group in most of those situations perceives itself to be in a safe group environment and people from that group generally have no

sense that the minority person in the room has their own personal intergroup stress instincts activated.

So a situation that feels like a clear intergroup encounter of some kind to whoever is the situational minority in a setting might trigger almost zero levels of intergroup perceptions of any kind for the majority group people in that same room.

The exact same meeting and setting can feel very different for each set of people. The meeting can feel like it has rich and deep racial and ethnic undertones for some people and it can create absolutely no active sense of either ethnic or racial context for other people in the same room.

Feeling Constant Low Level Stress Is Stressful

That whole set of instincts is important to understand because the discomfort created for people by those situations can be very real and that discomfort creates a context for other intergroup interactions.

The instinctive alarms that can go off for each of us when we are in a minority situation create very real levels of discomfort and stress. Those feelings can be unpleasant. Creating discomfort is both their function and their goal.

The discomfort is intended to guide our behavior. We need to remember why those instincts exist.

They exist to save our lives.

Stress is created in those settings by our instincts to cause us and steer us each to avoid being surrounded by Them. The instinct that is being triggered in each of us by those situations wants us not to be near “Them” and not to ever be by “Them.”

The goal is safety — our personal safety. That set of instincts tries to guide us to safe situations and to safe settings. Safe is a good thing to be.

Those instincts are ancient, but they are unfortunately relevant for large numbers of people today. Sadly, those sets of those instincts to feel stress when we are surrounded by “Them” actually do make very real sense much of the time in far too many settings in the world.

Many people live in parts of the world where “Them” is often dangerous. Entire villages have been massacred every year for the past several years by people who perceived those villages to be a category of “Them.” The people in those villages would have been well served had their instincts somehow kept them from the presence of “Them.”

We don't massacre entire villages in this country — but we do still have our thinking influenced in significant ways by the activation of those instincts, and being aware of who in a setting might be “Them” can be highly relevant for us today.

That set of instincts can cause us to become very apprehensive about the behavior of others when we find ourselves in any “them” linked settings. We tend to become very aware of potential intergroup risk and we become very sensitive to issues of functional intergroup risk whenever those instincts are activated.

We Go On Full Innuendo Alert

When we are in a situational minority setting, we often go on full innuendo alert — looking for any words or any behaviors by the other people that might indicate the possibility that a threat or an attack or an insult might exist.

That innuendo alert can be triggered on each of us whenever we are surrounded by anyone that isn't “us.”

That can be a useful awareness to have in settings where real threats do exist — but the negative consequence of having those interactions activated is that it causes us to sometimes interpret both behaviors and

language of other people in negative ways when the actual intent for both the words and the behaviors of the other people was not actually negative.

Being on perpetual subconscious alert and feeling constant low-level situational stress is not an easy or pleasant place to be.

For obvious logistical reasons, that feeling of stress and of being reminded cognitively of our status of being “other” than the rest of the group in a given setting can happen often for minority Americans.

Those same instincts can be triggered for majority Americans who find themselves in a setting where they are situationally a minority.

We all have that same package of instincts. The level of intergroup stress can be unpleasant for anyone who has it activated.

Integration Can Trigger That Stress At An Instinctive Level

We need to understand the practical impact in our society of those instincts.

That set of instincts can create constant stress for the minority students in a school when a school is integrated. The new students from any group in a school can feel an instinctive discomfort that runs constantly in their minds.

It can happen when anyone from any group is hired into a work setting where that person is a situational minority. The work setting can trigger instinctive stress for that employee.

Those issues and those perceptions need to be understood more directly as we succeed in integrating more work settings and schools, so that we can help people overcome the negative consequences that those situational minority feelings can create.

We need everyone in each work or school setting — minority or majority — to know that those instincts exist and we need new people from the existing group in each setting to reach out to make new people feel safe and included.

When people in any setting are inclusive and build interpersonal and intergroup trust, those particular sets of instincts and stress points can disappear entirely for that setting.

Those stress levels can be erased — and life is better for people from every group when they are gone.

Algerians In Paris Feel The Same Stress

That set of feelings relative to being a situational minority is clearly absolutely not unique to us as Americans. Those same feelings happen when

people are in a minority status in other countries. The stress levels that are instinctively triggered for a situational minority person in Dublin or in Prague can be almost constant for some people in some settings in those cities.

The stress levels for an Irish Catholic in Ulster who is standing on the grounds of a Protestant church can also be unceasing and can create real levels of negative feelings as long as the Catholic person is physically in that specific church setting.

An Algerian Muslim in Paris who is working in a site where all of the co-workers are White Parisians would have those same instincts activated. That Algerian worker is likely to find some situations in that integrated work setting far more stress-provoking than the White workers in that same setting perceive the same incidents and situation to be.

Minority situations everywhere create that stress and that stress adds pressure in a real way to peoples' lives when it occurs.

Those feelings can create a negative context for peoples' lives that make being a situational minority person a constant stress-invoking experience and that can make it significantly more difficult to create intergroup interactions at a level that generates friendship and trust.

We need both personal friendship and intergroup trust for intergroup Peace, and both are hard to create when intergroup stress levels are situationally active and relevant.

We do need all people in intergroup settings to understand that those levels of anxiety can easily exist. We need people to accept people as people and to reach out in ways that generate a sense of safety and trust to other people in those settings.

We can do the right things to make the situations much better for all parties.

White Americans Can Go For Long Periods Of Time Not

Thinking Of Race

For White Americans, that particular intergroup instinctive stress level is a much less common experience. The truth is, for obvious reasons, that White Americans in most of this country are much less likely to face those levels of situational minority-status instinct-triggered stress in their daily lives.

Many White Americans in many settings can actually go for very long periods of time without even thinking of race or ethnicity in any direct or relevant way. When White Americans live in basically White communities

and when White Americans tend to work in basically White work settings, the instinctive reactions of perceived minority status are not triggered in those White Americans very often for any of those settings.

Also, the layers and incidents of functional discrimination that happen with some frequency for minority Americans in a number of settings are not happening in any setting for most White Americans — so those more negative intergroup realities are also not perceived or functionally relevant to the lives of White Americans.

People in a situational minority status are often aware of those issues almost all of the time. Majority people in that same setting can be completely unaware of those issues almost all of the time. People who are in an overwhelming permanent situational majority status may be completely unaware that those issues or those stress points exist at any level.

Each Real Negative Event Confirms The Suspicions And Fears

The level of intergroup stress that is created by those instinctive reactions can be periodically reinforced in very negative ways by any active and actual experiences of discrimination, prejudice or intergroup animosity that do occur.

Negative intergroup experiences do happen. Prejudicial decisions are made. Bigoted or negative comments are made.

Each real incident of racism — even if those incidents actually very seldom occur in a given setting — reinforces the validity of the on-going sense of intergroup stress for people who are affected by those incidents.

The truth is that we look instinctively for behavior patterns in intergroup settings and we use each piece of evidence as a proof point for the patterns.

Even if most policemen do not act in racist ways in each setting, each policeman who does a racist thing can be seen as a proof point for many people that the police, generally, are racist or are at least somewhat likely to do racist things.

Non-racist, but negative behaviors can also be perceived to be racist when those intergroup stress levels and underlying perceptions exist. A rude or unpleasant or even discourteous police officer behavior that might be interpreted by a White person in this country as being rude and jerky behavior can be perceived by a Black or Brown or Native American person to be racist and intentional rather than just rude and jerky.

Expectations clearly color perceptions. The expectations in that case that a situation or a police behavior might be racist are not unreasonable to hold because, the truth is, sometimes those rude behaviors by police officers are, in fact, racist.

So it is legitimate and intellectually sound to suspect racism for a negative behavior when we know for an absolute fact that some negative behaviors do have racist roots and when we don't know for an absolute fact that racism isn't relevant for that particular rude behavior.

We need all police departments to recognize that reality. We need all police departments to explicitly reject racism and reach out to the communities they serve to both commit to non-racist behavior and to prove, through good and non-racist behavior, that the motivations of the department and the officers are not racist.

Improving that situation is a benefit to the community and to the police.

Police departments in any setting are handicapped and even crippled when the people in that setting perceive the police to be "Them."

Real crime doesn't get solved because the community will not help a police "Them" solve crimes.

More than 70 percent of murders in Detroit were unsolved a year ago because the community did not help the police solve those crimes.

That kind of situation is very bad for the community and for the police.

An Incident Can Be An Anomaly Or It Can Be Positive Proof

For many minority Americans, the issue of race or ethnic difference creates multiple daily reminders. Those differences can generate frequent and daily trigger points and relevant behaviors in work settings, schools, and various community and public settings.

The perception and the belief that the issue of race is functionally relevant to people all of the time is constantly in place for many minority group members, and that creates a context for understanding a wide range of behaviors.

Those very consistent on-going levels of instinct-triggered stress for minority Americans means that when a negative intergroup incident of some kind — like an interracial shooting — actually does occur, the groups of people interpret the event very differently. That specific negative incident can be seen as an anomaly and perceived to be an infrequent and even rare aberration from normal reality by a person from the White majority.

That exact same incident can be seen and interpreted as an absolute, clear, and affirming proof point for the ongoing sense of intergroup stress intergroup prejudice and intergroup damage. That event can be a proof point for discrimination by a person in any relevant minority status who has been continuously feeling ongoing and continuing instinctive levels of intergroup stress.

Any actual intergroup incidents — like a White policeman killing a Black child — that make the race or the ethnicity of the relevant people clearly visible to everyone in that setting can very directly reinforce, confirm, and affirm that continuous alert level for the people who have been instinctively feeling that intergroup stress.

Those specific events that have obvious and clear race links are seen as both affirming the legitimacy of the on-going general concern and confirming the validity of the on-going intergroup stress level for the people who have been feeling that daily level of stress.

An Interracial Murder Can Be A Trigger Event

That set of perceptions explains why large numbers of people can go to the streets in collective anger and collective alignment when those incidents happen.

In the macro context for that community — with both a very long history of intergroup negative experiences and extended periods of perceived stress for many of the people in minority status in that community — the kind of incident where a minority student is shot and killed by a white policeman isn't seen as a rare, outlier, solo incident by the specific minority group that the student is from.

That occurrence is often seen by people from that particular group and by people in that community to be a proof point for intergroup fears.

Each shooting creates a clear, highly visible, and immediate reinforcement for the constant intergroup stress levels that exist in those settings and each shooting is seen as another very current, egregious, and particularly unforgiveable incident of intergroup oppression, intergroup damage, intergroup discrimination, and deliberate and targeted intergroup violence.

We have seen a number of very public recent occurrences that prove that set of very diverse reactions to those kinds of events is very real and robust. The recent issues in Ferguson — with a shooting of an 18-year-old Black youth by a White policeman — triggered an extended period of protests, demonstrations, and even some mob behavior.

The Ferguson Police Department Had Instincts Clearly

Activated

The tendency to see those events as intergroup confrontations were exacerbated in Ferguson by a local police department that clearly had its own us/them instincts activated and guiding their thinking and behavior.

That particular police department took multiple visible and symbolic public positions of pure, clear, and intentional intergroup confrontation.

Us/them behaviors and us/them perceptions were the clearly visible police response pattern at several important levels in Ferguson.

The police lined up as a direct confrontational wall of heavily armed police “us” in clear contrast to the community “Them.” The police public and highly visible positions of pure intergroup confrontation in the streets of Ferguson could only be interpreted by other people in that community as being created by an us/them mindset and as an us/them intergroup reaction.

Those behaviors all feed on themselves — reinforcing themselves in a group. Those behaviors also activate the same instincts in the other group in any setting.

Those processes for both groups are reciprocal and can even lead to escalation if the cycles are not broken.

When The Police Communicate As A “Them,” The Consequences Are Predictable

Whether a less confrontational set of behaviors by the police in those particular streets would have improved that situation in that setting is not something that can be proven, but it is hard to come up with a more public statement of negative us/them alignment behaviors, and negative us/them perceptions than the ones that were initially chosen by the local police in Ferguson.

The riot gear and the combat zone automatic weapons, alone, said that the police perceived that their “us” was ready, willing, and even eager to do battle with the local “Them.”

It also said — symbolically — “we” feel good about our alignment and our position and “we” have in solidarity as a police unit to resist whatever relevant “Them” decides to do.

Ferguson gave the country a highly visible and very valuable lesson in a wide range of intergroup issues.

As the Ferguson situation fully unfolds, the reasons for the community anger that triggered the demonstrations are becoming increasingly clear. The police department had a long record of clearly racist

patterns of arrests for minor offences. Many minority people in Ferguson were functionally damaged badly by the fines and by losing their license to drive when they could not pay their fines.

People who could not pay fines and who could not drive lost their jobs. So a horrible employment situation that already existed for minority residents of Ferguson was actually exacerbated by people losing employment as the result of police traffic arrests.

The shooting, itself, just unleashed the anger created by all of those other issues.

Two Hundred Killings In Oakland Did Not Trigger Riots

In a fairly similar recent case in Oakland, an unarmed black student was shot and killed by a white policeman on a subway. Demonstrations, mobs, and riots also resulted in Oakland. People were damaged. Businesses were closed, and property was destroyed in the riots.

Again — the killing of an unarmed youth and having a person die was not the major reason all of those people were on the Oakland streets.

The issue and incident that caused people in that particular California community to riot, and to do it so fairly quickly, clearly was not purely the fact that a person in Oakland had been murdered.

Oakland actually often leads the country in the number of people who are murdered each year.

Oakland has drug violence, gang violence, and intragroup violence levels that literally result in daily shootings, daily stabbings, and nearly 200 deaths of Oakland residents just by murder each year.

None of these 200 killings trigger any riots.

All of the people who are shot and killed each year in Oakland are equally dead. But most of their deaths barely rate a mention in the local paper — much less triggering riots that first shut down the business and the commercial districts of Oakland, and then did damage to both people and property in a couple of Oakland settings.

Why did that particular killing trigger those reactions and generate those particular riots? Again — as in Ferguson — Us/them instincts were triggered by that killing.

It was obviously and clearly an intergroup killing. That specific shooting was done by a White policeman. The young man who died was African American.

That act created a symbol of intergroup conflict and that event brought the existing intergroup anger realities that exist in Oakland into the

situation. Many people were already angry in Oakland — for a wide range of reasons.

Oakland Is A Troubled Community

Oakland is an economically troubled community. It has school systems that do not meet the needs of Oakland students. Unemployment levels are high. Many minority kids in Oakland are being set to jail.

Oakland is an unhappy and angry community. That particular killing was a situational tipping point that made that existing anger visible.

Like the situation in Ferguson, the shooting was a release factor for a significant level of very real on-going intergroup anger that has existed for a very long time in that community — anger that is fed daily by both small and large acts of discrimination that either happen or are perceived to be happening in that community.

That anger and the context that created the protests and riots in Oakland and Ferguson were also fed, in part, by the on-going stress levels we all feel when we are in minority situations.

The anger in each of those settings had been visible and visceral. Some of the people protesting each shooting death were situationally violent.

Businesses closed. The city of Oakland basically advised people who were White to avoid the sections of the city where the demonstrations were happening. Intergroup and interracial anger was clear and that anger was shaping behaviors.

Some businesses and government buildings were damaged in the process. Much of the damage was done by people who do not live in Oakland.

People actually came to Oakland from a number of other communities to participate in the demonstrations and some of those people who came from other communities used the Oakland protests as cover to loot and destroy things.

Many people came to Oakland from other communities to support the protests and demonstrations. Some came simply to loot and do damage. There were a number of local places where looting was possible to do under the cover of the group activities and the group anger.

That same problem happened in Ferguson. A number of people came to town in both communities in ways that demeaned the legitimacy of the actual protests and the group causes just to steal things from businesses that they could loot.

Significant intergroup anger exists in Oakland and the people who were demonstrating wanted the world and the rest of Oakland to know how much anger exists.

That same kind of on-going intergroup anger exists at a constant level in many settings in this country. Where it exists, it can be triggered by symbolic events like an intergroup shooting and it can be turned into real intergroup violence and intergroup damage. The Trayvon Martin shooting and the jury decision for that case also triggered intergroup demonstrations in a number of communities. People in many settings were angry about a wide range of issues and were ready to collectively make their anger visible to the world.

The protests created a pathway for that anger.

Sun Tzu, in *Art of War*, likens group collective energy to a cocked and loaded crossbow — ready to fire. Specific triggers actually turn that group energy into action and release the arrow and that energy from the cocked and loaded bow of intergroup anger.

Pent Up And Simmering Anger Is Unleashed

That is obviously the same sort of energy release that can happen in response to intergroup killings in our country today. The existence of that

pent up and simmering anger is fed by actual centuries of dysfunctional and very real and very damaging intergroup history.

It is fed as well by the day-to-day actions, emotions, and experiences that are created currently by intergroup negative perceptions.

All of those factors combine to create the local energy release into the collective anger that we see as riots and demonstrations with some regularity across the country.

For the reasons that are outlined above, those riots and that level of collective anger often tend to completely surprise the White Americans in this country. The White Americans who are surprised by the riots and who are taken aback by the anger are not experiencing the daily personal stress of minority status in their own lives.

Those significant collective responses to that event, however, do not surprise the minority populations who are relevant to those communities and to the rioting groups.

Many of the people in that set of people are already feeling simmering anger and constant unhappiness. The event is just a spark that provides flame for the simmering set of beliefs and emotions constantly being felt and perceived in those settings.

Differences By Group Are Clear

Public surveys that were taken about each of those trigger situations showed very different reactions to those events from each of the surveyed groups.

For the Ferguson situation, surveys taken in the midst of the event showed that more than 80 percent of Black survey respondents felt the police responses in that community were wrong — and a majority of White survey respondents at that same point in time felt that the police responses — at that stage of the process — had been appropriate.

For both the Trayvon Martin shooting in Florida and the subway train shooting in Oakland, there was a similar opinion and perception split by groups in the public surveys taken about the results of the jury action for each case.

Again, significantly higher percentages of the black people who were surveyed — at the 80 percent level — felt that the courts had not done their job well relative to convicting or punishing the defendants in those cases.

The White people surveyed tended to be split about evenly in their opinion and the decisions by the courts.

The perspectives that are used to judge and evaluate the trial results in each case of intergroup killing were clearly significantly different perspectives for each group of people surveyed.

Racist Experiences Create A Context And Expectations

About half of the White people who were surveyed about each of those trials seemed to have a pre-trial predisposition and belief that said the young person who was killed in each situation may well have been doing something wrong or might have been doing something inappropriate, that may have justified the police action in some way.

The minority group members who were surveyed about those cases tended to believe that the policeman with the gun who killed the youth was very likely acting in a racially prejudicial way, and believed that the policeman had clearly committed a punishable criminal act.

Racism Is Real — Racist Things Happen

That particular interpretation of the facts in those intergroup-linked shooting cases involving policemen is clearly influenced by the fact that many of the minority people who were surveyed may have personally had at least one discriminatory and negative encounter with a racist law enforcement officer.

Racist policemen do exist. Racism is real. Racist encounters do happen.

All policemen are not racist. Only some policemen are racist. Large numbers of policemen from all groups and settings actually want to serve and protect the public. Most police officers try to do good things for people from all ethnic groups and from other races.

There are very well meaning and motivated policeman who make police work a calling and a mission of service, and who spend their lives creating safety for people in their communities.

But the truth is, that some police officers are racist. Some policemen do at least some racist things. Some police departments have patterns of racist behavior.

When Black drivers make up 20 percent of the drivers on a particular Florida highway and when Black drivers make up 60 percent of the drivers who are stopped and searched by police on that highway, it's hard to interpret that data in any way that doesn't have racism involved.

The set of facts create a reality. The functional reality is that each individual racist policeman who actually exists, and each racist policeman

who does actually do racist things to people can leave a lot of scars and have a very broad impact.

The facts that some police departments have patterns of racist behavior are also known and visible to the group of people who are the targets and victims of those behaviors.

People from each affected group who have those clearly racist experiences with those racist police officers tell those stories about those racist experiences to family and to friends and to the relevant community for a very long time. That telling and retelling of those experiences extends the scars over time to more people and it creates an overall context and a set of expectations for perceiving and interpreting the next racist act by any police officer.

Those incidents, experiences, and scars can cause very different responses to survey questions by groups of people about the guilt or the innocence of the shooter and the victim in those cases.

“Stand Your Ground” Trial Results Were Evaluated

Differently By Race

White people have not had to face significant levels of prejudice and discrimination in their own lives. White people did not have friends who had

been arrested for “Driving While White.” So White people have had a different context to use to interpret each of the public incidents of intergroup violence involving the police.

No one makes jokes about being arrested as a driver for being White because those incidents are not part of the shared and communicated group experience for White drivers.

Most Black Americans do at least know someone who was clearly stopped by police for “driving while being Black.”

Real issues of prejudice and discrimination do happen. The book *Ending Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Disparities in American Health Care* has very real examples of bias in health care delivery that creates bad health outcomes for minority Americans.

That health care focused book explains the disparities that exist in the context of three B’s — Bias, Biology, and Behavior. The net and total impacts of those care disparities and care differences creates several years of lower life expectancy for far too many minority Americans.

Those are very real and legitimate issues.

That particular set of information and those data points about group perceptions are all highly relevant to *The Art of Intergroup Peace* because

that information tells us that there will be significant challenges and some real intergroup trust issues to address as we go forward to create Peace among various groups in our society today.

It tells us that we will need to look at issues that result from events with a strong sense of context and a strong sense of relevancy.

We Need A Sense Of Us In Each Community

We need to keep various intergroup flash points in specific settings from creating significant damage to intergroup Peace in those settings.

We need each community to have a sense of “us” that includes White Americans as one of the groups committed to intergroup success and values.

A primary goal of the people in each community should be to create a clear and deliberate sense of community “us.” We need that commitment from all of us in each community — and we particularly need it from our leaders.

We need the people in local government roles to clearly support intergroup Peace and we need our police forces to be openly and clearly and honestly on the side of the community “us” that we create in each setting.

We need leaders who both preach and practice inclusion at key levels. When intergroup incidents do occur, we need to respond to those incidents and events from a community perspective that is inclusive of all people.

We need leaders in each setting from each group who value protecting and extending that community sense of “us” as one of their personal leadership goals.

We all need to be true believers in those values and goals.

The values and commitments that tie us together as an “us” in each community need to be real or they will not have the impact they need to have. We need community specific actions that lead each setting to have a legitimate sense of “us.”

We need people in each community both creatively and consistently doing the work that earns a sense of local “us.”

Some Current Leaders Also Have Patterns Of Divisive And Inflammatory Responses

The challenge of achieving intergroup Peace in various settings is increased by the fact that a number of people who are in leadership positions for each of the relevant groups of people are actually leaders who rose to power in their own group on the strength of their personal negative reactions

to earlier intergroup issues and based on their personal prior militant positions as conflict leaders of their group for earlier confrontations.

Some leaders prefer conflict — and some leaders find that continuing conflict increases the personal power with the group.

It can potentially create a real risk to some leader's personal power as war leaders in some settings if Peace exists in their settings. The Alpha instinct chapters of this book describe those behaviors and those motives in more detail.

A problem we can face is that people who have been at the microphone in past intergroup incidents as the people who were preaching anger, extending negative perceptions and advocating antagonistic behaviors relative to the other group are often very ready and even eager to continue to interact with the other group in attack and conflict mode whenever new incidents occur.

That perspective and that personal readiness, and even eagerness to be conflicted can create a low likelihood of those particular leaders coming into any new intergroup situation as a calming influence.

As noted earlier, it is best at several levels when those former war leaders can become the new Peace chiefs. Former warriors can make great leaders for Peace.

War Chiefs Tend To Be War Chiefs When Incidents Happen

It is also true that people whose personal rhetoric has inflamed and informed prior situations are often not the people who are most likely to offer calming advice to their groups when new inflammatory incidents occur.

War chiefs tend to be war chiefs — and the war chiefs in various kinds of tribal and intergroup settings tend to be most relevant, most effective, and have the most personal power in times of war.

So when a triggering event happens, the people who have been war chiefs during prior events tend to take on those same war chief roles and they tend to use the same intergroup language and the same conflict-oriented approaches that they had used as leaders in the prior events.

That pattern is understandable. Those particular people who function as war chiefs are often very angry — sometimes for very good reasons — and they can easily extend and embed that anger into the people they lead and into the situations they face.

That common behavior pattern for those leaders makes perfect sense — and it is entirely understandable as a standard pattern of human leader behavior.

But it can obviously create real barriers to intergroup Peace when incidents occur that inflame our emotions and trigger those us/them instincts in us, and when those particular war chief leaders lead our response in ways that increase the conflict and add to the negative intergroup group energy.

We Need To Convert War Chiefs To Peace Chiefs

We need our leaders at this point in time to be able to set aside their prior anger and to work together to defuse and de-energize those kinds of situations when they occur rather than inflame them.

Each set of people in every American setting needs to look for Peace chiefs rather than war chiefs when trigger events occur.

Converting war chiefs to Peace chiefs is a great strategy when that conversion process is possible.

Or we need to do what needs to be done to have a different set of Peace chiefs in place if the war chiefs refuse to convert.

The Mohawk Indians — for intertribal conflicts — actually had a tradition of naming specific people to be Peace chiefs to achieve exactly that purpose and to perform exactly that function. That was a wise thing to do.

We may need to do similar things in multiple settings to keep our budding Peace in any setting from being destroyed by incidents of intergroup anger and conflict.

We need leaders who are committed to Peace and who are willing and committed to resolving incidents rather than inflaming them.

We Need Inclusive Leaders Who Value Peace

As groups of people look for the next generation of leaders in various settings, identifying people whose goal is to create a win/win outcome for everyone rather than creating situational inflammation and win/win outcomes is the right thing to do.

We should ask each of our leaders what their own strategies are for achieving win/win results rather than their strategies for winning conflicts, defeating the enemy, and avoiding losses for our side in intergroup win/lose interactions.

We Need Police Who Generate Community Trust

We also need to do what needs to be done to create trust and a common commitment to community safety on behalf of the police departments and the various groups who make up our neighborhoods.

Some crimes damage people badly and some crimes can only be successfully addressed by police action.

If the police are not trusted or liked by the people in a community, then the relevant laws that are needed to protect people will generally not be well enforced. People who do not have good police protection can be deeply damaged badly at several levels because they have no safety net or security against violence or danger.

That is why more than 70 percent of the killings in Detroit were not solved a year ago. That failure to solve those murders happened in part because the people in too many neighborhoods in that city perceived the police to be “Them” and the people in those neighborhoods did not trust the police enough to help “Them” solve those crimes.

The obvious problem that is created by that lack of trust is a growing number of murders and a huge increase in thefts in those settings.

Murder is clearly not a good thing. It is bad for all groups in a setting to have both the number of murders, and the number of property thefts in any setting growing.

Police Need To Be “Us” — Not “Them”

Police departments need to be an “us” — not a “Them” — in the communities they serve. That approach is a basic need that we need to achieve if we want our communities to be safe and if we want the people in our communities to succeed and thrive.

It is very good for each community when the police in that setting can be an “us.” Our personal safety levels in each setting improve when we have the key laws that directly protect our personal safety both enforced and followed.

Communities each need to have their community police function well to protect the people in each community. Where the police in a setting are perceived to be “them,” then key trust issues need to be resolved and protection levels drop for all people in the community.

Multiple levels of crimes will grow in the areas where the police are not perceived to be the communities’ tool for preventing crime, creating safety, and for ensuring adequate protection for all groups.

Basic distrust of the police creates a real threat to Peace. We need to eliminate such that distrust by having the police function as an “us” in the service of the people that they protect.

A key goal for the leaders in each community needs to be to create mechanisms that protect the safety and the possessions of the people who live in each community.

Lawless settings and a lack of basic protection can very easily trigger truly evil and dangerous behaviors.

We need to create a clear and shared sense in each community that safety for everyone is a goal. We need our police departments to be enough of an “us” in each community that people call on their police without hesitation or fear to protect the people against people who assault, damage, or steal from other people in the community.

We Need Each Community To Be An “Us”

The principals are pretty basic and fundamental. The specific solutions need to be specific to each setting because trust and safety are both setting specific.

We need each community in America to very deliberately create a sense of community “us.”

We need the people in each community to share support for community schools, community transportation, community safety, and community health.

We need people in each community to create processes and approaches that improve the futures for our children and improve the health for all of the people who are being damaged by the diseases that do not need to be allowed to do that damage to so many people.

We need leaders in each setting who react immediately when negative us/them situations occur — with the goal of restoring a sense of functioning, beneficial, and legitimate sense of “us” to that setting as quickly as it can be restored.

We need political processes that give us leaders who might differ on their pathways and who might differ on their ideology, but who concur entirely on their goal of having us all succeed by becoming an inclusive America where the American Dream is available to us all and where we all have the safety and protection of being an “us.”

The set of beliefs and rules that we need to create alignment and bring us together is outlined in the final chapter of this book. For all to succeed, we need a common path to success.

The time to be on that path is now.

We each need to make the personal commitment to Peace that will make that path possible for us all.