

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Chaos in the World Around Us

AS I BEGAN to study the ethnic and tribal conflicts that were happening in the world around us, I was increasingly horrified at the levels of evil, disgusting, and horrible guilt-free behaviors that I saw in so many places and so many settings.

I was looking for evidence that our us/them instincts, our tribal instincts, and our turf-related instincts could cause us to do bad things to other people. What I saw — in both current events and in the bloody records of history — exceeded my worst expectations.

As I was writing early drafts of the book, I saw the Hutu/Tutsi massacres, the Sarajevo mass killings, and I saw intertribal bloodshed, rapes, mutilations, mass killings, and deliberately genocidal behaviors that were happening in a wide range of settings.

I was horrified to see kinds of barbaric and evil intergroup behaviors in so many places on our planet today and my horror was not relieved when I could see those same behaviors in so much of our history going back in time as far as history extended back in time.

## **We Are Not Evolving to Levels of Modern Enlightenment**

In my 1989 draft of the book, I predicted both the Sarajevo and the Sudanese conflicts, based on intergroup tensions and damaging intergroup behaviors that were evident in both settings at that point in time.

I actually started the whole writing process with a mild sense of optimism centered on the somewhat fuzzy idea that we certainly must all be getting more

civilized in many ways because we are all becoming increasingly more modern in so many ways.

I confused modern with civilized and I confused science with enlightenment.

That optimism and that confusion faded quickly. I had to conclude very early in my research and analysis process that we are clearly not collectively evolving as people in some generic and all inclusive positive directions that will lead us inevitably and inexorably to more civilized and more ethical behaviors and to higher levels of intergroup understanding and intergroup Peace.

The situation that we face in a great many settings relative to intergroup conflict was actually, I quickly discovered, clearly getting worse.

Being “Modern” increased and improved our weaponry — but it did not increase or improve our wisdom.

The behavior that I saw in growing numbers of negative current intergroup encounters that were happening in multiple settings across the planet was deeply sobering to me on a good day, deeply depressing to me on a bad day, and frightening to me at a very core, fundamental and deep level every single day.

### **My File Boxes Overflowed**

My file boxes of news articles from multiple sources about current intergroup conflicts filled and then overflowed. I looked in some detail into several of the current sets of conflicts and I could see people damaging people at an intergroup level in each and every conflicted setting.

What was particularly frightening and even jolting to me was to see that civilized people in multiple settings could deteriorate so very quickly from having good relationships, civilized interactions, and even friendships with people from other ethnic groups into killing and damaging those same neighbors and feeling no sense of guilt or remorse for the deaths.

I was both amazed and frightened by the fact that it was obvious that people could make that change in core values and foundational thought processes about

other people so completely and could often make that change in an amazingly short period of time.

I saw those kinds of behaviors by people in current events at the time I began writing — and I found those behaviors embedded and interwoven into our history.

I have been a lifelong student of history. I love studying history. It was very easy to find and see those negative intergroup behavior patterns as major components of history once I learned to identify the patterns and then began to look for them in our historical records.

### **Nazi Germany Was My Initial Template**

Nazi Germany was one of my initial historical templates for overall us/them behavior changes. I knew about the Nazis and their evil behaviors before I started that research.

I had believed, however, when I started the process, that Nazi Germany was a relatively unique and even isolated manifestation of us/them evil actions and horrible intergroup behaviors. I knew that Germany and the German people had gone through major changes in a very bad way.

Germany had been one of the worlds most civilized countries — highly educated, and historically rooted for generations in a tradition of at least moderate intergroup enlightenment that had prevailed for a relatively long period of time.

The country did have some negative and dysfunctional levels of both intergroup discrimination and intergroup prejudice before the Nazi regime, but it also had a significant “civilized” degree of functional intergroup acceptance.

Jews, for example, were a key part of the German economy and society prior to the Nazi era. Jews were not assimilated as a group and discrimination relative to Jews obviously existed, but Jews were accepted and tolerated as a group in ways that allowed Jews in Germany to flourish in the arts, education, science, and several areas of the economy.

Then Nazi ideology and Nazi laws turned the Jews in Germany into a very clear “Them” and the consequences of becoming Them in Nazi Germany were horrible. People were displaced, imprisoned, tortured, abused, and sent to evil-personified concentration camps where people were starved, very intentionally demeaned and degraded, and then actually gassed and burned in mass ovens simply for being Jews.

### **The Faces in the German Crowds Were Frightening**

I read the history of that transition for the German people who were not Jews. It was frightening for me to learn how little effort the “decent people” of Germany had expended in that time to resist that evil. The previously semi-accepting and semi-inclusive German people did not rise up together in righteous and ethical indignation over that truly inhumane treatment of the German Jews by the Nazis.

The horrors that were inflicted on the Jews in the death camps of the Nazi regime almost defy description, and it was clear that the German people, as a people, did not take stands of principal and did not choose to become either an individual or a collective force for ethical behaviors or for moral responsibility.

What I read about the German public in those pre-war eras told me that they didn’t even generate a sense of basic concern and a sense of shared humanity for the persecuted people who were Jewish. The sad truth clearly was that far too many people in Germany supported that particular us/them agenda and a wide array of us/them behaviors once those us/them instinctive triggers were activated.

The faces of the German people in the crowds listening to Hitler give his speeches are, I have to say, also frightening in their own way. I have seen several newsreels and some movie footage from that era. It is both sobering and chilling to look at crowd faces in those old German news films. The people of Germany in those crowds were clearly being mesmerized by Hitler and his message. The people in the military, police force, and death camps who were inflicting

those horrors clearly felt no ethical challenges or constraints and they clearly experienced no moral or mental horrors for doing morally horrible, evil, and reprehensible things to other human beings.

### **The Japanese InterGroup Cruelties in that Same War Were Stunning**

I thought that situation in Germany was unique when I started looking at those issues in 1987. Sadly, once I started looking at those kinds of issues, I saw similar behaviors in far too many settings.

The Japanese armies in that same war inflicted massive cruelty on several other ethnic groups who had the great misfortune to fail under their power. Horrible things were done by the Japanese forces. The Philippines, Korea, and China all had their own torture camps, organized sexual slavery, and food deprivation to the point of starvation and each country conquered by the Japanese had its own tribal mass murders that were done by the Japanese who had their own us/them instincts clearly in full gear — again, with no sense of guilt for truly inhumane behaviors. It was clear that when the soldiers in those armies perceived the people from other cultures, races, and ethnicities to be a “them,” no level of cruelty was prevented by ethical concerns.

At the time I wrote the first draft of this book, a number of Korean women who had been forced into sexual slavery during the war were asking for an official apology for being so horribly mistreated and so personally abused for long periods of time by the Japanese. Those women were unsuccessful at that point in getting that apology. It has taken a very long time for even the post-war Japanese to apologize for some of those self-evidently evil wartime intergroup behaviors. It was clear to me from looking at that history that when we have our us/them instincts fully activated in the most negative ways, those instincts skew our thinking and our values at truly frightening levels.

More currently, the Hutu-Tutsi situation was very much like the German situation in the fact that neighbors who had been Peaceful neighbors and friends of each other for long periods of time turned on each other over night — and

many innocent people were tortured, mutilated, and killed by the same exact people who had been their friends days and weeks earlier.

That same sequence of events happened in Sarajevo as well. Neighbors killed neighbors who were from the other ethnic group and who lived in their area. We are seeing similar intergroup damage being done in multiple settings today. Currently, in the world we see around us now, we have groups of armored men in the Middle East who are simply, purely, and very openly committing local genocide at the village, tribal, and religious group level — with no sense of guilt on the part of the people who are committing those crimes for killing all of the people they are killing.

It was clear to me early in the research process that we can do really ugly and evil things to other people when our basic sets of negative intergroup instincts are triggered and it was also clear that people can move from Peaceful and accepting settings and values into evil behaviors and values in relatively short time frames and can act accordingly.

Those issues are not theoretical at any level. They are what people do to one another in the real world today.

I saw a number of settings in the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia where local ethnic cleansing was either happening now or had happened in relatively recent history and the evil that I saw in many of those intergroup settings who were intentionally damaging other groups of people very clearly echoed and replicated the ethics and the moral standards that existed at Auschwitz and Treblinka.

I did write about The Sudan as being a dangerous multi-tribal setting that involved evil intergroup behaviors in a very early draft of my book back in 1989. I predicted back in that very early version of this book that the really damaging intergroup situation that was happening then in The Sudan was clearly headed for major intertribal war at some future point in time. The intergroup abuses and damages were obvious and visible even then. That prediction proved to be entirely accurate.

The war that has finally happened in The Sudan was even more bloody and conscience free than the conflict I predicted in 1989. Pure intergroup killings in that setting continue to happen today as I write this particular draft of this book.

It has been easy to see those kinds of divisions and behaviors in multiple settings. Kenya, The Congo, and Tibet have all been settings where people have been killed for purely ethnic reasons. Neighbors have been killing neighbors in multiple places, and groups of people were damaging other groups of people in very intentional ways and feeling both right and justified in doing the damage they were doing.

### **The Media and the Analysts Described the Situations — Not the Patterns**

Our ability as human beings to go into those kinds of horrific value sets and evil intergroup behaviors when we have our most negative packages of intergroup instincts activated in a bad way horrified me.

I was also fascinated and personally unhappy about the fact that no one was writing about those sets of behaviors that were happening in any of those settings in the context of those events being predictable and consistent patterns of intergroup behavior. Both historians and journalists tended to look at each of those instances of conflict in each of those countries as being a separate situation and a separate set of circumstances — and the people who did cover those events for the news media tended to tell the stories of those particular horrors as if they were each unique to those local settings and unique to those specific groups of peoples.

It was obvious to me fairly quickly that those behaviors were not situationally unique. It was also clear fairly quickly that those behaviors were clearly not purely circumstantial or truly incident based. Those local interethnic explosions of evil were clearly all the local manifestations of basic behavior patterns that are created by very distinct instincts that we all have and that we all share for our intergroup interactions.

## **The Situation Is Getting Worse – Not Better**

As I looked for evidence points around the world to either mitigate or increase my concern level about those instinctive behaviors, I discovered that things were actually getting worse, rather than getting better, relative to intergroup issues in major areas of the world. I truly had not expected to see that those issues were getting worse. That information was very sobering.

I personally did actually have a vague level of optimism before that time that things were probably getting better at some level in the world relative to intergroup issues. I was optimistic that we had somehow collectively learned from our past negative behaviors and that some level of growing civilization would make those kinds of intergroup conflict and evil behaviors less likely to happen in the future. That optimism was unfounded and that assumption was wrong. We have not reduced the risk of those conflicts and, in fact, it was clear to me very quickly that we are actually on the cusp of a perfect storm of intergroup conflict and chaos in multiple settings across the planet. It was obvious once I started looking at those conflicts in a systematic way that the risk levels are growing rather than shrinking.

## **We Are on the Cusp of Chaos**

It was clear that in a number of areas and in a number of ways, we are very truly on The Cusp of Chaos relative to those issues. That sense of being on the cusp inspired the title of this book.

My concerns on those issues are increasing. My personal sense at this point in time after looking at what has been happening in a number of settings, is that those kinds of intergroup issues will continue to grow if we don't understand what those issues are, why they are being triggered, and how they very directly affect so many people in so many settings.

I believed then and I believe now that we Americans need to understand what those issues are in all of those other countries who are at war with



themselves as well as understanding our own issues for our own country and our own people. We need to prevent intergroup Chaos here. I believe we need to see and understand the conflict that is happening in all of those other countries so that we don't go down the same paths in our own country.

## **Those Issues in Other Countries Can Spill Over to Us**

I believed then — and I believe now — that we Americans needed to understand those issues as they have played out in all of those other countries to keep them from happening here. I also believe we need to understand those issues because it is clear that some of those conflicts and some of those intergroup anger levels actually have the direct and very real potential to trigger some levels of negative spillover impact and damage here. I believed that when I wrote the first drafts of these books and I was confirmed in that belief later when the terrorists flew those airplanes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. That painful day was clearly a spillover impact of conflicts that were happening in other places in the world that ended up killing people here. I had that sense as I watched the television and saw those planes flying into the sides of those buildings that my prediction that we would be damaged have by the spillover from those conflicts had just happened — and I believed that those negative impacts are highly likely to happen in various other ways in the future.

I believe that to be true because people who hate will often try to do hateful things. Doing hateful things is part of the package of hate.

I knew that when people anywhere feel a collective animosity, direct anger, and focused hatred for the United States, then those groups will have a high likelihood of making efforts to have group members hurt us — and I know that the people who hurt us will feel very right in doing damage to us in any ways that damage might be done to someone they hate. We know what that behavior looks like. It happens daily. People who have those sets of instincts activated strap bombs to their own bodies and go to settings full of “Them” to set off the bombs. Those horrible bombings actually happen in some place in the world

daily. Some of the people who have that level of hatred embedded in themselves very clearly hate us now.

Once those angers are activated in any sets of people and once people feel motivated to do damage, then damage is probably going to be attempted. Those risks and those behavior patterns are both clear. We need to do what we can to keep them from doing damage to us in the places we live. I knew that those risks to us from those sets of people existed when I wrote the first drafts of those books and I know with even more conviction that those risks exist today.

We need to understand how those kinds of destructive intergroup behaviors are triggered and we need to be as careful as we can to keep intergroup angers that are activated in other settings in the world from being embodied in people who hate us enough to reach into our population and cause very direct damage here.

### **Those Conflicts Are Predictable — When You Know the Triggers**

I looked at intergroup conflict information from hundreds of countries in my total research process. I read extensively. I traveled in person to more than 40 countries. I talked directly to people from dozens more. I have file boxes full of interethnic conflict stories and data points alphabetized by the country where each conflict exists. When I started down that road to study those conflicts, I could immediately see intergroup conflicts everywhere I looked. I can still see intergroup conflicts everywhere I look. Multi-ethnic, multi-tribal, and multi-racial settings all tend to have intergroup stress and varying levels of intergroup conflict. It has been fairly easy to figure out that we have more than 200 current sets of intergroup conflicts happening in the world today and it has been fairly easy, as well, to figure out, as well, that the number of those conflicts is actually growing. The patterns are clear.

Those conflicts are not incidental and they are not uniquely circumstantial or situational. They follow patterns, and the actual conflicts, themselves, are, sadly, all too predictable and generally foreseeable when the combination of facts and

circumstances in settings create trigger level situational realities that cause those negative packages of intergroup instinctive behaviors to be activated.

## **Process Analysis Is Key**

It was obvious to me very early in the analytical process that there are some clear patterns of negative intergroup behavior that are driving those conflicts in each of the settings and that there are some clear situational trigger points that are creating the context for those instincts to be activated. I discovered that it is relatively easy to identify what the basic components of those patterns are once I began to look at the entire functional intergroup situation as being a process of instinctive intergroup behaviors and not as just a string of individual intergroup occurrences and unrelated intergroup incidents.

That was a useful insight to have. Once I started to look at those issues as being part of our overall intergroup interaction process, it became much easier to gather relevant data points about the process, itself.

It is very important — and extremely useful — to understand actual processes when processes exist and when those processes are functionally relevant.

I had, in my day job as a health care organization executive, become a Deming-influenced process improvement believer, practitioner, and advocate. I loved looking at my work problems and opportunities in the organizations I served from the perspective of specific and actual processes. I became a “continuous improvement” zealot. I loved the concept and the tool kit of continuous improvement thinking that was anchored in process analysis and in process design and redesign. We could, I learned, reduce hospital deaths significantly and reduce those deaths consistently when we clearly understood the specific processes that triggered each set of relevant deaths.

We actually reduced stroke deaths by 40 percent by making improvements in the care processes for stroke. We actually brought HIV deaths down to the lowest levels in the world by thinking in terms of process design and doing very

intentional and well-designed process improvement approaches for our HIV patients.

Process improvement works. I know it works because I have used it in many ways and I have seen it work well in the world I live in. Process improvement is a science and a skill set and process improvement literally makes things better when it is done well. I have seen it have those results. I believe strongly in improving outcomes in a setting in any setting by understanding, defining, and improving the relevant processes that create the outcomes in that setting.

I used that approach to making outcomes better in my health care jobs and I then applied that same thinking and those same approaches to the basic issues and opportunities that are involved in intergroup conflict. I started looking for clear patterns of intergroup behavior and I started looking for functional and generational causes of those behaviors.

## **Separatists, Satellites, Colonialists, Immigrants, Racists, and True Believers All Trigger Intergroup Instincts**

As part of that data gathering analysis for intergroup issues and process improvement thinking, about intergroup conflict, I have spent time searching out some of the basic factors that have triggered all of the intergroup conflicts that I could see at that point in time. I knew that instincts were involved in creating those behavior patterns — so I did the work outlined in this book to figure out how some key instincts — like turf instincts and tribal instincts — were relevant to those patterns. I also looked for context, to get a better sense of what context created the opportunity for those instincts to be relevant.

To get a better sense of context, I grouped the conflicts I could find into six basic categories of intergroup conflicts. The conflicts in each of the six categories have enough in common with one another to be, I believe, better understood and better addressed in the context of their relevant groupings. I found that context grouping useful both for process related prevention strategies and for process related interaction strategies.

The six context groupings of intergroup conflicts that I saw in various countries and settings when I started doing that grouping process were; (1) existing separatists, (2) freed satellites, (3) newly independent colonies, (4) major recipients of inter-ethnic immigration, (5) pure intergroup racism and direct ethnic discrimination, and (6) conflicts exacerbated by religious beliefs.

The nearly 200 conflicted settings and situations that I discovered tended to fit nicely into that set of intergroup negative behavior triggers — with each context creating the situation for the full packages of our intergroup instincts that are activated in each setting. There are sections of this book that deal with countries that face each of those sets of issues.

Some settings where conflict was underway were actually affected by more than one of those context factors — but it made sense from a process analysis and process improvement perspective to understand how the relevant context triggers affected each actual conflict.

I looked at all of the conflicts that I could see in the context of those six trigger categories to see what had activated the negative intergroup behaviors that were happening in each setting and to predict what future intergroup behaviors and Peace strategies might be for each of those settings. My goal was to figure out process-linked approaches that can either help to prevent future conflicts or to help resolve the areas of conflict that exist now.

I looked at the conflicts and intergroup angers, intergroup stress points, and negative intergroup behaviors that were triggered by each of the six conflict categories. I also looked at our instinctive behaviors — our turf instincts, tribal instincts, survival instincts, and team instincts — to see how each of those packages of instincts was relevant to each set of context-category conflicts.

It was significantly easier to figure out why each conflict was happening when I understood the basic set of historical pattern points had set up the context for each conflict.