



Creating **Common** Ground

Bridging Divides on Controversial Issues

Moving from Political Conflict to Political Problem-Solving

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION: CREATING COMMON GROUND

In political discussions, we often hear that it is important to “find common ground” with our opponents. Common ground is indeed important. However, common ground is not so much *found* as it is *created*. If you are on one island and I’m on the other, we have no common ground. To have common ground, we have to create it. We have to actively create “ground” that does not yet exist. We can do this, of course, by building a bridge. When we build a bridge, we can both stand together on the same ground. But building bridges -- and building them together -- is hard work. It takes time. Our hope is that this process provides a way to bring opposing parties together to create common ground.

Why Debates Fail

If your goal is to solve a problem, political debates are almost designed to fail. That is because they are not designed to solve problems. The purpose of a political debate is to *win* – not to solve problems.

In a democracy, we debate. The apparent purpose of a debate is to subject one’s ideas to the “marketplace of ideas”. People debate in order to determine who has the best ideas. In a debate, individuals are given the opportunity to elaborate their arguments in a public forum. They are asked challenging questions to identify the weaknesses in a debater’s ideas. Each debater is given the opportunity to defend his or her ideas. The public gets to decide who has the best ideas: the person with the best ideas wins.

Of course, it doesn’t actually work this way. A debate is a type of competition – it is a contest or battle. The goal of the debate is to “win”. To win what? Well, the most obvious answer is to win votes. But there is more – the contest is a contest of *egos* – not so much what is the best argument (or solution to a problem), but instead *who* has the best argument? *Who* is the *better* candidate? To lose a debate is not simply to lose votes, it is to lose status, prestige, respect, and esteem. Losing courts humiliation and shame. People will do whatever they can to win and to avoid losing.

The goal of a debate (or an election) is to win – to gain power, prestige and status so that one can advance one’s agenda. The winner’s agenda is advanced; the loser’s interests are not met. The loser becomes resentful and begins to strategize about how to win and gain power the next time.

Debates rarely change minds. When was the last time you changed your mind in a political debate?

Collaborative Problem-Solving: An Overview

There is an alternative to polarizing debate. Collaborative problem-solving allows people to work together to seek genuine solutions to real problems – even when do not agree with each other. The key to collaborative problem-solving is the willingness and ability to:

- (a) see the other person not as an enemy but instead as *person* who is motivated by human needs, fears and beliefs – just like you;
- (b) Understand and acknowledge the other person's ideological beliefs -- without either agreeing with them or giving up on your own;
- (c) Separate a person's political *positions* and *ideologies* from the *needs, interests, fears* and *beliefs* that motivate them;
- (d) Slowly develop *novel* solutions to the problem of meeting the needs, interests and concerns that motivate each side to adopt the positions that they do.

By first focusing solving problems and acknowledging the human needs of each party, it becomes possible for political adversaries to work together in creating entirely new ways of thinking and solving problems. Slowly, over time, as parties gain trust in one another, it can even become possible parties to modify their own beliefs in relation to the "truths" they find in the beliefs of the other.

The Basic Process

At its most basic level, political problem-solving is a form of conflict resolution. A political issue typically involves a conflict of political positions. One person or party takes one position, the other takes a clashing position. The debate that ensues is a battle over whose position will prevail.

One of the most important principles of conflict management is the need to separate the *positions* that people take on an issue from interests, goals and concerns that motivate those positions. In a dispute, a position is a kind of stance that a person adopts on an issue. Different sides take different positions against each other. So, imagine that there are Terri and Joe are in the library. Terri wants the window open, but Joe wants it closed. Immediately, we have a contest – a battle for over whose position on the issue will win out. It is clear that if we think about the situation as a battle over whether the window will be open or shut, there are only three options.

- (a) The window is opened, in which case Terry wins and Joe loses;
- (b) The window is closed, in which Joe wins and Terry loses;
- (c) Terry and Joe compromise and agree to have the window is partly open and partly closed.

Each outcome is the result of a power struggle. As shown in the first two outcomes, in a fight over whether the window is open or closed, there will be a winner and a loser.

The third outcome – compromise -- is typically seen as the goal of dispute. Disputes can often be resolved by "splitting the difference". While a compromise is better than a win-lose situation, it is not optimal. In a compromise, while each individual "wins" something, they each both "lose" something. We still have a power struggle here. In a power struggle, any advance

made by one party comes at the expense of the other party. In the example involving the window, the more the window is open, the less that it is closed, and vice versa. Terry can only get what she wants at Joe's expense, and vice versa. It is as if each person two hungry people are competing over who will get the most out of a fixed amount of pie.

Is there is a better way? In the window example, imagine that the librarian comes into the room and asks Joe and Terry about their problem. The librarian asks Terry *why* she wants the window open, and *why* Joe wants the window closed. Terry says, "I want some fresh air" while Joe says, "I don't want there to be a draft". The librarian thinks for a few minutes. She leaves the room and opens a window in the next room. Opening the window in the next room has the advantage of bringing fresh air into the room without producing a draft from the nearby window. In this situation, both people get what they want – both persons win – it is a "win-win" outcome. The librarian was able to create a solution that would achieve the maximum amount of gain for both individuals.

In a contest, competition or battle, there can be no win-win solutions. The purpose of the battle is to win – to beat the other opponent. If I don't win, I have either lost or "given in" in some way. In the situation described above, neither party had to "give in" on what they wanted. They were both able to "win" because the librarian transformed the conflict into a type of *collaborative problem-solving*. She realized that there was *something deeper* that both Terry and Joe wanted that motivated them to adopt the positions that they did. This deeper something is the person's *interests*.

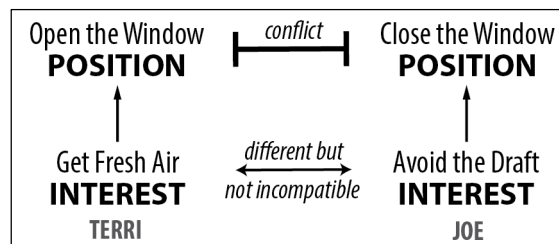


Figure 1. Behind Every Position is a Human Interest

Terry's adopted the position that "the window should be open" in order to fulfill her desire (interest) for *fresh air*; Joe adopted the position that "the window should be closed" in order to meet his need (interest) to *avoid the draft*. In this situation, while Joe and Terry's *positions* are in conflict – the window cannot be simultaneously open and closed – their interests do not clash. To be sure, they have different interests, but in this case, their interests are not incompatible. It is possible – with some clever thinking – both to *bring in fresh air* while simultaneously *avoiding the draft*.

This brings us to the first principle of negotiation – whether involving political or non-political issues: **Never negotiation over positions. Only negotiate from interests.**

What the librarian did was to engage in a process that looks something like this. First, she started by thinking about the conflict between Terri and Joe not as a competition or zero-sum game, but instead as a problem to be solved. In so doing, she sought to identify the interests that motivated Terri and Joe to adopt the positions that they did. This is shown in Figure 1 above.

Having identified Terri and Joe's interests, the librarian then simply pushed their initial positions aside. She was aware that Terri and Joe's positions were not the real issue – the real issue is how to meet both of their interests at the same time:

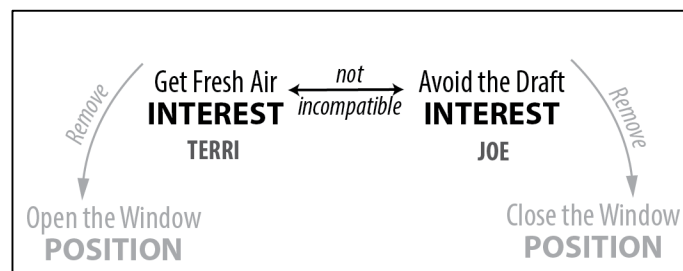


Figure 2. Focus Only on Interests, Not Positions.

Focusing only on interests, the librarian then set out to do some brainstorming. In so doing, she asked herself: What solution would give both Terri and Joe what they really want – that is, meet their interests – in a non-conflicting way? As she was brainstorming, she likely generated a variety of possible solutions – some of which were good, some of which were bad, and some of which were ugly:

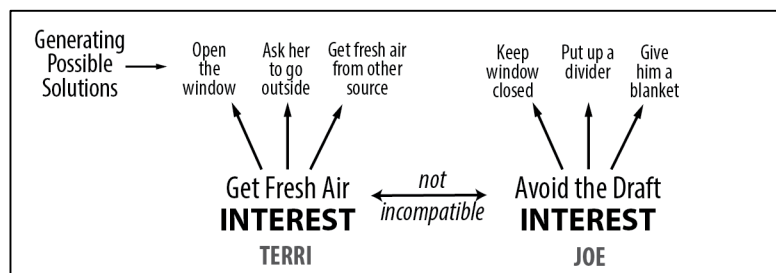


Figure 3. Brainstorming Possible Solutions
(Ways to Meet Both Interests Simultaneously)

Then, examining the *possible* solutions, the librarian invented an entirely new solution – one that was suggested by the different possibilities. She realized that if she could get fresh air from another source, she wouldn't have to open the window at all. Opening the window in the next room allows air to flow in through an open door:

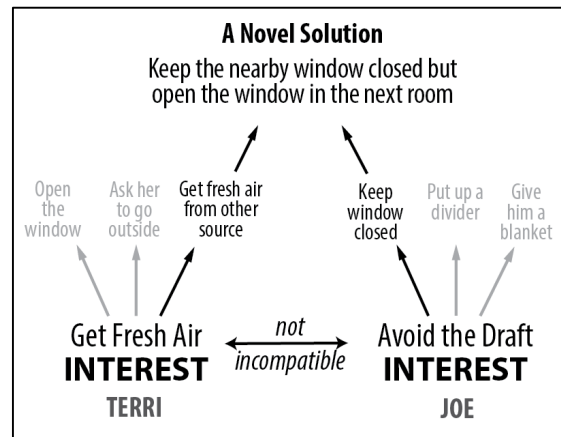


Figure 4: Creating a Novel Solution

Problem solved!

Building on these ideas, the basic process of collaborative problem-solving – for both political and non-political issues -- involves four basic steps.

FOUR BASIC STEPS SHARED POLITICAL PROBLEM-SOLVING

1. **Seek Out the Humanity of the Other.** Affirming the dignity and humanity of the other.
2. **Separate Interests from Positions.** In discussion, in a series of organized conversational turns, identify both your own and your partner's positions in a given issue. Then – ignore them. Seek to identify the *interests*, unmet needs, concerns, goals and fears that motivate your partner to adopt the positions that he or she does.
3. **Brainstorm Possible Ways to Meet Interests of Both Parties.** Separating interests from positions, put all of the interests of each party on the table. Honor them. Express your commitment to work to find ways to meet both your own and the other party's underlying interests. Start Simple. Begin to brainstorm to identify novel ways to meet the interests of both self and other simultaneously.
4. **Construct Shared Novel Solutions.** Drawing on your collaborative brainstorming, identify novel solutions that meet the underlying interests of both parties on the issue in question. The best solutions tend to *novel* solutions – new ideas that neither party considered prior to the problem-solving session. As the result of a collaborative process, take *joint responsibility* for the decision. Agree to return to problem-solving if and when issues and problems arise with the agreed-upon solution.

These are the basic steps. It takes some time to learn how to engage in each of these steps. The purpose of these sessions is to give us the time to learn how to do this as we seek to engage each other in constructive political problem solving. Some political problems are easy enough to tackle with just these steps alone. This is especially the case when disputing parties can identify small problems that are not defined in terms of conflicting partisan or ideological

commitments. For example, solving the problem of gun violence in the United States involves deeply entrenched ideological positions. However, a smaller or more local problem – say, how to keep guns out of the hands of people with records of physical violence – becomes an easier one to address.

When Ideologies Clash: A More Advanced Process

Political disputes are different from everyday conflicts in the sense that they tend to occur in the context of different ideological commitments. The process of political problem-solving becomes more difficult when it involves a clash of political ideologies. An *ideology* is a way of thinking -- a system of *ideas*. It is a system of beliefs that helps people make sense out of the world. Political ideologies tend to include beliefs about the proper nature of government and economic life. However, they also include moral and religious beliefs, beliefs about the human nature, and even beliefs about the nature of life and the cosmos.

In political life, there are many types of ideologies. Words that refer to political ideologies include *conservativism*, *libertarianism*, *liberalism*, *progressivism*, *socialism*, *communism*, *authoritarianism*, *fascism*, and many, many more. Ideologies tend not to be pure types; they overlap with one another. In fact, there may even be as many different political ideologies as there are people!

Ideologies matter. Sometimes, people think that it is possible to understand the world without appeals to ideology. Some people seek to avoid adopting a particular political ideology. When people try to avoid ideology, they are usually trying to avoid adopting a fixed ideology or belief system. They are saying, “I don’t want to be pigeonholed into one way of thinking”. This is a perfectly acceptable perspective. There is no shortage to the number of ideologies or belief systems that people can hold. However, even people who try to avoid having a *fixed* ideology tend to have *some sort* of ideology. However, without *some sort* of ideology or belief system, it is virtually impossible to understand the world and make judgments about it.

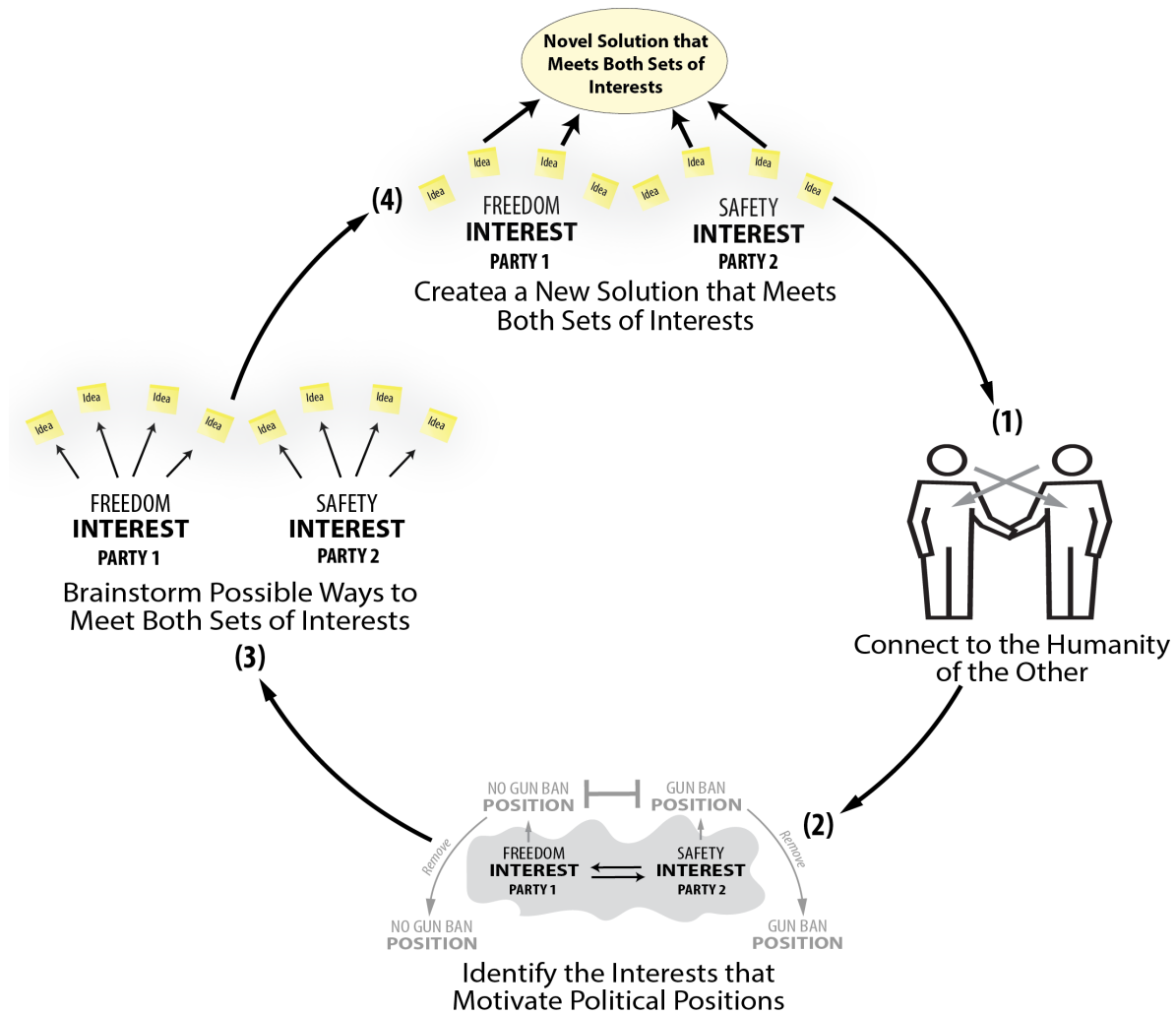
It follows that we must all hold some system of beliefs that we draw upon to understand the world. We may not always be aware that we have an ideology or what that ideology might be. And so, when we are talking about political issues, it becomes important to become aware that we have ideologies, to try to identify what they are, to reflect upon them, and even to entertain the possibility of changing them as we gain new insights about our worlds.

Because of the role of ideologies, political controversies are more complicated than everyday disputes. As is true of any dispute, in a political dispute, people take different positions or sides. As is true in any other dispute, political positions are motivated by underlying interests, needs and concerns. As is true in any other dispute, to resolve a political dispute, it is important negotiate from *interests* – not positions. However, political controversies are complicated by the fact that a person’s political *interests* do not “stand alone”; instead, they are in part structured by their political *ideologies*. A person’s *ideology* helps to define the types of interests that they have. As a result, to resolve more complex political issues, it is important

not only to seek to understand the interests of each party to a conflict, it is also important to understand the ideologies of each individual – and how any person's interests are influenced by a person's ideologies, beliefs, identifications and other commitments.

In this set of teachings, we will focus first on the basics of collaborative problem-solving. As we master the more basic (less ideological processes), we will move on to the more difficult problem of political engagement in the context of ideological differences. The more advanced process builds on the basic process, but involves some additional principles and steps. For now, we will turn our attention to the basics. The basics can take us further along the path of successful political problem-solving than we might ordinarily think.

PART I: THE BASIC COURSE



CHAPTER 1: CONNECTING WITH THE HUMANITY OF THE OTHER



In political situations, people take different sides on any given issue. Why do people adopt such different points of view? How can people believe some of the crazy things that they do? In political discussions, it is often hard to understand why the others takes the position they do.

But there are two meanings to the phrase, “hard to understand”. The first meaning has to do not so much with understanding as a form of comprehension; instead, it expresses a *judgment* or *criticism* about the other: “I don’t understand how someone could have such crazy ideas!” In this use of the phrase, “not understanding” is almost offered as a kind of virtue – that person’s ideas are so crazy as to defy comprehension! In fact, if I *did* understand them, it would show that I must be crazy too!”

This gives us the ability to pretend that we are trying to understand, but in fact we aren’t. It protects us from the difficult task of having to try to understand the other person. And it protects us from the idea that if we do understand the crazy person across from me, that other people are going to think I’m crazy, out of touch, or even evil, as well.

The other meaning of “I don’t understand” is more literal. It means, “I really can’t make sense of the other person’s thoughts and feelings”. The proper reaction to such a thought, however, should be *curiosity*, and not immediate dismissal. But again, we are afraid to be curious. It’s hard to understand the other, and who cares about them either (especially if I don’t have a relationship with them). Why should I be curious about someone else’s crazy, horrible thoughts?

The answer, of course, is that the same thing you are thinking about the other, they are thinking about you. To them, you are the Other – you are the one with the crazy horrible thoughts. Hmmm. Could they be right? Could you both be right? But that doesn’t make sense either.

Why do people adopt the positions that they do? They adopt those positions because those positions *make sense* to them. They may not make sense to you, but they make sense to *them*. Their views make sense to them just as much as your views make sense to you.

Even though it might not seem like it, both parties in a political dispute are *human* beings with their own *human* needs, interests, beliefs, pains, pleas, identities and grievances. The positions that they take on a political issue is a product of those human interests, feelings and beliefs, just as yours are. People act in order to meet their needs and to advance own interests, beliefs and values. It follows that a person's *behavior* is like a *solution* to a *problem*: it is a *solution* to the *problem* of meeting their *needs* – human needs that are organized by their own beliefs, identities and commitments.

And if this is so, the way to truly understand the other is to be *genuinely curious* about what they think, feeling and believe. It is to treat them as *persons* rather than merely obstacles to our own goals. It is to see that their political positions reflect the social and personal problems that they are trying to solve from their personal perspectives.

Behind every political position that we hate is a human need, feeling, belief or plea. It follows that to have a political conversation, we have to be curious about what those needs, feelings, beliefs and pleas are. To be sure, we don't have to *agree* with what the other person believes or even wants. We can understand even if we disagree. Agreement isn't necessary for us to understand. But understanding is necessary for us to generate genuine agreement.

In a traditional debate or political conversation contest or battle, then the other is viewed as the *enemy*. My goal is to win out over the other – to *beat* the other. I can win only if the other person loses.

The situation changes once I begin to think of my “opponent” as a person and not an “enemy” or some obstacle that I must overcome. If I can see the other as a person, then I must be constantly aware of their capacity for pain and suffering – which is identical to my capacity for pain and suffering.

Typically, we enter a debate with both assertiveness and fear – our assertiveness is born of our desire to advance our interests. Our fear arises from a sense that the other person can hurt us in some way. If their position prevails, we are humiliated, beaten, or inferior. It is certainly understandable and appropriate to have these feelings. But the moment that we see the other as a person, it becomes important to entertain an additional set of feelings – compassion for the pain and fear experienced by the other, a concern about meeting the human needs that motivate the other person to adopt the positions that they do, and even empathy for their pain and suffering.

Fear for the self and concern for the other are not mutually exclusive. They can occur at the same time. In fact, in order to have a genuine problem-solving situation, we need both.

The first step to engaging in genuine problem-solving is to embrace the humanity of the other. It is to affirm the unwavering dignity of the other as a person – no matter how much we disagree with the other or even hate political positions that they adopt.

The next two sections outline particular ways to connect with the humanity of the other in situations involving disputes – political or otherwise.

Skill 1: Honoring the Dignity of the Other

Constructive dialogue relies upon at least three fundamental values. These include affirming the *dignity* of the other, *civility* in social discourse, and *compassion* for the plight of the other.

Dignity refers to the inherent value of individuals as persons.

- Dignity is different from respect. Respect is earned; dignity refers to the inherent value of the other as a person.
- It is possible to honor the dignity of the other independent of any particular beliefs that he might espouse.
- Dignity involves accepting the identity of the other and providing her with the opportunity to express her authentic self without fear of being judged negatively.
- Dignity involves recognizing the unique qualities, talents and ways of life of the other, and giving her credit for her contributions, ideas and experience.
- Dignity involves honoring the autonomy and freedom of the other as an independent person.

Civility in social discourse involves treating others with respect, affirming their dignity and seeking to avoid shame and humiliation.

- Approach interactions with others from the premise that they have good motives, are acting with integrity, and are doing the best they can with the resources that they have available to them.
- Acknowledge the other and make her feel seen and heard. Make the other feel safe—both physically and from fear of being shamed or humiliated.
- Refrain from criticizing, blaming or denigrating the other. Instead, use I-Statements to express how you have been affected by the words or actions of the other (see below).
- Express differing opinions by using phrases such as, “in my experience”, “in my opinion”, “from my point of view.” Express disagreement by saying, “that is not my experience”; “I have a different sense of...” and so forth.
- Treat the other fairly and with equality. Seek to include others and make them feel that they belong and are part of a community.
- Apologize and take responsibility when we have violated their dignity. We make a commitment to change hurtful behaviors.

Compassion consists of understanding and caring about the pain and suffering of the other. It can be expressed in actions such as the following:

- Seek out, acknowledge and empathize with the of concerns, problems and pleas of the other.

- Seek understanding and give others a chance to explain their experiences and perspectives.
- Treat others in ways that promote a sense of hope and possibility.
- It is possible to have compassion for the plight of the other even if one disagrees with the beliefs, positions and behaviors expressed by the other.

Interactive Task: Experiences of Honoring and Not Honoring Dignity

(Adapted from *Global Dignity*)

1. Defining Dignity, Civility, Compassion
2. Video
3. Personal Dignity Story
4. Reflecting on Dignity
 - a. Participants break into small groups.
 - b. Each participant is asked to think about time when his dignity was **NOT** honored or respected. What happened? How did you feel? Why? What impact did this event have on you? Each participant shares his or her experience with the group.
 - c. Each participant is asked to think about time when his dignity **WAS** honored or respected. What happened? How did you feel? Why? What impact did this event have on you? Each participant shares his or her experience with the group.
5. Closing

Skill 2: Sharing “I-Stories”

You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view [...] until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.

-- Atticus Finch, in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

People long to be heard and to be understood. One way to begin the process of affirming the dignity and humanity of the Other – is to give the other person the gift of *feeling known*. A good way to do this is to hear each other's stories. Quite often, a person's stance on a political issue has its origins in a person's life experiences. A gun advocate may have been brought up with guns as a way of life; a gun control advocate may have witnessed or experienced gun violence. A person in favor of abortion rights might have experienced an unwanted or life-threatening pregnancy; a person against abortion rights may have been raised with deep-seated religious beliefs about the sanctity of life.

“I-Stories” are stories about the self. They are stories that express what is inside of the other person – his or her experiences, goals, triumphs, hardships, joys and pains. To begin to gain a sense of others, we will exchange I-stories. Through this process, you will gain experience in actively listening to others, bracketing negative judgments, remembering what they say, and finding something in the experience of the other with which one can empathize.

The procedure for Sharing I-Stories can be found in Appendix A.

Step 1 Example: Honoring the Dignity of the Other (Food Insecurity)

The following contains an example of the initial steps of a problem-solving dialogue between two people, Jaime and Todd. The task of their problem-solving process is ultimately to propose a shared solution to the problem of food insecurity.

As an act of honoring the humanity of the other, the first step of the process is to give each individual an opportunity to be genuinely heard by the other. Toward this end, each participant is given the opportunity to talk about his or her experiences with the issue at hand. In this case, the issue is *hunger or food insecurity*. Each participant is asked to take as much time as he or she wants, and to tell a story about the origins and development of their thoughts, feelings and beliefs about the issue of food insecurity. As one participant is speaking, the other adopts the role of an active and empathic listener (see below). The listener *listens attentively* with genuine *curiosity, refrains from interrupting, asks questions* in order to gain a clear understanding of the full range of the person's experience, *refrains from negative judgment*, and seeks to both *summarize* and *empathize* with the other's experience.

We begin with Jaime's I-Story about food insecurity, and thereafter present Todd's.

Jaime's I-Story about Food Insecurity

	Dialogue	Explanation
	Mediator: Tell us a little about your story. What, if anything, has happened in your life to make you feel that Food Stamp programs are so important? Remember, please use I-Statements and Descriptions as much as you can.	Mediator asks Jaime to tell her story—reminds her about I-Statements and Descriptions.
	Jaime: When I was a kid, we didn't have a lot of money. My father wasn't in the picture. My mother had to work all of the time, and so I had to take care of my little brother. We lived in the city. At the beginning of the month, everything was okay. My mom would buy groceries and bring them home. I would cook dinner and make sure that my brother had breakfast and lunch. After about two weeks, if I didn't budget our food really well, we would begin to run out. We couldn't just go to the store because all we had was convenience stores. My mother had to take a bus ½ each way hour to a Price Chopper. So, sometimes we went hungry. Sometimes I would get some food at McDonalds or Tedesco's – but that cost a lot of money.	Jaime tells her story. Note the many references to the term "I". At each point, Jaime is talking about what happened to her, what she experienced, what she thought and felt. There is no <i>blaming</i> of someone else. When Jaime makes reference to an event that occurred, she doesn't <i>characterize</i> , she <i>describes</i> it in concrete terms – for example, "My mother had to take a bus ½ hour each way..." rather than, "My mother was forced to buy groceries in another town far away."
	Todd: Wow. Okay – let me see if I understand what you are saying. You're saying that as a kid, you were poor and your mother wouldn't cook for you and so you had to cook for yourself and take care of your brother, is that right?	Todd tries to <i>summarize</i> . He summarizes what he can remember, and then asks <i>Jaime</i> to confirm it if is correct.

Jaime: Well, yeah. That's part of what I was saying. But it's not that my mother wouldn't cook – I mean, she was a great cook. She liked cooking and she wanted to cook. It was that she had to work through dinner. I had to do the cooking. And we would sometimes miss meals because I didn't know how to budget the food through the two weeks. That's because we not only didn't have money, but my mother had to go a long way to get the food. So, there was a long time between trips, and so we would sometimes miss meals or really not have anything to eat.	Jaime confirms that Todd was partially correct, which gives Todd a sense of <i>success</i> . She then tells him the parts that he left out, and <i>clarifies further</i> why that was important to her.
Mediator: Okay, Todd, do you understand everything she is saying? If not, you can ask her questions. Remember, your job is to show your partner that you understand what she has experienced – and that you understand it from her point of view.	The tries to empower Todd by giving him the option to ask questions, and reminds Todd that it is Jaime who has to determine whether he understands or not.
Todd: Okay, why couldn't you take the bus to go out of town instead of your mother?	Todd asks a question to <i>clarify</i> his understanding; his question is <i>not</i> a challenge or an attempt to catch Jaime.
Jaime: Well, maybe I could have, but my mother wouldn't let me. She didn't like me taking the bus far away with a lot of money and all. And then I'd have to bring back all the groceries. We could only bring back so much.	Jaime answers without defensiveness, perhaps because she understands that Todd is seeking clarification, and is not trying to make his own point.
Todd: Okay, so you're saying that your mom would go out of town to get food, and your mom wouldn't let you do that, so you would run out of food, right? But then you would eat out at restaurants when the food started to run out. So you would run out of money.	Todd summarizes.
Mediator: Jaime, do you feel that there is something that Todd is not understanding?	Mediator asks Jaime to confirm Todd's understanding out of a sense that Todd was not remembering what Jaime said accurately.
Jaime: We didn't eat at restaurants – we couldn't go to the store. The stores nearby were only convenience stores. They were too <i>expensive</i> to buy food there. That's why we'd have to wait to go to the store. There weren't any grocery markets in our neighborhood. So sometimes we'd go to McDonalds. It wasn't like we were eating at a restaurant or something. That's what was there.	Jaime clarifies.
Todd: Oh. Are you saying that where you lived, there weren't any grocery stores?	Todd asks a clarifying question – one that comes from being surprised by Jaime's response.
Jaime: Yup – that's why we had to go out of town. It was a big deal to go for food.	Jaime confirms Todd's understanding.
Mediator: Okay, Todd, do you think you can summarize everything that Jaime has said so far? And imagine how she might feel about that?	Mediator asks Todd to re-summarize so to make sure that both he and Jaime know that Todd understands.
Todd: I'll try. So, when you were growing up, you lived in a poor neighborhood that didn't have grocery stores. The stores in your neighborhood were like 7-Elevens and stuff, so you couldn't buy food. Your mother had to take the bus	Todd summarizes and asks for verification of his understanding.

	to go shopping out of town, and she wouldn't be able to do that all the time. So, you would do the cooking because your mom was working, and sometimes you wouldn't eat because the money would run out. Is that right?	
	Jaime: Yeah, you basically got it. Yup.	Jaime verifies Todd's understanding.
	Todd: Wow. That's really awful. I never thought that people would have a hard time buying food because there wouldn't be any stores. That must have been really hard.	Todd empathizes with Jaime by saying "That's really awful". He communicates his <i>genuine surprise</i> that there were no grocery stores near where Jaime lived.

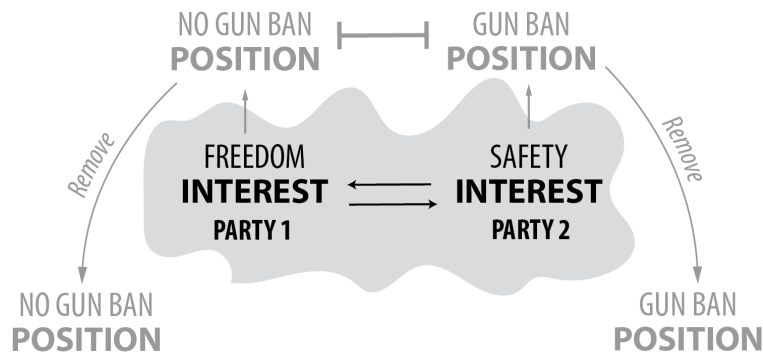
Todd's I-Story about Food Insecurity

	Dialogue	Explanation
	Mediator: Tell us a little about your story. What, if anything, has happened in your life to make you feel that Food Stamp programs are so important?	Mediator begins discussion.
	Todd: I'm not so sure that <i>food insecurity</i> exists. This is the United States – there are a lot poor people who are overweight! And this term "food insecurity" – what that does it mean? That used to be called "hunger". I feel that there that is just a euphemism for hunger. But it's kind of like a lie. There isn't really hunger like there is in other nations, and so liberals want to call it "food insecurity".	Todd starts his I-Story by stating a series of political <i>positions</i> – not sure food insecurity exists; insecurity is a euphemism, etc. He is not so much talking about his own experiences, feelings and needs as he is critiquing the concept of <i>food insecurity</i> .
	Mediator: Todd, I hear what you are saying. You clearly have a lot to say here. I worry that there are some "you-statements" there as well as some instances of "Characterizing the Other". Remember, please use I-Statements and Descriptions as much as you can. We want to hear from you, so, can you consider reframing your statement?	Mediator validates Todd's attempt and his experiences. Without blaming, he describes his sense of what Todd is doing (characterizing) and asks Todd to shift to <i>I-Statements</i> and <i>Descriptions</i> .
	Todd: Yeah, okay. It's so hard though.	Todd agrees.
	Mediator: Yes, it is. But you're ready to do it, I think.	Mediator supports Todd.
	Todd: Okay. So, food insecurity. For me, that means "hungry". And I wonder, from my point of view, whether people in the USA are really "hungry". In my view, there is a lot of food out there. And, I don't want to be insulting, but it just seems to be a fact. A lot of poor people are overweight. So, how can they be "hungry"? Let me tell you what I mean. Several years ago, I was at the supermarket. I saw a woman who was asking for money. She said that she needed the money to buy formula for her infant. I felt sorry for her and so I gave her the money. I went in to go shopping. I wasn't really thinking about it, but then I saw the same women get in line and, right in front of me, buy cigarettes. I mean, she lied right to me. I don't even know if she had a kid or not. It may seem like a little thing, but I felt used. Here I was, feeling sorry for her, giving her hard-earned money that I made, and she lies and spends it on cigarettes for herself. At that point, I just stopped giving to homeless people.	Todd is able to begin to speak about his own sense of "food insecurity" without blaming or criticism. Without blame, Todd <i>describes</i> what he experiences as plentiful food supply and a prevalence of obesity among the poor, and infers that poor people as a rule are not "hungry". Using <i>I-Statements</i> , he then <i>describes</i> a story of an encounter with a person who asked for money. He described his experiences of feeling used and betrayed. He <i>described</i> the solicitor's behavior as lying, but did not attribute further motives to the person.

Jaime: Okay. So what you are saying is that there was a time when you felt sorry for homeless people and you were willing to give them money. And there was a time when a woman asked you for money for her baby to buy baby food. You felt bad for her. When you gave her the money, she bought cigarettes for herself with it. Is that right?	Jaime summarizes Todd's story without characterizing or criticizing it and asks Todd for verification if she is correct.
Todd: Yeah, that's about right. Except, it was baby formula she said – not baby food. Actually, that kind of made a difference to me because, you know, formula is milk – the kid <i>needs</i> the milk, maybe more than other kinds of food – I don't know. But then she bought something that she clearly didn't need. I don't know if she was buying the cigarettes for herself or for somebody else. But it doesn't make any difference, she lied, and she didn't need the cigarettes.	Todd corrects Jaime, and further elaborate his story and his reasons for feeling used and betrayed.
Jaime: Okay, so, she bought infant formula, which was important to you because it's like a staple for the baby. And so you felt, uh, like – did you feel betrayed?	Jaime summarizes not only Todd's description but also his feeling.
Todd: Yeah. She lied. It was like an agreement and she betrayed the agreement.	Todd verifies Jaime's summary.
Jaime: I see. Yeah. Well, I know when people lie to me that I feel betrayed. And I can see how you would feel betrayed to – especially because you felt sorry for her and were trying to do something to help her baby. That made it worse.	Jaime continues to summarize but also seeks something in Todd's statement with which she can genuinely empathize.
Todd: Yeah, that's right. I think you get it.	Todd report feeling understood.

Note that Todd's story makes no reference to food stamps, government programs, or the particulars of the political issue at hand. In a traditional debate, Jaime might have been motivated to call this to Todd's attention as something that was irrelevant to the issue. She might have tried to counter the implications of Todd's statements (e.g., "What does this have to do with food stamps?" "Poor people are forced to asked for money because food stamps don't cover everything." "Why shouldn't poor people be denied access to cigarettes just because they are poor?" Such statements, of course, would function as a form of argument (convincing and defending) rather than as an attempt, motivated by curiosity, to genuinely understand the experiences that lead Todd to take the positions that he does. People come upon their position through their own history of experiences and dispositions – it takes time to figure out how the experiences of a particular person are relevant – from the perspective of the person him or herself – to the issue at hand. To dismiss Todd's experiences as irrelevant would be to lose the opportunity to understand his thoughts, feelings and concerns that make him skeptical about food stamps, the conditions of poverty, the motives and capacities of the poor, and so forth.

CHAPTER 2: IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND INTERESTS



The second step in a constructive political dialogue is to actually begin the conversation. Unlike in a political debate, where each side attacks the other while defending themselves – the first goal of problem-solving discussion is to *identity the interests and needs that motivate each party to adopt the political positions they espouse*. The goal of this step is to identify each party's deep and underlying interests, concerns, unmet needs, fears and pleas and put them on the table for further discussion in Step 3. At that point, the task will be to find new ways to meet these as many of these needs as is possible at the same time.

1. The goal of Step 2 is to identify the interests and needs of all parties to an issue. This requires skill in *separating political positions from the interests* that motivate them (Skill 3).
2. To identify interests, partners take turns assuming the role of *speaker* and *listener* (Skill 4).
3. When speaking, the goal of social partners is *self-assertion* rather than asserting positions or blaming others. Speakers use *I-Statements* and *Descriptive Statements* to express their interests and needs (see Skills 5 and 6)
4. When listening, the goal of social partners is to *seek understanding* of the other's interests rather than asserting or defending their own positions. To do this, the listener engages in the acts of *deep questioning* and *empathic listening* (See Skills 7 and 8).
5. Participants continue to take turns as speaker and listener until they have identified each party's important interests, needs and concerns relative to the issue at hand.

Each of the skills needed to identify the core interests of all parties in a discussion is provided below. An extended example illustrating the application of these skills in the context of a discussion on food insecurity follows.

Skill 3: Separating Interests from Positions

The task of political problem solving requires learning to separate interests from positions in ongoing dialogue. This occurs through discussion, as each partner (or mediator) asks probing questions intended to separate identify each party's interests and needs and separate them

from their initial political positions. To do this, it is necessary to be able to discriminate political positions from the interests that motivate them.

A political position is a *side* or *stance* on an issue. It is a person's initial sense of what he or she wants to occur in a dispute. If we think about a political conversation as a type of collaborative problem-solving, a *position* is a kind of *solution* to a *problem* – the *problem* being how to meet the individual's *interests*, goals, unmet needs, and so forth. In this way, *interests* are like *problems* whereas, positions are like solutions. That is, as shown in Figure X, drawing on the non-political conflict about whether to keep the window opened or closed, *positions* are to *interests* as *solutions* are to *problems*.

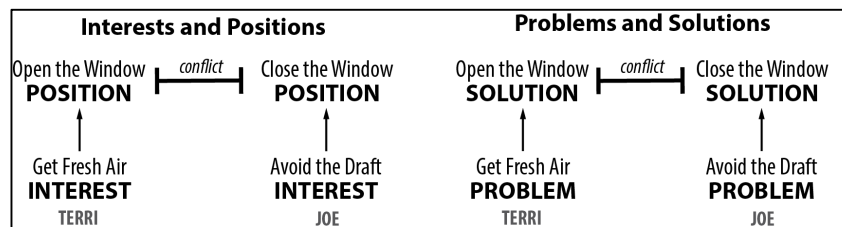


Figure 5. Interests are to Positions as Problems are to Solutions

While positions are like solutions to a problem, they tend to be *pre-emptive* solutions to problems that people are not even necessarily aware they have. As a result, in a dispute, it is first necessary to “bracket” or put aside initial positions and solutions, and instead identify the problems that each party is trying to solve. For any given problem, there are many possible solutions. The key to thinking about collaborative problem solving is to see that it is possible to create novel solutions to shared problem. If we negotiate from interests and problems rather than pre-emptive initial positions or solutions, we open up the possibility for “win-win” solutions – solutions that solve both problems simultaneously. This works because in many (but not all) disputes, although positions (or solutions) clash, underlying interests and problems that people are trying to solve may not.

Another way to think about the relation between interests and positions is in terms of goals and actions. In this sense, *interests* are to *positions* as *goals* are to *acts*:

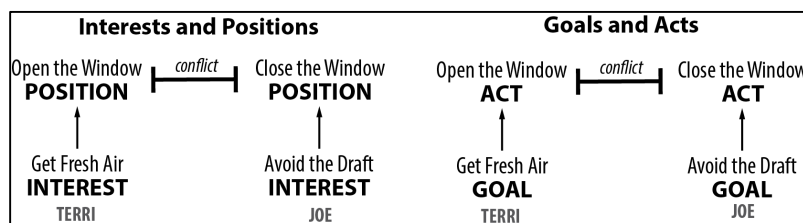


Figure 6. Interests are to Positions as Goals are to Actions

Here, the same logic applies. For any *goal*, there are many *acts* that will lead to the desired outcome. There are many ways to bring in fresh air, just as there are many ways to avoid a

drafty window. By focusing on interest and goals rather than positions and solutions, we open ourselves to finding new acts that can meet the goals of both partners in a dispute.

In many political disputes, participants are often unaware of the interests, needs and problems that motivate them to adopt the positions that they do. At the beginning of a discussion, a person's positions and interests tend to be undifferentiated; people confuse interests and positions all the time.

Table 1: Separating Political Positions from Underlying Interests and Needs

	Position	Interests, Needs, Fears and Concerns
1	Ban assault rifle.	I want to stop gun violence.
2	Make no laws prohibiting firearms.	I like to engage in target practice with rapid fire weapons.
3	Restrict immigrants from Mexico from entering the USA.	I am worried that immigrants will take American jobs and will require more government services.
4	Support immigrants from Mexico who want to enter the USA.	I feel for immigrants. I want immigrants to be able to build a better life in the USA. America needs hard working immigrants to perform many economic functions.
5	Transgender individuals should be allowed to use bathrooms consistent with their gender identity	I empathize with transgender individuals who seek to live their life as the gender that they experience as theirs. If I felt I were a different gender, I wouldn't want someone to tell me what bathroom to use.
6	Transgender individuals should be required to use bathrooms consistent with their biological sex.	I am uncomfortable using a bathroom with someone with opposite-sex genitals. am worried that trans females with male genitalia will take advantage of women and girls in women's bathrooms.
7	Extend universal healthcare for all citizens.	All people need healthcare, but many people don't have it. Healthcare is not something that individual people can fund.
8	Keep healthcare private.	I want to be able to choose my own physician and plan. I fear that universal healthcare programs will decrease the quality of my care.
9	Automobile companies should be required to make all cars meet rigorous fuel efficiency standards.	I want to find ways to reduce carbon emissions in order to save the planet.
10	People who can afford to buy luxury cars should be able to do so.	I don't want government to take away my freedom to live life as I choose.
11	Drugs should be decriminalized and the proceeds used for healthcare.	I want to save the lives of people who abuse drugs. I don't think punishment helps to stop people from abusing drugs.
12	Drugs should remain illegal.	I fear that if we legalize drugs, more people will take drugs and break the law.
13	Black lives matter.	I want to be respected and have my worth acknowledged.
14	Blue lives matter.	I want to be respected and have my worth acknowledged.

Many of the interests and motives that motivate political interests are deeply ideological in nature. Identifying and negotiating ideologically structured interests is a difficult process that will be discussed in Course II. However, not all political disputes are driven by deep-seated ideologies. And even ideological disputes can often be resolved by identifying basic non-ideological interests and needs that underlie political positions. Table 1 contains a list of some

sample political positions and the types of relatively non-ideological interests, needs and concerns upon which they can be based. motivate them. In this list, the interests, needs and concerns are largely non-ideological ones.

Just like in the non-political example of the dispute about the open window, in political disputes, interests are like problems and goals, while positions are like solutions or actions intended to reach a goal. This is how the analogies hold in a dispute about immigration:

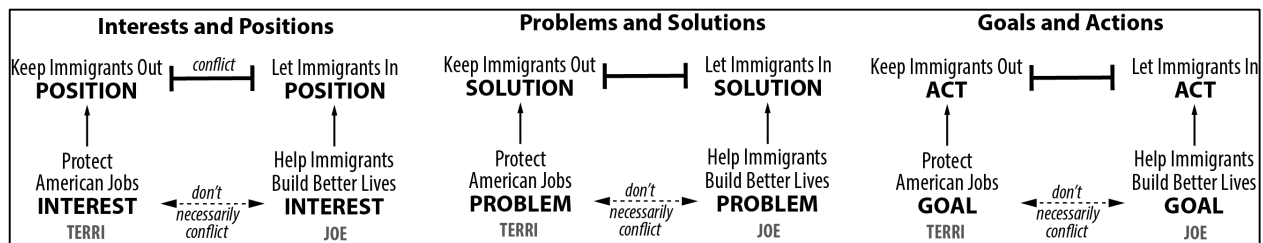


Figure 7. Interests = Problems = Goals AND Positions = Solutions = Acts

The task of identifying each party's interests and needs is a difficult one. It requires a different mindset from the ways in which we ordinarily engage in political discussion. Again, it is helpful to think of what we are doing in political dialogue not as a form of *convincing the other* or *defending the self*, but instead as a form of *shared problem-solving* – where the problem to be solved is that of finding new ways to meet each party's interests and unmet needs in ways that do not conflict with each other. This requires that we temporarily put aside our own issues long enough so that we can form a deep understanding of the human needs and interests that motivate each person in a political conversation.

The next sections describe a series of skills that help make this happen. These include *deliberate turn-taking* to manage the conversation, *identifying interests* and *empathic listening* in order to understand the other, and *using I-Statements* and descriptive statements in order to express the self.

Skill 4: Turn Taking (Seeking and Speaking Mode)

In political conversations involving sensitive topics, it is often helpful to establish clear ground rules about speaking and listening. Everyday conversation can be a free-for-all: people often interrupt each other, speak past each other, pursue different agendas, try to “call out” the other person, or engage in other strategies to dominate the conversation or win an argument. Genuine problem-solving conversations are different. They require that the Jaime is given the time to elaborate upon what he or she wants to say in detail, without being interrupted or judged negatively (even if the Todd is seething inside!). They require that the Todd attend very carefully to what the Jaime is saying in order to understand the Jaime. This requires taking the time to put aside one's own issues long enough so that the Todd can remember and even summarize what the Jaime is trying to communicate. This takes time and patience.

To make a political conversation work, it is often helpful to make a sharp distinction between being the *Jaime* and being the *Todd*. At any given point in time, any given social partner should operate in either *speaking mode* or *seeking mode* – but not both at the same time. This goes beyond any guideline against not interrupting. Instead, in the conversation, is helpful to devote longer stretches of time to allow one person to speak while the other person seeks (asks questions and listens).

Seeking Mode (Listening)

The goal of the seeker is to *seek to understand* the interests, feelings and beliefs (and, later on, ideologies) of the other. This is done by *asking questions* (Skill X), *empathically listening* to the without interrupting (Skill X) and then *summarizing* one's understanding of what the other person is saying and feeling (Skill X). The goal of the seeker is to *understand the Jaime* and *show* – until the *Jaime* is content -- that the seeker understands the Jaime.

In seeking mode, the dominant motives are *curiosity*, *credulity* and *compassion*. The goal of the seeker is NOT to try to gain information from the Jaime in order to formulate a counter-arguments, to trap the person, or to shoot down the other person's position. In fact, the goal of the seekers is to identify the Jaime's positions if and when they come up and *look past them*. The seeker's job is to ask questions to get beneath the Jaime's positions in order to identify the interests, needs and beliefs that motivate those positions. In this way, the seeker is *curious*.

It will often be the case that the Jaime will articulate beliefs, positions and interests that seem foreign, strange, or even nonsensical or *incredible* (not credible) to the seeker. This is where the value of *credulity* come in. Rather than dismissing the Jaime's statements as incredible, the seeker adopts a credulous stance – even if the seeker disagrees, he or she tries to understand how the Jaime's views make sense to him or her. Even in disagreement, we strive to see how the Jaime's statements are credible (at least to them) rather than incredible.

To do this, it is helpful to cultivate *compassion*. No matter how incredible a Jaime's views may seem to the seeker, it is important to remember that the Jaime – like you – comes by his or her views honestly. There are reasons why they adopt those views. It is helpful to try to cultivate an attitude that on the basis of their personal history, the Jaime – like you – is always *doing the best that they can* with the *resources* that they have available, in ways that make sense *to them*. Compassion involves trying to see the world from the view of the other, and for *you* to try to *feel* or imagine how *you* might feel if you believed what the Jaime believes. You need not agree with the other to have compassion; you merely have to imagine that you believed what the other believes.

And so, in seeking mode, it is NOT the job of the seeker to *judge* the Jaime's statements, to *defend* the self against what the Jaime is saying, to try to *counter* the Jaime, or to try to convince the other of the error of their ways. It is much harder: It is to seek and communicate your understanding of the other with curiosity, credulity and compassion.

Speaking (Self-Assertion)

While the seeker is seeking, the Jaime is speaking. The goal of the *Jaime* is to articulate his or her interests, concerns, feelings and beliefs about the issue at hand to the seeker. The goal of the Jaime is not to convince the Jaime, to defend him or herself against “the other side”, to counter the seeker or “the other side”, or to try to convince the seeker of the merits of the Jaime’s position. In fact, it is not to assert a position at all. The goal of the Jaime is to try to look beneath his or her positions in order to identify his or her core needs, interests and beliefs about the issue at hand. This is done through the use of *personal expressions* and *I-Statements* rather than attacks (See Skill X) and *concrete descriptions* of events rather than generalizations or “characterizations” (See Skill X).

Turn-Taking

The process is simple to state but more difficult to learn. In a problem-solving conversation, partners take turns being in Speaking and Seeking mode. First, decide who will be the Jaime and who will be the Todd. During this first segment, the seeker seeks while the Jaime speaks. The segment will be over when the Jaime is satisfied that he or she has been understood. Then, the Jaime and seeker switch roles: the Jaime becomes the seeker and the seeker becomes the Jaime. The conversation continues. Partners engage in as many seeker-Jaime exchanges as are necessary for both parties to agree that they have been adequately understood and that they have had the opportunity to articulate the full range of their interests, needs and concerns about the issue in question.

If, at any point in the process, a participant feels as though his or her needs and interests are not understood, or that additional interests and needs have come to mind, that person can pause the session and initiate a new round of self-assertion and empathic listening.

Skill 5: Asking Questions

The task of identifying interests is central the process of collaborative problem-solving. When a partner is in seeking mode, his or her core task is to try to identify interests, needs and feelings of the other. When a person is in speaking mode, their task is to try to identify their own interests, needs and feelings.

This is not easy. In a political dispute – as in all disputes – people in seeking mode will often find that their own interests and needs (including ego!) can get in the way. When the Jaime speaks, the seeker wants to counter! This gets in the way.

Something similar occurs within the Jaime. In political conversations, we are already expecting to be attacked and to have to defend our positions. It can be very difficult to learn to “let down one’s guard” – indeed, trust develops slowly – in order to stop defending one’s positions and

start looking beneath those positions to identify what really matters. We are often afraid that if we do that, we will be vulnerable, and the other will attack us.

Identifying Interests in Seeking Mode

Asking questions and listening closely are key processes in identifying the interests, needs and feelings of the other. In seeking mode, the key to identifying interests in the other is *attitudinal* in nature. It requires a shift in our orientation toward the other. Instead of trying to attack the other or defend the self, the goal is to understand the other. If the seeker can be genuinely *curious*, *credulous* and *compassionate*, the seeker cannot help but to ask the right questions for the right reasons.

The most useful tool for identifying interests are “wh” questions – and particularly “why”? To identify an interest, first look for the *position*. The position will usually be a stance, solution, a belief, a judgment, or a statement of what “should” happen. When you hear the other articulate a position, *look beyond it*. Then ask “wh” questions to try to identify the motive, value, pleas or unmet behind the position.

Table X identifies a series of “wh” questions for each of the positions described in Table Y (above). Note that the interests listed in the right column are the same as those indicated in Table Y. To identify interests, simply turn the position stated into a “wh” question that probes for the underlying motive.

Table 2: How “Wh” Questions Reveal Interests, Needs and Concerns

	Position	Interests, Needs, Fears and Concerns
1	Why do you want to ban assault rifles?	I want to stop gun violence.
2	Why do you want to ensure that there are no laws to prohibit assault rifles?	I like to engage in target practice with rapid fire weapons. I worry that there will be a slippery slope – that first it will be assault weapons, and then handguns.
3	Why do you want to restrict immigrants from Mexico from entering the USA?	I am worried that immigrants will take American jobs and will require more government services.
4	Why do you support allowing immigrants from Mexico to enter the USA?	I feel for immigrants. I want immigrants to be able to build a better life in the USA. America needs hard working immigrants to perform many economic functions.
5	What problem would be solved by allowing transgender individuals to use bathrooms consistent with their gender identity?	This would be the start of finding ways to help transgender individuals be able to live their life as the gender that they experience as theirs.
6	What problem would be solved in transgender individuals were required to use bathrooms consistent with their biological sex?	A lot of people are uncomfortable using a bathroom with someone with opposite-sex genitals. I am worried that trans females with male genitalia will take advantage of women and girls in women’s bathrooms.
7	How would extending universal healthcare to all citizens help?	All people need healthcare, but many people don’t have it. Healthcare is not something that people can pay for by themselves.

8	Why do you want to keep healthcare private?	I want to be able to choose my own physician and plan. I fear that universal healthcare programs will decrease the quality of my care.
9	What problem would be solved by having automobile companies should be required to make all cars meet rigorous fuel efficiency standards.	I want to find ways to reduce carbon emissions in order to save the planet.
10	Why do you think that people who can afford to do so should be able to buy luxury cars that get low gas mileage?	I don't want the government to take away my freedom to live life as I choose.
11	Why do you think drugs should be decriminalized.	I want to save the lives of people who abuse drugs. I don't think punishment helps to stop people from abusing drugs.
12	What do you think would happen if drugs were legalized or decriminalized?	I fear that if we legalize drugs, more people will take drugs and break the law.
13	What are the problems that motivate you to support the Black Lives Matter movement?	I want to raise awareness of how Blacks and other minorities are systematically discriminated against in society.
14	What are the problems that motivate you to support the Blue Lives Matter movement?	I want to police officers to be respected for the hard and difficult work that they do.

Note that the “wh” questions listed in the left column are not intended to prompt the Jaime to *justify* his or her position. The “wh” questions are *not* meant to try to *convince* or *change the other person's mind*. They are meant to try to understand and identify core interests, values and concerns. When you are asking “wh” questions, your job is to communicate to the Jaime that you genuinely want to understand his or her interests because you genuinely want to be able to meet those interests if possible. And you have to mean it! The key to being able to mean it (and not just say it) is seeing that when you are able to identify the deep interests of the other, they often *do not* conflict with your own deep interests. To the extent that they don't conflict with your core interests, there is no reason why you would not want to try to meet the core needs of the other person.

Don't believe me? Take a look at the interests listed in the right column of Table X. Again, note, these are *interests, needs, concerns, and desires* – they are not *justifications* for the positions listed on the left. Look past the positions – ignore them – and focus only on the interests. Regardless of your political orientation, ask yourself: Are there other ways to meet the interests, needs and concerns identified on the right other than the positions (solutions) indicated on the left? The positions are initial solutions to unarticulated problems. If we articulate the problems that people of different political orientations are trying to solve, it becomes possible to find alternative ways to solve them – ways that neither partner knows exist – because they don't exist yet. They need to be created.

Identifying Interests in Speaking Mode

Identifying one's own interests can also be quite difficult. We often do not know what the interests are that generate our positions. The questions posed by a good seeker can help a seeker reflect upon and identify the needs and concerns that motivate political positions. Even without good questions, the Jaime can identify interests through acts of reflection that are

similar to those described above. The Jaime simply asks him or herself the same questions that a good Jaime would ask:

- Why do I take this position?
- What problem am I trying to solve by adopting this position?
- If I didn't adopt this position, what do I fear would happen?
- What am I assuming would happen if I didn't adopt this position?
- What unmet needs and would be met if my position were carried out?

Skill 6: Empathic Listening (Seeking Understanding)

It may sound odd to think of empathic listening as an aspect of political communication. It is odd because of the way in which political discussion is set up. If you and I are enemies, I don't really care about what you think and feel – except to provide me with knowledge that I can use against you.

Empathic listening is the act of attend carefully to what your partner is trying to say in order to understand it, remember it, and have empathy for your partner. All of this can be done agreeing with your partner. It doesn't require that you modify anything about how you feel about the issue being discussed.

Empathic listening might seem easy, but it not. Quite often, when we are in a discussion, especially of a political nature, we listen just long enough to prepare for what we have to say. That's not genuine listening. Genuine listening is difficult because it is about the *other person*. It requires that we cultivate a sense of *deep curiosity* about the other person (even if we have to "fake it until we make it"). It is difficult because it requires that we *shut up*! It is difficult because it is our job to show the other person that we truly understand what he or she is saying. And the test of this is that we can repeat back what the person is saying to us *with understanding*.

And here's the kicker: It is not the Todd who gets to determine whether or not he or she understands what the Jaime is saying. That's up to the Jaime. The Jaime gets to determine whether or not he or she feels understood. And so, the Todd's job is pretty hard.

So, your goal is to understand the person's perspective on an issue in as deep a way as you can. Your goal is to figure out what really matters to the person, and how the issues at hand make sense to the other person – regardless of whether they "make sense" to you. Your goal is to attend carefully enough that you can repeat back your deep understanding of what your partner is saying to *his* or *her* satisfaction.

Here is how to engage in empathic listening.

1. **Ask and Listen.** Ask your partner about what you want to know. Listen carefully, without interrupting, in order to fully understand what your partner is saying. Monitor

your understanding; ask yourself, do I understand this from my partner's perspective? If not, *ask questions* to clarify your understanding as best as you can.

2. **Climb into Your Partner's Experience.** As your partner is speaking, try not only to understand what he or she is saying, but, by looking at the situation from your partner's point of view, try to understand how your partner feels in the situations that he or she describes. When this happens, even if we don't agree with the other person, we often feel a sense of compassion or empathy for the other.
3. **Put Your Issues Aside.** It is very likely that, if your partner is talking about a political issue, that you may feel as if you want to counter what the other person is saying. Remember, this part of the dialogue is not about asserting your positions, interests or feelings – it is about *understanding the other person*. So, it is important that when the feeling of wanting to counter your partner comes up, you resist this feeling. You can resist by doing one or more of the following.
 - Have a notepad. Take notes on what your partner is saying. If there is something you want to say in reply, write it down on in your notes. This will not only remind you of what you want to say, but it will also allow you to “get it out of your system” so that you can continue to listen with compassion and care.
 - Imagine that you have a little Reactions Box. When your partner says something that evokes a strong response or feeling, imagine putting your response in the box. Lock the box in a safe location so that you can take it out and let the feelings out later.
 - Cultivate compassion. Say to yourself: I don't have to agree with the other person in order to understand them. Ask yourself, “How would I feel if I thought the way they do?” Try to feel what your partner feels while imagining the issue from their point of view.
4. **Communicate Your Understanding and Empathy.** After your partner completes saying what he or she wants to say, or at other relevant points, repeat back what your partner has communicated. Your job is to *show that you understand* what your partner has said. Note the importance of the word *show*. The worst way to show that you understand is to say to the other person, “I understand what you are saying”. Simply telling the other person *that* you understand is insufficient. You might think you understand, but then, if asked, be unable to summarize what the other person said. Or, you might summarize it, but the other person may not feel that what you have said is accurate. Remember, it is the other person who is the judge of whether you understand them – not you. And so it is not sufficient to simply tell the person that you understand, you must show them by summarizing what they have communicated in a meaningful way. To do this, you can start out by saying something like:

“Let me see if I understand what you are saying.... “

“You are saying that...”
“Let me see if I have this right...”
“What you seem to be saying is...”

After you have completed, ask your partner to indicated if he or she feels that you are understanding him or her appropriately. You can say:

“Have I gotten that right? Does that sound about right?”
“Am I saying something that isn’t quite right?”
“Did I leave anything out?”
“Is there something that I’m missing?”
“Is there anything more you want to add?”

As you do, identify parts of your partner’s experience that involve strong feeling on his or her part. Show some degree of acknowledgement, sympathy or empathy with the person’s feelings. You can do this using phrases such as:

“If that happened to me, I would feel terrible”.
“It’s really hard when x occurs”;
“You must have felt really insulted when X happened”,
“that’s a terrible way to have to feel”

At first, you may feel quite strange in repeating back what the person has said. It may feel as if you sound like a machine or that the other person may feel that you are trying to manipulate or psychoanalyze him or her. These worries will pass quickly. People want to be understood. Part of the awkwardness of “summarizing what the other person has said” can be defrayed in you remind yourself that you are not so much “repeating back what the person said” as you are “showing the other person that you understand”. Those are two very different tasks. If you understand that I’m showing you that I understand, I realize I’m summarizing is for *your* benefit. This turns what might be a “memory task” into an act of empathy and connecting.

When a person feels as though he sounds like a machine, it is almost always because the person doesn’t *fully comprehend* what the other person has said. It can also mean that the person is trying so hard to remember that the summary sounds like a list being memorized by rote. Give yourself time. Learning to listen is hard. Your biggest challenge will be listening closely enough so that you can really remember what the person has said.

Skill 7: Using I-Statements (Self-Assertion Mode)

The purpose of a political conversation is to exchange views, identify needs and solve problems. For this to happen, people must be able to express their beliefs, opinions, needs, suggestions

and solutions. And so, skills for asserting the self are among the most important skills we can learn to prepare for political discussions.

As discussed throughout, typical political discussions are debates in which each side tries to advance their position at the expense of the other person. A debate is much like a battle. One person attacks, the other person defends. One person tries to shoot the other's argument down, while the other tries to dodge the attack, and so on.

In a debate, we often hear a lot of talk about **"you"** – about what *you* are saying that is wrong, about what *you* did that was wrong, how it is that *you* or *your side* has hurt people, how it is impossible to understand how *you* could adopt the positions that you do, and so forth. This is the language of attack and defense.

In a debate, attacks typically take the form of **blame** and **criticism** (if only you..., you're wrong when you say... that way of thinking only hurts people...). Attacks often take the form of **name calling** (e.g., "warmonger"; "selfish" or "greedy" Republicans; "looney" leftists; "social justice warriors", "fat cats", "wingnuts", and so forth).

In addition, in debates, people are quick to **characterize** or **diagnose** the other. When we "characterize" or "diagnose", we impose an interpretation or an explanation on the other that serves our purposes, but may not appropriately describe the other person. These can include statements such as "You left me out", "you cut off the conversation", "you are trying to avoid the situation", "you are doing that because you want power", "you are doing that because you are a socialist", etc.

None of these practices are typically very helpful. What happens when someone blames you for something that you feel is unjustified? Immediately, you become defensive. You retaliate with blame, criticism, and characterization of your own. The partner retaliates again, and the conflict escalates. There is no chance to create common ground when people are attacking each other. Attacks are meant to destroy the other, not create new ways of relating.

And so, a **cardinal principle** of political problem-solving is that when we have the floor – when we are expressing ourselves – it is important to **avoid blame, criticism, characterizing and diagnosing**. Sometimes, such statements are called "You-Statements". A "You-Statement" is a statement that blames, criticizes or characterizes the other person in some way. It usually but not always begins with the pronoun "you" – as in:

You Republicans only want to get rich.
You Democrats want to give everything away for free.
You Republicans don't care about people who are killed by guns.
You Democrats want to take away our rights.
You socialists want the government to run all of our businesses.
You never let me speak.
You have crazy ideas.

But You-Statements do not have to begin with “you”. All they have to do is insult, characterize, blame or criticism.

Personal Expressions and “I-Statements”

Now, you might ask: How are we going to have a conversation if I can’t criticize my opponent? Isn’t that the point? To show where my opponent’s thinking is wrong? To try to convince my opponent that there is a better way? Am I supposed to just be nice to my opponent? Are you saying that I shouldn’t stand up for myself? That I shouldn’t be honest about what I think and feel?

The answer is, “No – as a rule, you should try *not* to criticize your opponent or their position” (exceptions apply – see this sentence, for example.) But no, political problem solving is not about being nice. (It’s neither about being “nice” or “mean”.) It is also not about “not standing your ground”, being dishonest or not stating how you feel. In fact, it is precisely the opposite of not standing your ground, being dishonest or not stating how you think or feel. It is precisely about asserting your interests, thoughts, feelings, unmet needs, and concerns. But it’s about asserting ***your own*** interests, thoughts, feelings, unmet needs and concerns. It is simply **not** about ***attacking your opponent’s*** positions, interests, or ways of thinking.

Table 3: Blame versus Personal Expressions (I-Statements) in Non-Political Situations

	Blame, Criticism, Accusation, Characterization	Personal Expression I Statement
1	You never listen to what I have to say! (<i>Criticism</i>)	I’m feeling as if I’m not being heard right now.
2	Whenever I have a problem, you try to fix it. Why can’t you just listen? (<i>Criticism, Characterizing</i>)	When I have a problem, I just need to know you hear me and that you care. I don’t want to have the problem solved for me.
3	Whenever I have a problem, you give me pity so that I don’t feel bad. That doesn’t help me fix the problem. (<i>Criticism, Characterizing</i>)	When I have a problem, although I appreciate your sympathy, I really need help in trying to solve it.
4	You left the dishes in the sink again. Why do I always have to nag you to get you to do the dishes? (<i>Blame, Criticism</i>)	When I come home and see the dishes in the sink, I feel frustrated and hurt. I need some acknowledgment of how hard I work all day.
5	You bounced another check? (<i>Blame, Criticism</i>)	Honey, I saw that the checking account is overdrawn. What can we do to make sure that there is enough money in the account?
6	How can I sleep when I have to listen to your stupid music? (<i>Criticism, characterization</i>)	Honey, I’m really tired. It’s hard for me to sleep when I hear music.
7	You are so needy! You’re smothering me! You’re the reason I’m so anxious all the time! (<i>Characterization, Criticism, Blame</i>)	I really want to be able to help you right now, but I need a little time and space for myself.
8	You are so selfish. Why can’t we go where I want to go for once? (<i>Characterization, Criticism</i>)	Last week, we went to Burger King like you wanted. This week, I want to go someplace that I would enjoy.

Personal expressions (I-Statements) are statements that express something about the self – that is, about how the self *feels*, what the self *needs* or what the self *thinks*. Personal expressions reveal something about the *self*, and not about the *other*.

Table 3 provides some examples of the use of non-blaming personal expressions in a non-political context. In each statement on the left, one person *blamed, criticized, or characterized* (classified the other person or his or her action using some negative category --- e.g., you are so *needy*; you're *smothering* me).

The statements on the right express how the person is feeling, what the person is thinking, or what the person needs – without blaming, criticizing or characterizing the other person. Each personal statement expresses how the *Jaime is affected* by the situation without suggesting that the other person is necessarily the cause of those feelings.

Table 4 shows some You-Statements that are disguised as “I-Statements”. They may start or use the term “I”, but they nonetheless blame, criticize and characterize the other person.

Table 4: “You-Statements” Disguised as “I-Statements”

	Blame, Criticism, Accusation, Characterization	Personal Expression I Statement
1	You never listen to what I have to say!	I think you never listen to what I have to say!
2	Whenever I have a problem, you try to fix it. Why can't you just listen?	Whenever I have a problem, I feel that you try to fix it. Why can't you just listen?
3	Whenever I have a problem, you give me pity so that I don't feel bad. That doesn't help me fix the problem.	Whenever I have a problem, I don't think you are helping when you just you give me pity.
4	You left the dishes in the sink again. Why do I always have to nag you to get you to do the dishes?	You left the dishes in the sink again. Why do I always have to nag you to get you to do the dishes?
5	You bounced another check?	I can't stand it that you bounced another check!
6	How can I sleep when I have to listen to your stupid music?	How can I sleep when I have to listen to your stupid music?
7	You are so needy! You're smothering me! You're the reason I'm so anxious all the time!	I think you are so needy! I feel you're smothering me! I feel that you're the reason I'm so anxious all the time!
8	You are so selfish. Why can't we go where I want to go for once?	I think you are so selfish. Why can't we go where I want to go for once?

You can't fix a you statement by putting an “I feel” or an “I think” in front of it. An I-Statement must make contact with what is vital and alive in you in ways that are **distinct** from the actions of the other person. Even though the other person is involved, personal expressions give the other person “the benefit of the doubt” (even when there may be no doubt!) by simply referring to the self's needs and feelings. This has the effect of putting the self's needs “on the table”. When this happens, the task becomes a *collaborative* one of figure out how to meet the self's needs rather than defending oneself against accusation.

Table 5 shows ways to *transform* “You-Statements” into “I-Statements” in a political context. Each “You-Statement” in the left column is an actual comment posted by readers in response to an actual political blog.

Table 5: You-Statement and I-Statements in Political Discussions

	Blame, Criticism, Accusation, Characterization	Personal Expression (I Statement)
1	Can you actually take a look at how liberals act? Their attitude has been around a lot longer than Trump.	As a citizen, I have a need to be treated with respect. I often feel talked down to by liberals, as if I were seen as somehow inferior.
2	Could you at least show a little balance? Or at least pretend?	I see that most of this article seems to say negative things about Republicans.
3	I don't care who you vote for, but at least be a little less proselytizing.	I feel pushed away by these comments. They seem to be telling me what I should do rather than attempting to engage me in a conversation.
5	[Racism/Sexism] Democrats created the Office of Women's Health, but ignored men's health, despite the shorter average male life expectancy, and the four-times-greater male suicide rate.	Democrats voted in greater numbers than Republicans to create the Office of Women's Health. However, men have health problems too, such as a shorter average male life expectancy and higher male suicide rate.
7	[Transgender Issues] I agree. Preferred pronouns require me to lie. I can clock men who dress in female stereotypes. They're sex liars. Why should I be compelled to lie about their sex?	I feel that transgender people retain their biological sex. As a result, I feel that if I'm asked to use preferred pronouns that, I'm being required to lie. I do not feel it is fair to be compelled to lie about what I take to be a person's genuine biological sex.
8	[Transgender Issues] All are sick psychopath deviants in womanface. Gender must be fought and abolished. It's a money-making scheme for Big Pharma and it's the Lobotomizing of the sexuality of the next generation for profit.	I find it difficult to understand transgenderism. For me, there are two sexes – male and female. From my point of view, transgenderism is not normal. It goes against nature.
9	[Transgender Issue] It is beyond the pale that prisoners are getting tax payer funded fetish gear and cosmetic surgeries.	I don't want my tax money to be spent for prisoners who are having what I take to be non-medical surgery.
10	[Transgender Issues] Wow that's even sicker than pushing minors who don't fit the gender stereotypes or have normal issues with their body during puberty into thinking they're trans and give them hormones.	I worry about that practice even more than I do allowing minors to have life-altering surgeries. If they had to wait, many minors might change their minds about the surgery – but by then it would be too late.
11	[White Privilege] Why don't you lecture us again about privilege while your comrades reach for our wallets? Apparently, 22 trillion burnt up in a failed war on poverty wasn't enough. Anti-White frauds will be outed.	During the 1960's the Great Society program cost the US a great deal of money. Many people believe those social programs were a failure. I want to ensure that our money is well spent on programs that would actually work.

Skill 8: Describing versus Characterizing (Self-Assertion Mode)

As stated above, personal expressions avoid *characterizing* the other person or the other person's actions. These concepts can perhaps be a bit difficult to understand. *Characterizing* consist of making generalizations or interpretation of the other person or of the other person's behavior. The left column of Table 6 provides some examples of statements that characterize or make generalizations about the other.

Characterizations, generalizations, stereotypes, diagnoses and other such statements are used frequently in political discussions. They are strategies that function to sway a listening in one or another direction by trying to classify a person or a person's behavior as an instance of a general category or trend. If I can classify someone into a favored category, that person's behavior *in general* might be seen as favorable; if I can classify someone's behavior into a negative category, that person's behavior *in general* might be seen as unfavorable.

There are many problems with characterizations. First, characterizations and generalizations often have the effect of distorting the other person's behavior or character for political gain. They are designed for the purposes of winning an argument. As a result, they detract from the process of genuine problem-solving. Second, negative characterizations are insulting and demeaning, and thus immediately cause the other party to become defensive.

Table 6: Characterizations and Generalizations versus Concrete Descriptions

	Characterization	Concrete Description
1	Republicans <i>don't care</i> about the poor.	50 Republican Senators voted to cut funding for food stamps.
2	Democrats want to <i>give away other people's money</i> .	50 Democratic Senators voted for higher taxes on people earning more than \$100,000/year.
3	Poor people <i>waste</i> their government checks.	Last week, I gave money to a person who said she needed it for her children, but then I watch her buy cigarettes with it.
4	You're being <i>politically correct</i> !	When you say "the US is a racist nation", I feel ...
5	Immigrants are <i>rapists</i> and <i>thieves</i> .	"[R]oughly 1.6 percent of immigrant males 18-39 are incarcerated, compared to 3.3 percent of the native-born.
6	Democrats want <i>open borders</i> .	Yesterday, Congress voted 235-227 along party lines to fund more immigrant processing agents at the Mexican border
7	Libertarians are selfish.	The libertarian party platform states that "all individuals are sovereign over their own lives and are not forced to sacrifice their values for the benefit of others"
8	They want to <i>take your freedom away</i> .	78% of Democrats support a ban on high capacity ammunition clips with more than 10 bullets, while only 43% of Republicans do.
9	White men want to <i>preserve the patriarchy</i> .	In a survey (reference), 32% of collegiate men said they would act on "intentions to force a woman to sexual intercourse" if they could get away with it.

Third, in a political discussion, characterizations can be *refuted*. Using characterizations, if I say that you *don't care about the poor* or *you want to give away other people's money, because they are generalizations*, these assertions are easily refuted by the other party. All the person has to do is to provide a single counter-example of the generalization, and the generalization is refuted. In this way, characterizations fail to advance a Jaime's agenda.

When referring to the unwanted behavior of another person, one can avoid using characterizations by replacing them with *concrete descriptions of actual behavior*. Unlike characterizations and generalization, concrete descriptions of actual behavior are (a) less charged with judgment and evaluation and therefore are (b) less likely to produce

defensiveness in the other. More important, they are (c) more difficult to *refute* and (d) more likely to foster discussion that *clarifies* the issues at hand.

For example, the statement, “Democrats want open borders” is a *characterization*. As a generalization, it is refuted. One can refute this in many ways. One can ask the Jaime to define the concept of an “open border”. Regardless of the definition provided, the target of the attack can identify many Democrats who don’t approve of “open borders” defined in that way. Thus, in a political conversation, the statement that Democrats want open borders is immediately discredited.

Instead of making such a generalization, when referring to the actions of the other, it is more helpful to *describe concrete actions*. One can say, for example, last week, Democrat Sandra P. Congressperson made a speech where she said that “undocumented immigrants should be entitled to health care” or that “Yesterday, Congress voted 235-227 along party lines to fund more immigrant processing agents at the Mexican border.” These are concrete descriptions. Instead of characterizing events in generalities, they describe particular events that actually happened.

Concrete descriptions of the behavior of others thus direct the conversation toward actual events that (a) cannot be simply dismissed. Mere descriptions help to defray judgment, thus (b) decreasing the likelihood that one’s partner will become defensive. Mere descriptions, (c) give the other person the opportunity to explain the reasons, interests that motivated their actions. As a result, instead of fostering defensiveness and counter-attacks, *describing* rather than *characterizing* the actions of the other is more likely to generate mutual understanding and problem-solving rather attacks and counter-attacks.

Rules of Engagement for Political Conversations

- **Respect your Partner’s Dignity.** At all times, seek to honor and respect the dignity of the other. Try to honor dignity, act with civility and cultivate compassion for your both yourself and your partner.
- **Alternate Between Listening Mode and Speaking Mode.** Often, political discussion function like debates: we listen to the other just well enough to be able to formulate some way to counter what the other has said. In collaborative problem solving, it is better to separate the speaking and listening roles of participants. Divide the conversation in separate segments. In the first segment, one person is the Jaime and the other the Todd. The Jaime speaks without being interrupted. The Todd listens until he or she is able to summarize what the Jaime says with deep understanding. Then the roles shift. The Jaime becomes the Todd and vice-versa. The back-and-forth continues until both partners agree that they have been appropriately understood by the other.
- **Seek to Understand Your Partners Interests Using “Why” Questions.** To find out your partner’s interests and concerns, try to find out “why” the person adopts the positions they do. Ask, “why do you feel that way?” “What problem are you trying to solve?” “Why do you think that would work?”
- **Adopt a Credulous and Empathic Stance.** Instead of thinking of your partner has having bad intentions or motives, try to remember that what your partner is saying *makes sense to them*, even if it doesn’t make sense to you. You don’t have to agree to try to understand how the situation makes sense to the other person

- **Avoid Blame by Using Personal Expressions.** With exceptions, in situations of disagreement, Jaimes should express their thoughts and feelings using personal expressions and I-Statements rather than by blaming, criticizing or characterizing the other.
- **Address – Don’t Avoid -- Bad Feelings.** If bad feelings arise (e.g., anger, hurt, offense), do not deny or suppress them. Instead, find a way to deal with them constructively. This can be done in many ways including expressing them verbally without blame, engaging in explicit calming activities, taking a break, or redoubling your efforts to be compassionate toward your partner.

Example of Step 2: Identifying Interests

Mediator: Okay, let’s start our discussion of the issue. The issue here relates to the issue of food insecurity and how to solve the problem of *food insecurity*. The first step to solving a problem, however, is to define the problem as clearly as we can. We need to get a clear sense of how each of you sees the problem of food insecurity, and even if you see it as a problem at all. Once we define the problem clearly, our goal is to create and agree upon a solution to the problem of food security as the two of you will come to define it.

We are trying to define the problem not in terms of political positions, but instead in terms of your interests, goals, concerns and unmet needs related to the issue of food insecurity. Our goal in this particular conversation is to seek to understand each person’s interests and needs; the problem will become one of finding ways to solve the problem of meeting each of your concerns about food insecurity at the same time.

Remember our **rules of engagement**:

- Respect your Partner’s Dignity.
- Alternate Between Listening Mode and Speaking Mode.
- Seek to Understand Your Partners Interests Using “Why” Questions.
- Adopt a Credulous and Empathic Stance.
- Avoid Blame by Using Personal Expressions.
- Address – Don’t Avoid -- Bad Feelings.

If at any point you have a question or concern about the process in which we are engaged, please stop us so we can discuss it and resolve it.

Any questions? Okay, let’s begin.

Step 2a: Identifying Jaime’s Interests

	Dialogue	Explanation
	<p>Mediator: Okay, we flipped a coin and determined that we will start by seeking to understand Jaime’s interests, needs and concerns regarding the problem of food insecurity. Jaime, you’re your point of view, what is the problem of food insecurity? What is the problem that must be solved?</p>	<p>Mediator uses a random or agreed-upon process to decide you is listener and speaker. Mediator identifies the particular task before the group in a clear way.</p>

	Todd, please listen carefully so that you can show Jaime that you understand what she is trying to communicate.	
	Jaime: Well, I think that the problem is pretty obvious. People are hungry in America, and we want to make sure that no one has to go hungry.	Jaime's main response is in the form of an I-Statement, but "the problem is pretty obvious" risks being seen as demeaning to the other.
	Mediator: Thank you. This is helpful. Remember that sometimes things that are so clear and obvious to one person may not be obvious to others.	Mediator reminds Jaime to be mindful of the potential for her words to be seen as expressing negative judgment.
	Other (Todd or Mediator): So, would it be fair to say that you have an interest or need to ensure that people <i>do not go hungry</i> ?	Other asks question to try to summarize and further understand Jaime's interests.
	Jaime: Yes, that's right.	Jaime verifies Other's understanding.
	Other: Can you tell me just what you mean by hungry? I mean, from your perspective, how would we know whether someone is hungry?	For purposes of clarity, other seeks genuine understanding of what it means to Jaime to be "hungry".
	Jaime: If they have enough to eat.	Jaime's response may be clear to her, but is not necessarily clear to the Other.
	Other: Okay, so you want people to be able to have enough to eat. Now, this may seem obvious. I'm trying to understand what "hungry" and "enough to eat" mean. By hungry, do you mean having basic nutrition – like meeting basic calorie needs? Does "having enough to eat" mean that people have enough of any type of food they want?	Other seeks further understanding of Jaime's sense of what it means to be "hungry". He is genuinely seeking to understand what would and would not constitute an instance of "hunger" or "food insecurity".
	Jaime: I'm feeling attacked her. Why would you want to limit what people can eat? What difference does it make what the food is? Rich people can eat whatever they want. Why should poor people be restricted?	Jaime feels that Other is attacking her and implying that he is trying to limit what it means to be "hungry". She adopts a combative or defensive stance.
	Mediator: Good use of an I-Statement Jaime. You are feeling attacked and so naturally feel as if you want to defend yourself. Todd, can you clarify your intentions?	The mediator reminds Todd that it is his responsibility to show that he is motivated by curiosity and not a desire to trap Jaime or advance his position.
	Other: I'm sorry if I was clumsy. I'm not trying to criticize – I'm really trying to understand what enough food means from your perspective. What, in your mind, is "enough to eat".	Other responds with clear reassurance about his motives, and asks a question designed to seek clarification.
	Jaime: Enough food to eat means having good nutritious food for at least three meals per day. It means being able to get good nutritious food at affordable prices without having to go long distances to get it.	Jaime responds by describing in concrete terms what she takes to be a clear definition of an adequate diet.
	Todd: Okay, so let me see if I've got this. You have an interest to ensure that poor people have access to good, nutritious, affordable food for at least three meals per day, and that they do not have to travel long distances to get it.	Todd summarizes his understanding.
	Jaime: Well, yeah, poor people, but not just poor people – all people.	Jaime verifies Todd's understanding, but clarifies it further.

Todd: Okay, you want all people to have access to good nutritious and affordable food – but particularly poor people because they have a harder time getting food. Would that be right?	Todd re-summarizes his understanding.
Jaime: Yes. That's it.	Jaime verifies Todd's understanding.
Todd: I see that you care deeply about the problems of the poor, and you want to do what you can to help.	Todd responds empathically to Jaime's expressed interests and feelings.

Step 2b: Identifying Todd's Interests

Dialogue	Explanation
Mediator: Okay, that's great. It looks like we have a good initial understanding of Jaime's interests. Now, let's turn to you, Todd. Can you answer the same question as Jaime did? From your point of view, what is the problem of food insecurity? What is the problem that must be solved? Jaime, please listen carefully so that you can show Todd you understand what she is trying to communicate.	Having articulated a sense of Jaime's interests, the participants switch roles.
Todd: As I said before, I have some trouble with the idea of "food insecurity". It seems like a dishonest term. I don't think there are a really lot of people in the US who "go hungry". And so, people shift to talking about "insecurity".	Todd starts off expressing his feelings using an I-Statement, but it quickly turns into a You-Statement "It seems like a dishonest term". He seems to be attributing manipulative motives to those who use the term.
Other (Mediator or Jaime): Okay, so you feel that "food insecurity" is a kind of "term" that is made up by people. I'm curious about why you think people would make up that term? In your mind, what would they be trying to hide?	Other ignores the potentially critical aspect of Todd's statement, and asks a question designed to identify Todd's perspective more deeply.
Todd: Yeah don't trust this kind of talk. It feels like an excuse to give money to poor people rather than requiring them to earn the money.	Todd again expresses his sentiments in what seems to be an I-Statement ("I don't trust"), but there remains a possible sense of blame that could distract the dyad from a focus on interest and needs rather than positions.
Other: Are you saying that you are trying to avoid having the government give money to people who could otherwise earn it? So, what would be your interest, need or concern in this situation?	Other seeks to reframe the issue in terms of what Todd wants (interests) rather than in terms of the negative motives of others.
Todd: I don't want the government to waste taxpayer money. And I don't want people to become dependent on government money. I worry that the more the government gives people money, the less incentive people will have to go out and work and make money by themselves.	Todd uses I-Statements to express his interests more clearly.
Other: So, would it be fair to say that you have a need to keep government spending to a minimum, to ensure that people who can work actually do work to gain money for food, and to have people who are able to work to assume responsibility for earning a living?	Other summarizes her understanding of Todd's interests.
Todd: Yes, that sounds right.	Todd verifies Other's understanding.

Other: Do you have any other interest, concerns or unmet needs that you can think of that relate to food stamp programs?	Other seeks to establish if there is more that Todd wants to say.
Todd: Not that I can think of right now.	Todd indicates that there is not, but keeps open the possibility that new interests may arise as the discussion proceeds.
Todd, Jaime or Mediator: So, it seems that we have a series of clear interests on the table. They are as follows:	The group turns its attention to the task of summarizing the all of the interests that have been articulated at the same time:

Jaime's Interests	Todd's Interests
Desire that all people should be have access to a sufficient amount of food to be healthy and productive	Ensure that tax payer money is not wasted.
Food should be nutritious.	Ensure that government programs are not abused.
Food should be affordable.	Promote initiative and self-reliance among people.
Food should be available locally.	Ensure that people work and earn what they get from the government, at least as much as they are able.

Note that the interests described above may not be exhaustive or definitive. Instead, they are stated in ways that each partner can agree upon. There may be nuances of meaning that are not represented in the interests – sentiments that are being “bracketed” or held in abeyance for the present, and which might be addressable in the future. For example, Todd expressed an interest to promote a sense of self-reliance and initiative among the poor. This statement could be interpreted to mean that the poor lack initiative or a work ethic. Representing Todd’s interest as a desire to “promote initiative and self-reliance among people” – rather than among poor people – is silent with regard to the ideological question of the extent to which poor people have or do not have a work ethic. As Todd and Jaime can agree upon the need for all people to show some sense of initiative and self-reliance, to speak of “people” rather than “poor people” allows the discussion to move forward in a constructive, problem-solving way. It is important to note that the goal here is not to avoid, hide or pretend that there is no disagreement on the issue of the work ethic of the poor. Instead, it is to seek ways to reconcile more accessible needs and interests before taking on more difficult ideological concerns.

Having articulated a basic understanding of Jaime and Todd’s interests, the next step is to clarify those interests by ensuring that bot Jaime and Todd understand them in similar ways. To the extent that there is difference in the way they understand each other’s interests and needs, it is important to seek clarification through further discussion. This allows Jaime and Todd to develop some agreement on the nature and meaning of the interests that they are both agreeing to try to address.

Step 2c: Clarifying Jaime and Todd's Interests in Relation to Each Other

	Dialogue	Explanation
	Mediator: Todd, let see if you agree with or are willing to try to meet Jaime's concerns here. I'm just talking in principle here. We are not talking about <i>solutions</i> to these problems – we are only talking about the problems, concerns and interests themselves. Do you share Jaime's desire that all people should be have access to a sufficient amount of food to be healthy and productive?	Mediator initiates clarification process, reminding the participants that they are not yet focused on solutions to problems, and that they are simply seeking to ensure that they are understanding each other's problems and needs in compatible ways.
	Todd: Of course, who wouldn't? It just that I don't think that the government should necessarily have to redistribute money for this to happen.	Todd agrees that he is committed to addressing Jaime's interests as the mediator has represented them – but then also offers a political <i>position</i> as a way to identify the limits of his agreement.
	Mediator: I see. Remember Todd – we aren't talking about solutions here – independent of whether or not it's the government's job to solve the problem, do you want all people to have access to a sufficient amount of food to be healthy and productive.	The mediator reminds Todd that the discussion currently only focused on <i>interests</i> and not <i>solutions</i> , and seeks to reframe Todd's <i>position</i> in the form of an I-Statement about <i>interests</i> in a way agreeable to both Jaime and Todd.
	Todd: Like I said, yes. Of course.	Todd agrees.
	Mediator: Great. So, we agree on this very basic and important interest. That's important! Let's see what else we agree upon. Do we embrace the goals of finding ways to ensure that all people, and especially people of limited means, have food that is <i>nutritious, affordable and locally available</i> ?	Having stated the interests that Jaime and Todd have agreed to, the mediator goes on to ensure that both parties understand and agree on pursuing other interests that have been discussed.
	Todd: Yes.	Todd agrees with this characterization of Jaime's interests, and affirms his desire to seek to meet them.
	Mediator: Jaime, what about Todd's interests here? Do you agree that it is important to ensure that tax payer money is not wasted and that programs are not abused.	Mediator seeks to establish Jaime's understanding and commitment to interests that Todd has raised.
	Jaime: Of course, we should not waste tax payer's money. Programs should not be abused. But we should make sure that <i>programs are adequately funded</i> . People shouldn't abuse programs, but the programs have to be able to <i>meet people's needs</i> .	Jaime agrees with Todd's interest, but, like Todd did before, adds position to identify the nature of her agreement.
	Mediator: Assuming that people can agree upon adequate funding to meet people's needs, can you embrace to goal of seeking ways to ensure that taxpayer money is not be wasted or abused?	The mediator seeks to transform Jaime's statement of position into a statement of interest.
	Jaime: Yes, of course.	Jaime concurs.
	Mediator: Todd, you've said that you want to avoid waste in government in general. Can you embrace the goal of ensuring that taxpayer money is not wasted and abused when it comes to <i>agreed-upon government programs</i> ?	The mediator detects a possible need for clarification. Todd seeks to avoid waste in government, but hasn't spoken specifically of government programs. The mediator seeks to establish whether Todd sees a need for

		government programs to address the issues at hand.
	Todd: Well, I'm not crazy about government programs in general – but as long as they exist and are agreed upon, avoiding waste should be a priority – it shouldn't just be given lip service.	The mediator's intuition is borne out – Todd has some trepidation about government programs, but, assuming that such programs exist, believes that they should avoid waste.
	Mediator: Jaime: should eliminating waste be a high priority in running government programs?	Mediator seeks to establish whether Jaime is committed to eliminating such waste.
	Jaime: As long as they are adequately funded, yes, it should be a priority.	Jaime concurs – but implies communicates her interest in ensuring that eliminating waste should not come at the expense of meeting needs.
	Mediator: let's move on to the goal of seeking to promote initiative and self-reliance. Jaime, do you agree with the goal of promoting self-reliance and initiative when it comes to the issue of food insecurity?	At this point, the issues become a bit more difficult. Todd expressed the need to promote initiative and self-reliance. These are ideological concepts that have the potential to generate strong disagreement that could get in the way of more basic progress in meeting the other interests that have been agreed upon.
	Jaime: I think it is disgusting to imply that poor people have no initiative. Poor people aren't self-reliant because they don't have money; they don't not have money because they are not self-reliant.	Using a You-Statement, Jaime advances a position in opposition to the implication that the poor do not have a sense of self-reliance.
	Moderator: Jaime, I see you feel that it is insulting to poor people to suggest that they are dependent and not self-reliant. But I wonder whether we have to believe that the poor are or are not self-reliant or dependent to answer the broader question. I would like to reframe the question: Do you value <i>self-reliance</i> and <i>initiative</i> in general, among all people, when it comes to issues related to food insecurity?	The mediator acknowledges Jaime's feelings. There are many ways to address the ideological conflict that is emerging. One way is to seek agreement to address that issue later, and eliminate it from the interests under discussion. Another is to see if both can agree upon the need to promote self-reliance and initiative in all people, rather than simply the poor.
	Jaime: Well, in the abstract, of course. But what does <i>self-reliance</i> mean? A person who doesn't have a job can't be self-reliant. If they can't afford food, how are they going to be self-reliant?	Jaime agrees, but worries about the unstated implications of the term "self-reliance". She worries that the term "self-reliant" can be used to punish people for not being able to find employment.
	Todd: I have no problem helping people who are truly needy. The question is, what defines needy? If someone is not able bodied, has special needs or other special circumstances, we have to take care of them. It's people who can work but don't that I have problems with.	Todd's reply helps to clarify what it is that he seeks. He sees a need to help the truly needy, but wants to ensure that people who can work for their needs do so.
	Jaime: So, do you believe that there are people who are truly in need that should be helped?	Jaime switches to seeking mode, and seeks to clarify her understanding of Todd's interest.
	Todd: Yes. I'm not sure that there are as many as liberals might say there are. But yes.	Todd verifies Jaime's understanding, but again, offers a <i>position</i> that limits his agreement.
	Jaime: Okay, so how about we say that people should be expected to <i>work</i> for what they need <i>to the extent that people are able</i> ?	Jaime ignores any desire to counter Todd's position, and instead continues to engage Todd in seeking mode. She offers a way of representing Todd's interests that she thinks might be acceptable to both Todd and herself.

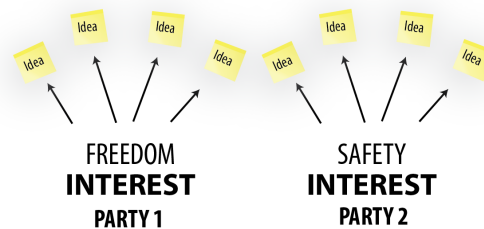
	Todd: I agree with that, but the devil is in the details. How can we know the extent to which anyone is able to work?	Again, Todd agrees, but limits the level of his agreement.
	Mediator: Is it possible for us to bracket that question and agree on the basic interests? That is, can we agree that we <i>want people to work for the needs to the best of their abilities</i> without solving the problem of how to determine people's capacity to work? We could address that problem later.	At this point, the mediator seeks to separate the ideological question from more basic questions about Jaime's and Todd's interests.
	Todd: The details are important, but yes.	Todd agrees.
	Jaime: Yes.	Jaime agrees.

At this point, the moderator (or any of the participants) would seek to summarize their shared conception of the interests and needs that they will seek to address collaboratively as the discussion ensues.

Moderator: So, it seems that we have agreed upon the following goals and interests:

Ensure Sufficient Food	Make Programs Efficient Avoid Abuse and Promote Initiative
Desire that all people should be have access to a sufficient amount of nutritious , affordable and locally available food.	Ensure that tax payer money is not wasted and programs are not abused by people who can work but do not.

CHAPTER 3: BRAINSTORMING SOLUTIONS



Once each party's interests and needs have been articulated and put on the table, the next step in political problem-solving is to begin to brainstorm ideas that hold out the promise of meeting the core interests of all parties as best as possible.

At this point, hopefully, each party is beginning to feel – at least a bit – less threatened by the other. Each is likely to have gained a degree of trust that others in the discussion understand that seeking to meet the non-conflicting interests of the other party neither means giving up on one's own interests and needs nor giving in to the other party. It is possible – often but not always – to meet the genuine needs of each party in ways that no one has yet thought of before.

Skill 9: Generating Possible Solutions

The goal of this step is not yet to propose definitive solutions to the problem of meeting the various needs of constituents. Instead, it is merely to explore *possibilities*. The key to success in this step is to explore as many possibilities as you can (including impossibilities – solutions that seem impossible when first considered!) while putting aside (only for now) judgments about whether possible solutions are good or bad. The goal of this step is simply to collaboratively generate as many possible solutions as you can. And then, when you think you have exhausted all possible solutions, to generate some more.

We can think of possible solutions to a problem as falling into three basic categories: The *good*, the *bad* and the *ugly*. When we set out to generate possible solutions, we are likely to think that we should restrict our ideas merely to the “good” solutions category. But this would be a mistake. Doing so tends to put limits on the types of solutions that people offer. The danger of seeking to generate only “good” solutions is that, unless we really understand the full depth and range of both our own and our partner's interests, we are likely to put limits on our brainstorming. To think of only generating “good” solutions increases the likelihood that people will seek safe solutions – solutions that they are confident will already be “good ones”, solutions that are only “good for me”, or perhaps solutions that they believe the other side will not object to.

There are good reasons to allow all possible solutions to come forth at this step. These are:

- **Good ideas lead to other good ideas.** Each *good* idea is likely to stimulate other good ideas from all constituents. Good ideas lead to other good ideas. Together, many good ideas can suggest new and more powerful ways of addressing shared problems.
- **“Bad” ideas are often good ideas in disguise.** Quite often, we are afraid to nominate possible ideas because we think that they are bad, will not be acceptable to others, or will make us look somehow stupid or incapable. However, such so-called “bad” ideas are often good ideas that no one else wanted to suggest either!
- **Bad ideas clarify what we don’t want.** A bad idea is one that offers a partial solution that also has negative effects of its own. To actively reflect on why the idea is bad helps us to understand both what we want and what we don’t want. Don’t pre-empt ideas!
- **Ugly ideas push us beyond our comfort zones.** An “ugly” idea might be an idea that is so bad that it appears ridiculous – even offensive. Or it can be “ugly” in the sense that it is so idealistic and grandiose as to appear unattainable. But here, as before, ugly ideas can help us identify what we want and don’t want. Ugly ideas are often ideas that are the result of “thinking outside of the box” – ideas that go beyond what people might consider to be reasonable. But this is precisely the source of their power. An ugly idea can reveal hidden assumptions that people have – both negative and positive – that require further reflection. Like other “bad” ideas, ugly ideas can become good ideas after they have been shaped and polished for a while.

Brainstorming Steps

1. **Identify an optimal number of interests to consider.** Identify the interests of all parties, to the degree that is relevant to the discussion. Seek to put a management number of interests on the table at any given time. The fewer interests the better—but since interests must be coordinated in relation to each other, having too few interests is not optimal either. There is a need to find a manageable number of interests that can lead to constructive progress.
2. **Ensure everyone understands each other’s interests.** Give everyone an opportunity to ask questions about each interest. Seek to ensure that each person understands each set of interests. When it becomes clear that constituents do not fully understand any given interest, stop the process, and return to this step until all participants increase their understanding.
3. **For any given interest, identify possible solutions.** It is acceptable to identify solutions that address single interests; however, as you identify interests, it is helpful to be sensitive to generating possibilities that can address multiple interests at the same time. Bracket evaluative judgments about each solution. Record the solutions in some way that they are available to all constituents. Work to move through all interests.
4. **As the number of possible solutions increases, being to identify solutions that meet multiple interests simultaneously.** Ultimately, there is a need to create solutions that meet multiple interests simultaneously. There are many ways to arrive at solutions to address multiple problems. You can begin by addressing individual interests, or you can begin by considering multiple interests simultaneously. Step 3 starts with the former; Step 4 with the latter.

Step 3 Example: Brainstorming

Having identified Jaime and Todd's core interests, the next step involves brainstorming ideas and solutions that hold out the possibility of meeting all of these interests at the same time. The process can begin by identifying ways of meeting particular interests, but in ways that are sensitive to the task of meeting other interests as well. As the process unfolds, it is typically that new interests arise that had not been identified before. While this typically complicates the process, by addressing new interests as they arise, it offers the promise of creating genuinely novel solutions that no one could have thought of prior to the problem-solving process.

Brainstorming about Food Insecurity: Round 1

	Dialogue	Explanation
	<p>Mediator: Okay, now that we have everyone's interests on the table, let's start to brainstorm. Let's simply begin to generate possible solutions to the problem of meeting these goals, interests and needs. Don't edit or censure yourselves; offer any solutions that come to mind, regardless if you think that they are good, bad or ugly. We can focus on individual interests if you want, but try to be sensitive to the ways in which the ideas you create can meet multiple interests at the same time – your own as well as your partner's. So, the core interest here is in finding ways to ensure that people – and particular people of limited means – have a sufficient amount of nutritious, affordable and locally available food. Solutions?</p>	<p>Mediator begins process by identifying the agreed upon goals and interests and providing basic instructions.</p>
	<p>Jaime: Well, the first solution that comes to mind is to expand the already existing <i>food stamp</i> program. This gives poorer folks vouchers to purchase nutritious food. The problem is that the food stamp program can't keep up with the need, and that in many urban districts, there are no grocery stores at which people can buy food. They have to either travel long distances, go to convenience stores, or purchase cheap and unhealthy fast food.</p>	<p>Jaimie suggests a solution to the immediate problem but notes that food stamps alone will not solve the broader issues.</p>
	<p>Todd: Okay, so this can solve part of the problem – the problem of giving people enough money to purchase food. But it doesn't solve the <i>additional problems you just raised</i>. And it doesn't solve the problem of <i>abuse and government waste</i>. In fact, I worry that if we expand programs, we create more waste and increase dependency. What do we do about that?</p>	<p>Todd agrees but adds identifies additional problems that the solution of food stamps does not address.</p>
	<p>Jaime: Well, we also said that we wanted to help people who were truly in need. And so, if we do this, there shouldn't be a lot of abuse or waste, right?</p>	<p>Jaime suggests that restricting food stamps to truly needy people can solve some of the issues raised by Todd.</p>
	<p>Todd: Okay, but that raises the question of how we determine whether people are truly in need! How can this be done?</p>	<p>Todd indicates that the task of determining what counts as "need" is a difficult one.</p>
	<p>Jaime: Well, perhaps you can have more rigorous <i>means tests</i> --criteria that have to be met to get food stamps. And maybe these criteria screen for abuse in some way – better ways of seeing if people can work. If people are abusing the system, change the rules to make abuse. But still, we don't really know whether this is a real problem</p>	<p>Jaime suggests that the means testing has the potential to solve not only food insecurity in the short run, but can also help</p>

	or not. I mean – just how many people abuse food stamps? Do we know? If we clarify the rules and procedures, maybe there can be a study to see if the programs really are being abused.	solve the problem of identifying people who abuse the system.
	Todd: I like the idea of a <i>needs test</i> ...	

At this point, Jaime and Todd have offered solutions that address each other's core interests. They have produced a potentially "win-win" solution in which both sets of needs are addressed. The solution so far looks like this:

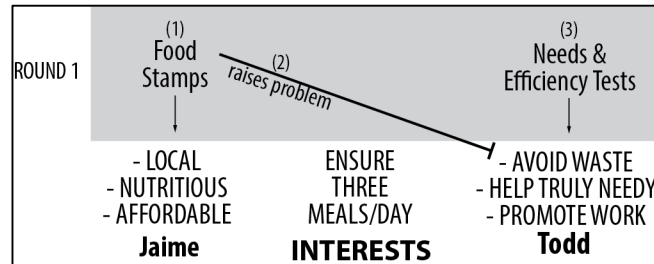


Figure 8. Brainstorming about Food Insecurity: Round 1

Jaime proposed expanding the (1) food stamp program as a way of providing nutritious and affordable food to the poor. By itself, however, this does not address the need (2) to ensure that food stamp programs are not abused and run efficiently. To address this problem pointed out by Todd, Jaime suggests the need to improve (3) needs testing – the criteria that government use to assess need – expanding the process to find ways to limit abuse. This produces a (“win-win”) solution that maximizes gain on both sides. At least in principle, this is an example of a novel solution that meets the needs of both participants at the same time.

However, like all solutions, this one is likely to generate new problems of its own.

	Dialogue	Explanation
	Jaime: I can see why people would want to have strict mean tests. I’m open to that – it might help curb abuse. However, it might also hurt the very people it is intended to help! A lot of needs are hidden. You can’t just say – oh these people make more money that the cut off, so they shouldn’t get food stamps. What if they have kids? What if they can’t afford health insurance? What if someone is sick? By having stricter standards, some people who might really need food stamps might be denied.	Jaime identifies a problem raised by the idea of imposing stricter means tests – namely, that that it might be overly restrictive, and fail to identify truly needy people.

So, after having proposed a solution to the problem of abuse and waste, Jaime notes that this very solution may introduce restrictions that (4) place limitations on the primary goal – to provide people in need with sufficient nutritious food

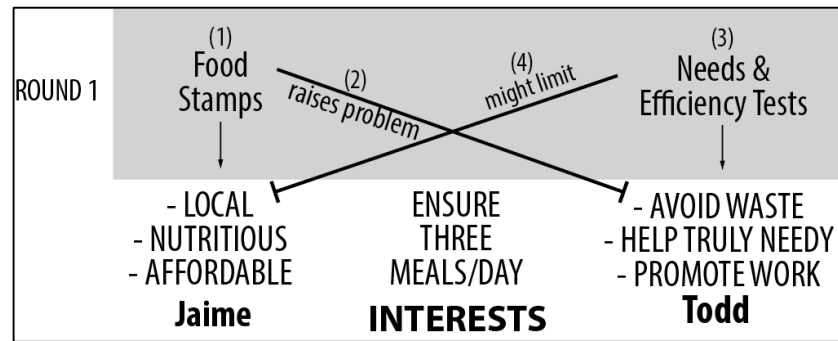


Figure 9: A Proposed Solution Raises a New Problem

Brainstorming about Food Insecurity: Round 2

Thus, although the participants have produced a novel solution that indeed begins to resolve the conflict between them, the new solution leads to a new problem, which motivates a new round of discussion, with its intent to find still new ways to address emerging problems.

	Dialogue	Explanation
	Todd: You are absolutely right. It may make things harder on some people. But this is part of the problem, I think, with government programs. A program starts off well-intended, but, so often, it backfires. And there's more. If you make needs testing stricter, you are going to need new tests and more people to do the testing! This increases government costs rather than decreasing them! What do we do about that?	Todd starts off by expressing some political positions, which which optimally should be avoided. However, in so doing, he identifies an additional problem – keeping programs from spiraling out of control.
	Jaime: Yes, I get your point. But again, we also don't know whether abuse is a problem and how much money it would take to fix the problem. For example, if you are right and there <i>is</i> a lot of abuse, then the cost of stricter means tests might be less than the costs of people abusing the system. And, if there is <i>not</i> as much abuse as you think there is, then the problem should be fixable without a big or protracted expenditure of money.	Jaime responds to Todd's observation that means testing could add costs by seeking ways to determine the particular extent of the problems at hand and using data to determine which programs to pursue.
	Todd: And so we need a study to find out if we have a problem that was caused by government programs. I'm telling you – it's gonna spiral out of control	Todd, frustrated, returns to advancing political positions.
	Mediator: Todd, we get your point. It may spiral, but may not. But remember, we are in problem solving mode here. You are raising the problem of programs spiraling out of control. Let's think of that as a problem that has to be solved, rather than something that cuts off discussion. Since we've agreed to seek solutions to the problem of food insecurity, let's bracket that problem and come back to it.	The mediator reminds Todd to try to separate positions from interests, and to seek solutions to address those interests.
	Todd: Okay! If you wish. I'm just saying what I think...	Todd is defensive, but agrees.

<p>Todd: So, seemingly simple problems get complex fast. You see, in my view, if you really want to solve the problem of hunger or “food insecurity”, you can’t just focus on the food. You have to focus on why people can’t afford food in the first place. And that has something to do with jobs.</p>	<p>Todd begins to focus on problems and solutions again. This time, he identifies the problem as bigger than the lack of food in the short term, and speaks of the need for economic development.</p>
<p>Jaime: Yes, I agree. People need to be able to earn a living wage. But if there are no jobs, I don’t want to simply let people go hungry. Yes, if we have stricter needs testing, we should still err on the side of generosity. I don’t want to let people go hungry just because they don’t have jobs.</p>	<p>Jaime agrees with Todd, but sees the question of economic development as one of providing jobs rather than growing businesses. This is a different of perspective that helps bring together Jaime and Todd’s views.</p>
<p>Todd: Yeah, okay – but “erring on the side of generosity” means <i>less</i> strict means testing, not <i>more</i> strict means testing – and this creates more waste and entitlement thinking. If we really want to solve the problem of affordability, we need to <i>grow jobs</i> in poor communities. More business means more jobs which means more money which solves a lot of problems.</p>	<p>Todd identifies what he takes as problems that are raised by the strategy of erring on the side of generosity, which, for Todd, points to the need for addressing larger problems.</p>

So, Todd and Jaime proposed two different solutions to the problems that might arise from imposing stricter needs testing. One is to (6) “err on the side of generosity” and risk extending food stamp programs to people who may not need it, and the other is to (7) attract businesses to poor communities so that people can gain employment and earn enough money to purchase their own food. So, Round II has produced the following solutions:

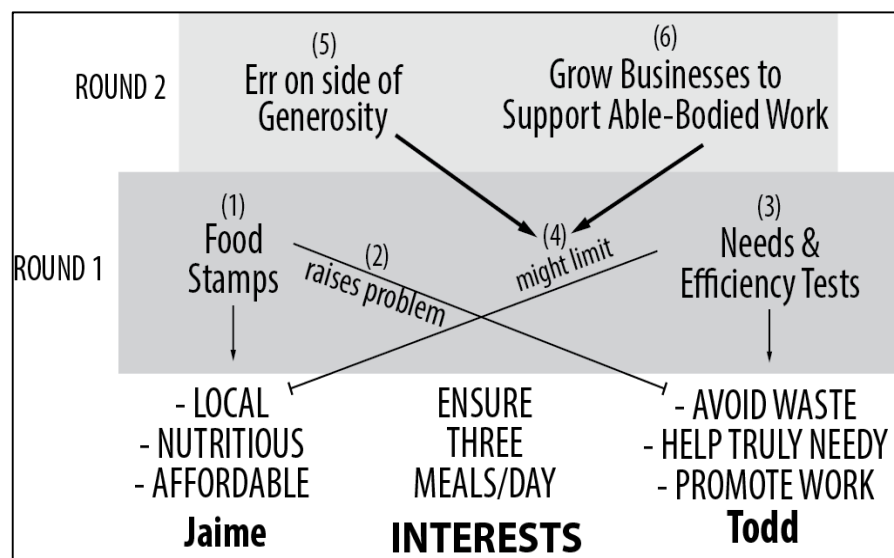


Figure 10. Brainstorming about Food Insecurity: Round 2

Brainstorming About Food Insecurity: Round 3

Round II produced a series of possible solutions to the problem of food insecurity. Right now, these solutions continue to exist in some tension in relation to each other. “Erring on the side of generosity” is proposed as a solution to the problem of establishing guidelines that invite, motivate or require able-bodied persons to work. However, “erring on the side of generosity” may undercut any requirements that are proposed to reach to goals of avoiding waste and promoting work. Let’s examine how further brainstorming can help to reduce this tension.

	Dialogue	Explanation
	Jaime: Yes, more jobs. But that takes time. What do we do in the meantime? And how we create jobs? And if we create them, what about people who have kids? What do they do with their kids when they’re working? And poorer people tend to be less educated – what types of jobs are we talking about? Minimum wage jobs? That’s not going to help people buy nutritious food.	Jaime agrees with the need to address jobs, but worries about more immediate issues of food insecurity. She also identifies problems that must be solved in order to solve the problem of food insecurity through economic expansion.
	Todd: I told you it would spiral! Let’s try a solution that doesn’t rely entirely on the government. Give tax breaks to attract businesses into poor communities. It’s a start. And then maybe these businesses can provide job training.	Todd worries that Jaime’s questions will require more government funding, and thus proposes a solution based on private sector initiatives.
	Jaime: Okay, that’s good. But why would businesses provide job training? If they’re minimum wage jobs, how much training do they need? What people need is job training for higher paying jobs. And even then, what about people who have kids. Who is going to take care of the kids while people are working and getting job training. It would be great if businesses could provide job training. And maybe even childcare.	Jaime identifies the problem of motivating businesses to provide job training, and restates the need to remove obstacles that make it difficult for able-bodied people to obtain and keep jobs.
	Todd: Businesses won’t come into an urban district if they are going to have to pay the costs of training and childcare. That asks too much of businesses.	Todd raises the problem that businesses will not be attracted to areas that will require deep additional investments.
	Jaime: Well, in addition to tax breaks for businesses, government programs can provide funds to childcare and job training – at least until people are able to make enough money to take care of these things themselves.	Jaime suggests a solution to this problems by suggesting government funding in addition to private investment.

At this point, Jaime and Todd have moved through a series of rounds of brainstorming. By treating both their own and their partner’s interests seriously, they have created a suite of possible solutions to the problem of food insecurity. Each proposed solution addresses a part of

of the problem – which is now increasingly being seen as more complex than might have previously been understood. Up until this point, Jaime and Todd have offered at least eight ideas to address various aspects of this issue: (a) food stamps, (b) enhanced means testing, (c) a mindset of generosity, (d) business development, (e) private and (f) public investment to create (g) businesses, jobs and grocers in the community (h) job training and daycare to support attempts to secure and maintain jobs within the community. The three rounds of brainstorming look something like that depicted in Figure 11.

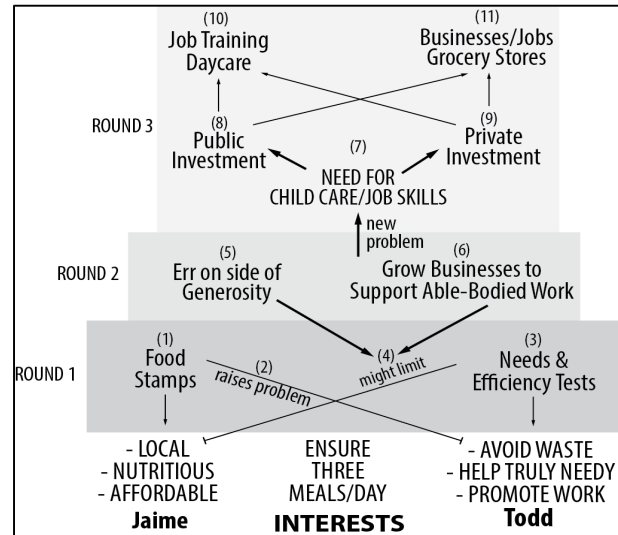
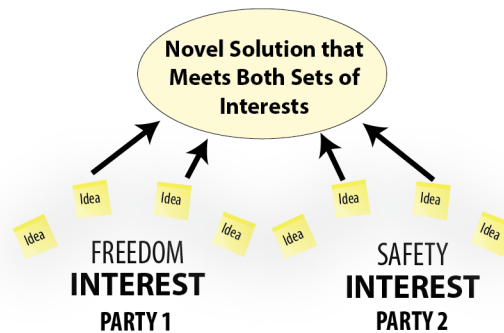


Figure 11. Brainstorming about Food Insecurity: Round 3

CHAPTER 4: CREATING SHARED SOLUTIONS



Step 3 – brainstorming – is designed to generate a list of ideas that hold out the promise of solving the problem of meeting the interests and needs of all constituencies involved in a political issue. Done well, the brainstorming process produces multiple ideas – good ones, bad ones, and ugly ones – that can be used to create an agreed-upon resolution to the problem at hand. Simply generating ideas is not the same as synthesizing a solution to a problem. Once one has identified the parts of a possible solution, those elements must be put together in ways that create a solution that holds out the promise of meeting constituent needs to the maximal degree possible.

This requires further discussion in order to separate useful from less useful ideas and to bring together ideas that meet different interests in a more-or-less seamless way. When this happens, the solution to the problem will incorporate ideas put forth by different parties to a discussion in ways that resolves the initial problem in a non-conflicting way.

Step 4 Example: Constructing Novel Solutions

The following example shows how the ideas constructed in Step 3 can be used to create novel solutions that address the needs and interests of each party.

	Dialogue	Explanation
	Mediator: We have had a rich brainstorming session. We've identified each party's interests and the problems that each is trying to solve. We've identified a series of partial solutions to these various problems. As we have done so, we've found that new problems have arisen, and we've found possible solutions to those problems as well. Now it's time to draw on these ideas to create a way to address the problem of food insecurity that meets as many of our various needs as possible at the same time.	Mediator sets up the task for synthesizing a solution.
	Jaime: Are we supposed to just choose one solution?	Jaime seeks to understand the meaning of a solution.
	Mediator: If one of the solutions you've created solves the problem, well, yes! But that's unlikely. More likely, we are going	Mediator suggests that problems are typically solved by putting

	to have to figure out how all the possible solutions can go together in order to solve the problems we started with.	tougher multiple solutions into a larger more seamless system.
	Todd: So, I see two types of solutions here –we’ve got <i>short term solutions</i> -- food stamps, generosity, needs testing -- and <i>long term solutions</i> -- creating businesses, job training and daycare programs to lift people out of poverty so that they can purchase their own food.	Todd starts by differentiating short term and long term solutions.
	Jaime: The <i>short-term</i> solutions can be both strict and generous at the same time. Generous in the sense that they meet people’s needs, but strict in the sense that they say, “we have to find ways to become self-sufficient”. We need the <i>short-term solutions</i> while we are waiting for the <i>long-term</i> solutions.	Jaime emphasizes how short term solutions deal with immediate food insecurity, while long term deal with the systemic problem.
	Todd: The point for me is that business development is key to helping people get on their feet. You need to attract private investors. Then you get a domino effect – businesses create jobs and grocery stores which gives people both the money and the supermarkets to purchase food.	Todd suggests that growing businesses provides the start of a long-term solution, as it meets foundational interests related to permanent food security.
	Jaime: But let’s take the domino metaphor further! You can say the same thing for job training and daycare – if there are potential jobs, then people have hope, and if people have childcare, with hope, they will want to go to job training – and they will be able to because they’ll be supported.	Jaime takes Todd’s domino metaphor (one solution influences another) and applies it to issues of job training and childcare.
	Todd: Yeah, that may be true. But all that takes time.	Todd restates these as long term solutions.
	Jaime: What if all of these things could come together in the same place? What if you had, like, community centers that were funded both privately and publically. What if these community centers had groceries, a cafeteria, daycare centers, job training and stuff like that? What if the centers were partnered with businesses so that people get trained for the local businesses? That would attract businesses and people. People would know their kids are safe; they’d have a place to buy groceries, or to even eat at an affordable cafeteria that serves tasty nutritious foods. The community center could have education programs, including how to create a small business within the center itself. This would be a win-win for communities and businesses...	Jaime seeks to bring together Todd’s focus on business development and her own focus on helping people in the present and in the future. She develops the idea of community centers that can bring private enterprise, government assistance and community together to create short term and long-term infrastructure to support self-reliance and food security.
	The conversation continues...	

At this point, Jaime and Todd are working closely together. Their ideas draw on each other’s creative efforts. Aware of their mutual commitment to meet not only their own interests but each other’s interests, each party is increasingly open to share his or her needs and to propose novel solutions. As each person influences the other, trust develops. As the parties collaborate, they are able to create solutions that neither party would be able to create if working alone. Through their collaboration, without always agreeing, the participants are able to learn from each other. Because the process is collaborative and not competitive, as trust develops, each participant feels less threatened by the other, and becomes more open to seeing value in each other’s ideas.

In the case described here, it is possible for participants to develop a systemic solution to their problem. By drawing on each other's insights and seeking to reconcile them in non-conflicting ways, they could come up with a proposal like the following:

The problem of *food insecurity* can be addressed by proposing *short term* and *long term* solutions. In the *short term*, it is helpful to identify the nature of the problem. How can we define food insecurity? How many people are “food insecure”? What are their needs? To what extent do existing programs (e.g., food stamps) address these needs? How efficient are existing programs? To what extent is abuse of these systems prevalent? To what extent do able-bodied individuals fail to seek work as a result of being participants in food stamp programs? Given the results of these studies, propose changes in the food stamp program that (a) will meet the basic nutritional needs and (b) ensure maximum efficiency and deterrence of abuse.

In the long term, there is a need to create a socio-economic infrastructure to help residents become self-sufficient and earn sufficient income to purchase nutritious, affordable, healthy and local food. This can be done by increasing public and private investment to attract novel businesses – including affordable supermarkets. One can develop a series of publically and privately funded community centers that provide job training to fill roles provided by incoming businesses, daycare to support parents as they work, in-house grocers and a cafeteria that provides affordable and nutritious meals three times per day. Residents can both work in the community center and be trained for jobs outside of the center. A community-business-government partnership can provide a means for addressing the problem of food security as it operates within the larger system of poverty.

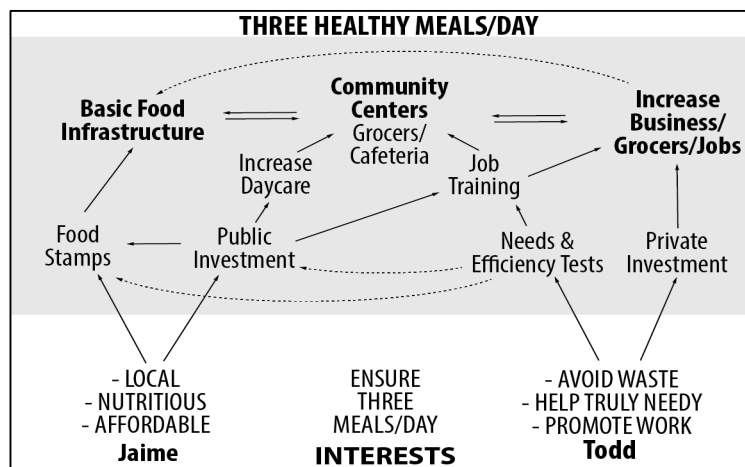


Figure 12: But One Systemic Solution to the Problem of Food Insecurity

The particular solution that participants construct is not important here. What is important is the awareness that there are multiple possible solutions that can arise when people seek to solve political problems not through winner-take-all debate or even through compromise, but instead through a process of collaborative problem-solving. It is understood that each solution to a problem will itself introduce new problems, which must then be subjected to further collaborative problem-solving efforts.

PART II: THE ADVANCED COURSE

PROBLEM SOLVING IN THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICTING IDEOLOGIES

CHAPTER 5: THINKING DIALECTICALLY

Political problem solving occurs at multiple levels of complexity. Some political disputes -- like those discussed in the Basic Course -- may be solvable by engaging in interest-based collaborative problem solving. This can occur when the interests involved in political disputes can be separated, at least in part, from the ideological frameworks and beliefs that separate political adversaries. In more entrenched forms of political conflict, the political issues at stake tend to be *constituted* largely by different political ideologies.

For example, at partisan extremes, the issue of gun violence tends to be organized by vastly different conceptions of the relation between citizens and governments. Some advocates of gun rights maintain that guns are necessary to protect individual freedoms against the possible excesses of an intrusive government. From this point of view, governments -- even democratic ones -- are not to be trusted. Because governments can turn tyrannical, there is a need to secure forces to battle against the possibility of tyranny. In contrast, some gun control advocates, maintaining that government is the instrument of the people, view government not as an institution to be feared, but instead as one that protects. From this view, democratic governments can and should be trusted to monitor and regulate firearms in ways that ensure the protection of the populous. From these opposing points of view, the issue of gun ownership is not one of merely resolving practical interests. The interests at stake -- freedom to protect the self against government vs. the use of government as a means for organizing society -- are themselves ideologically structured.

Clearly, ideologically structured political conflicts are much more difficult to manage than those that can be managed through the coordination of more local interests. Does this mean that only some political disputes are resolvable through conflict management practices? To be sure, it would be a mistake to assume that all political conflicts can be resolved in ways that meet the ideological needs of all parties to a dispute. It is likely the case that some political conflicts -- especially those that involve contests over the same limited resource -- may not be resolvable in ways that meet the core needs of all parties. Such disputes (e.g., when two nations compete for the same land), if they are to be resolved at all, will likely require compromise -- conditions in which each party gives up a desired outcome in order to obtain something else that is wanted. Similarly, disputes that are structured by diametrically opposed or incommensurable ideological beliefs may be difficult if not impossible to resolve without compromise. The most optimal solution to such disputes might be to identify conditions of compromise and peaceful co-existence while acknowledging and containing the presence of unresolved conflict over time.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to assume that ideologically structured conflicts necessarily *cannot be resolved* through the application of conflict-resolution procedures. The fact is that one cannot know beforehand whether or not an ideological conflict or dispute is resolvable. Perhaps the biggest mistake that can be made about the process of resolving political disputes is the pre-emptive assumption that a dispute is irresolvable. Quite often best solutions to social conflict are those that neither party could have anticipated prior to the initiation of collaborative problem-solving.

Approaching Ideological Conflict: The Task of Integrating Opposites

While ideological conflicts may be difficult to resolve, it is nonetheless possible. The approach taken here is on that involves a deliberate attempt to *identify* and *integrate opposing* ideological beliefs. At first glance, such an approach would seem to be impossible. How could it be possible to bring together opposing beliefs in to a single shared system?

An *ideology* is a system of beliefs that explains the world. While an ideology can refer to virtually any system of ideas, the term ideology typically applies to systems of belief about the proper functioning of political and economic systems. From this view, economic systems such as capitalism, socialism, communism might be seen as ideologies; political concepts such as *democracy* (government by the people), *monarchy* (government by monarchs as per family lineage), *autocracy* (government by single individuals) function as ideologies, as well as systems such as *conservatism*, *liberalism*, *libertarianism*, *democratic socialism*, etc.

We often think that when there is conflict between systems of belief, one must be right and the other must be wrong. This is shown in an exchange in the famous musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. In this scene, Perchik, a student from Kiev, arrives a little village and overhears an innkeeper complaining about recent actions of government officials. Perchik encourages the group of men gathered around the innkeeper to stop complaining and start acting. When this happens, a discussion occurs involving an exchange of contradictions.

Perchik: You'll all chatter your way into the grave... there is more to life than talk. You should know what's going on in the outside world.

Innkeeper: Why should I break my head about the outside world? Let them break their own heads.

Tevye: *He's right*. As the good book says, if you spit in the air, it lands in your face.

Perchik: That's nonsense. You can't close your eyes to what's happening in the world.

Tevye: *He's right*.

Avram: *He's right and he's right? How can they both be right?*

Tevya: You know, *you are also right*.

Tevya, the milkman and main character of the show, is the voice of moderation. He straddles between, on the one hand, the need to maintain long-standing traditions, and, on the other hand, the need to adapt to changes in the world. In this passage, Tevya begins by agreeing with the innkeeper – if you go looking for trouble, you're certain to find it. But then Tevya also agrees with the student – “You can't close your eyes to what's happening in the world”. Avram points out the contradiction between the two statements: “*He's right and he's right? How can they both be right?*”. Acknowledging the contradiction, Tevye embraces yet another contradiction, “You know, *you are also right*”.

This exchange shows a common experience – statements that contradict each other often have an element of “truth” in them. It is often possible for people to hold contradictory positions,

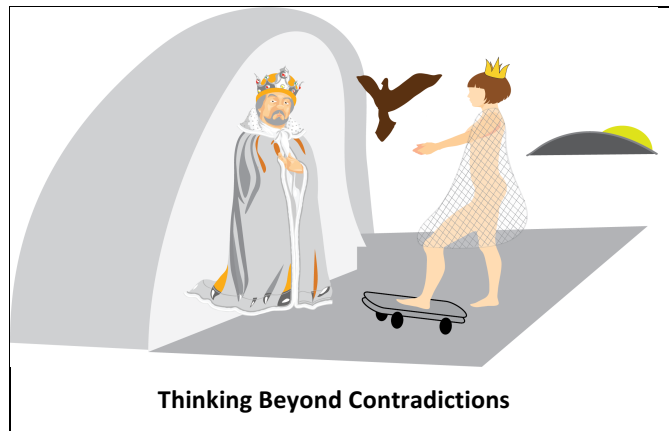
where each is partially “right”. *Fiddler on the Roof* is a musical about the circumstances under which it is possible to resolve contradictions between the need for both *tradition* and *progress*.

Reconciling Contradictions

To understand how it is possible to begin to resolve ideological differences between political adversaries, it is helpful to understand how it is possible to resolve seemingly contradictions that might otherwise seem unresolvable. Consider the following story:

A prince and the princess fell in love. The king – the princess’ father -- did not want the two to marry. The King said that he would only allow the couple to marry if the princess went to the Far Away Forest and perform a series of small tasks. Specifically, she had to return from the forest both *walking and riding, naked and dressed, during the day and in the night*, and while stopping simultaneously *in and out of the castle*, arrive both *with and without a gift*. Because it is impossible for two opposites to be true at the same time, the King was confident that the Princess would fail at each of these tasks, and thus prevent the desired marriage.

However, the King was surprised that, after a two-week trip, his daughter arrived home. She comes *walking with one foot while keeping the other on a skateboard, wearing fishing net as a dress*, providing the gift of a bird that flies away in the moment of passing to the King, arriving at the point of sunrise while stopping on the *doorstep* of the castle. The princess knew that there are often clever ways to reconcile seemingly contradictory statements.



Thinking Dialectically

“Dialectical thinking” is a way of thinking in *opposites*. Dialectical thinking is a very powerful way of thinking. It is key to creating ways to bridge differences between seemingly very different and even clashing perspectives – whether these perspectives involve everyday concepts, scientific knowledge, ideological beliefs or even religions.

The keys to dialectical thinking is *openness* to contrary, contradictory and even clashing ideas, as a willingness to *explore* the possibility that some aspect or variation of a contradictory notion may be useful, valuable or in some sense “true”, and a desire to try to *synthesize* new ways of thinking from what appear to be contradictory views. The process of thinking dialectically – in opposites -- is not new. It can be understood in terms of the movement involving four basic moments of thought. These include THESIS → ANTITHESIS → CONFLICT → SYNTHESIS.

A THESIS (T) is any statement that begins a line of thought.

THESIS
It is dark

An ANTITHESIS (A) is any statement that is made in contradistinction to the thesis. An antithesis is a statement that is defined in contrast or in opposition to a thesis:

THESIS **→** **ANTITHESIS**
It is dark It is light

Ordinarily, we think of two statements that are in opposition as contradictory – they **CONFLICT** (C) with each other:

THESIS **CONFLICT** **ANTITHESIS**
It is dark ───────── It is light

We typically think of a thesis and an antithesis mutually exclusive – that they cannot both be “true” or “right” at the same time. However, as shown in the example of the King and the Princess, it is nonetheless sensible to ask, “Is it possible for something to be dark and light at the same time?” In answering this question, is it possible to create or **SYNTHESIZE** a statement that is both “true” and which resolves the **CONFLICT** between the **THESIS** and **ANTITHESIS**. In the example of the King and the Princess, the statement, “It is dawn” can be understood as one in which it is both “light” and “dark” at the same time:

SYNTHESIS
It is dawn
 ↖ ↗
THESIS **CONFLICT** **ANTITHESIS**
It is dark ───────── It is light

An Extended Example: Resolving the Nature-Nurture Problem

Dialectical thinking is an important form of thinking. It helps us to resolve controversies in a variety of different modes of thought. This can occur, for example, in the realm of scientific knowledge. One example involves the traditional “nature-nurture” problem. This is the problem of whether *nature* (genes, heredity) or *nurture* (environment, society) is more important in the development of human qualities. Over the years, people have taken strong positions on this issue. Many scholars – up to the present day -- have asserted for example, that human qualities are primarily a product of heredity. This is shown in Table X in terms of the **THESIS**: “Nature causes development”. Theorists have made a variety of arguments in support of this idea. They may point to evidence suggesting that all children around the world walk and talk around their first birthdays. They may suggest that despite the variety of different languages, all language share a common “underlying” organization that is a product of heredity.

Scientists point to the results of twin studies to suggest that differences between people in various human qualities (e.g., IQ, personality dispositions) are the results of genetic rather than environmental differences between that occur between people.

Once a THESIS of any kind is asserted, it is possible to articulate statements that contrast with that thesis – that is, an ANTITHESIS. In the nature-nurture question, many scholars have articulated the view that human qualities are “nurtured” or determined by the environment. This statement provides the ANTITHESIS (2) to the idea that genes or nature determines development. (ANTITHESIS). To support this statement, scholars have pointed to different forms of evidence: No one is born knowing how to walk or talk, or how to read, write, or play a guitar. These skills develop over time and require the influence of people in the child’s social environment. In fact, the capacities to read, write or play a guitar are *cultural* processes – that is, their very existence depends on changes that happen in the culture over long periods of time. There is no reading or writing in nature -- reading and writing themselves develop as a result of how people relate to each other over time to solve particular social problems (e.g., how to keep track of crops).

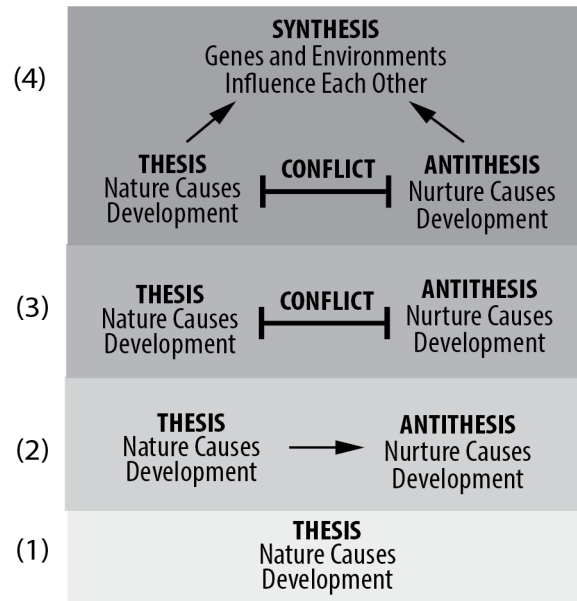
People who hold environmentalist (“nurture”) views of development point to other evidence as well. Without social interaction, children do not develop language or moral beliefs. The age at which a child walks varies as a function of their opportunity to move their bodies on flat surfaces; babies who are placed primarily on their backs in soft cushions for the formative months of life find it difficult to move their bodies. As a result, learn to walk later than babies.

The “nature” and “nurture” views, when brought together, naturally come into (3) CONFLICT. It cannot simultaneously be the case that nature *determines* development and nurture *determines* development. A common strategy for resolving this conflict of ideas is to assert that both nature and nurture *influence* (rather than “determine”) development. This is a kind of “compromise” view. In this conception, nature may cause some qualities (for example, eye color), while nurture causes others (the capacity to write). A different version of this statement would be that any particular quality is determined by some “combination” of genetic and environmental causation. This is suggested when scholars maintain that differences in a human quality -- for example, IQ -- are “partly” determined by genes and partly determined by environment¹.

¹ We sometimes hear statements like, “sixty-percent of intelligence is inherited”. Such statements must be taken with a great deal of caution. To support such statements, people might refer to empirical studies that show, for example, that some *proportion* of the statistical *variation* among people in IQ scores (or some other quality) is due to *differences between people* in their genetics (say, 60%), while the remaining proportion of *variation* between people in a given quality (say, 40%) is due to *differences between people* in their environments. These studies exist, and they are important. But such studies do not tell us anything about how genes and environment contribute to any individual person’s qualities. Instead, they tell us about how *differences between people* in a particular quality are related to *differences between people* in their genes or environments. This question is very different from the question of how genes and environment contribute to the development of any single person’s skills, abilities or qualities.

Such “compromise” strategies fail to resolve the nature-nurture controversy. For example, it does not make sense to say that some *proportion* of some quality of an individual – a person’s height, weight, ability to walk, talk, read or play the guitar – is due to genetics while another proportion of a given quality is a result of environment. Human qualities are simply not the kind of processes that can be divided into separate genetic and environmental parts. Which *part* of my height, weight, reading or writing is due to genetics? To *environment*? The question doesn’t make sense.

Is there a **SYNTHESIS** that can resolve the conflict between nature and nurture perspectives? The answer is *yes*. The old nature-nurture controversy is based on the idea that nature and nurture are separate forces – that is, that they work independent of each other. Contemporary biologists have shown that this is not the case. Genes and environments work together to create a developing organism. Genes actually influence the environments in which they operate, while changes in the environment can “turn on” and “turn off” gene expression. This new way of understanding how organisms develop is called *epigenesis*.



In this new view, “nature” and “nurture” are not independent of each other. In fact, they influence each other. For example, the “nature” of a child -- say, a child who gets upset easily -- influences the child’s environment. A smiling baby affects other people positively – they want to be around the baby, to play with the baby, and so forth. A baby who gets upset easily affects people in different ways. People may be more likely to pick up and try to soothe a cranky baby, to become frustrated with the child, or even try to avoid interacting with him. At the same time, how people interact with the baby influences the child’s developing “nature”. If adults respond to a cranky baby with anger and frustration, the child is more likely to have emotional difficulties. In contrast, if adults teach a cranky baby how to regulate his emotions, the child is more likely to develop in more healthy ways.

Although the concept of “epigenesis” – the idea that nature and nurture influence each other – builds on the old concepts of “nature” and “nurture”, it *reconciles* the conflict between them. We no longer need to think of an organism’s development as either caused by genes or environment, or even by some simple “combination” of the two. Instead, we ask how particular genes necessarily work together over time with particular environments to produce particular outcomes in development.

In this way, the concept of “epigenesis” is a SYNTHESIS that both builds upon and resolves the CONFLICT between “nature” (THESIS) and “nurture” (ANTITHESIS) conceptions of development. The concept of *epigenesis* is no mere ideological position; it is a *scientific* concept that is based upon an enormous body of empirical evidence. This example shows how scientific knowledge – and not simply social, political or ideological ideas -- develops as a dialectical process – that is, as a process of moving from THESIS → ANTITHESIS → CONFLICT → SYNTHESIS.

Additional Examples

Bridging differences through dialectical thinking is not a simple matter of “splitting the difference”. It is not a simple matter of “meeting in the middle”. The scientific concept of epigenesis is not a simple “midpoint” between “nature” and “nurture” positions. There is a world of difference between the idea that development results from some “combination” of “nature” and “nurture” (the old nature-nurture debate) and the concept that the processes of nature and nurture *influence each other*.

There are many others examples of dialectical thinking – both scientific and non-scientific. To help clarify how dialectical thinking can help bridge different ways of thinking in both political and non-political contexts, it is helpful to explore some additional examples.

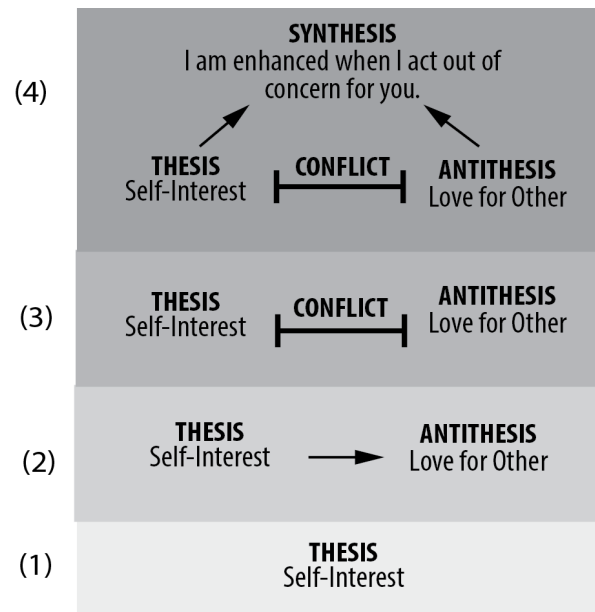
Thinking about Self and Others. Political disputes – especially those based upon different ideologies – are often products of different ways of thinking about the nature of persons. Are humans basically good or bad? Are people primarily selfish or self-interested (e.g., think of a stereotype of the Wall Street investor) or are they concerned with the well-being of others (e.g., think of the stereotype of a loving mother)?

Let us begin our thinking with the (1) THESIS that people are primarily self-interested – that people act in order to meet their personal goals and desires. There is ample evidence to support such an assertion. Infants enter the world as a bundle of needs. They cry when their needs are not met, and do not appear to be aware of or concerned with the needs of others. It does not take long however to identify an (2) ANTITHESIS to this THESIS. For example, infants cry when they hear other babies cry. Many infants as young as 8-12-months of age become empathically upset when they witness others in emotional distress. Around this same time, many infants will spontaneously help other people when who are in need in some way (e.g., a child may pick up an object dropped by an adult). Thinking about these observations, the THESIS “people are self-interested” gives rise to the ANTITHESIS “people are concerned with the welfare of others”.

In their development, young children tend to act *both* out of *self-interest* and out of *concern for others*. However, they tend to do so in different social contexts. A child who is playing with a toy may resist having that toy taken away from her. When asked to “share”, it is natural for children to want to continue to keep the toy for themselves. In *different* contexts, children act out of concern for others. For example, a child who witnesses another child in distress may spontaneously give that child a toy in order to soothe the child. This typically occurs in

situations which in the empathic child is not already deeply engaged in playing with the toy in question. So, early in development, children act out of self-interest and concern for others – *but not typically at the same time*.

As children get older, they begin to experience the CONFLICT between self-interest and concern for others. For example, a child may want to play with a toy (self-interest), but realize that if he doesn't share the toy when asked by a friend (concern for the other), his friend may not want to play with him (self-interest). In such a situation, self-interest and concern for other come into CONFLICT. At this level of development, children have difficulty resolving the conflict. The child may not know what to do to. He may alternate between wanting to keep playing with the toy and wanting to share (especially if prompted). At this step, the conflict remains unresolved.



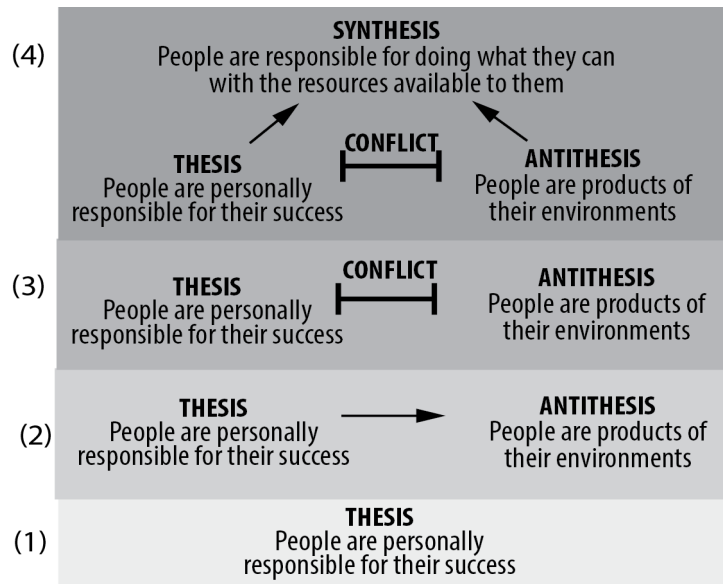
With later development, it becomes possible for older children, adolescents and adults to being to *reconcile* their self-interest and concern for others. This can occur, for example, when people begin to think about themselves as personally invested in the well-being of others. A primitive version of this idea is to understand that “It is in my self-interest to help you.” A more profound **SYNTHESIS** of *self-interest* and *concern for others* occurs when an older adolescent or adult can begin to understand how the *self can be enhanced* (self-interest) through their desire to promote the *well-being of the other* (concern for others). In such a conception, there is not just my needs and your needs – instead, my sense of who I am and what I want is defined through my relationship to you – who you are and what you want. A new way of thinking about the nature of self and other is formed, one that resolves the tension between self-interest and concern for others.

Personal Versus Social Responsibility. Questions about the nature of personal and social responsibility are very important in political disputes. Different political perspectives and ideologies are defined, in part, by beliefs about the nature of personal responsibility. Some people adopt the position that a person's success or failure in life is something for which individual persons can and should be held responsible. From this view, each person alone is responsible for his or her own success in school, work or social life. Others believe that people are products of their environments. From this point of view, the environmental conditions under which a person is raised or in which they live or work play a crucial role in determining or undermining their success in life. People born in poverty or to uneducated parents, for example, will be less likely – from no fault of their own – to become successful in life than people born to wealthy, educated families.

Is there any way to bridge the gap between these two positions without denying what is important in either one? Let us begin with a (1) **THESIS** that states that “people are personally responsible for their successes and failures”. There is ample evidence to show that in order to achieve success in life, people must be proactive. They must be willing and able to work hard, to persevere through difficulty, and seek out opportunities for advancement. However, it does not take much reflection to appreciate that this **THESIS** immediately suggests an (2) **ANTITHESIS** – namely the principle that “people are products of their environments”. There are many examples of diligent, hard-working people who, by virtue of circumstances beyond their control (e.g., poverty, disability or lack of ability, social discrimination, lack of access to opportunity or other social resources) find it difficult to achieve desired outcomes and common social goals. Considered together, these two statements (3) **CONFLICT** with each other.

Again, we ask: is it possible to build a new way of understanding the question of personal and social responsibility – one that draws upon what is valuable, meaningful or even “true” in both **THESIS** and **ANTITHESIS** – and which simultaneously resolves the **CONFLICT** or contradiction between them? There are, of course, *many* possible ways to reconcile these two contradictory statements. We will offer but one here. And because this is a politically charged example, we do so with some trepidation. The most important point about the process of dialectical thinking is that it is *open-ended*. There is *no single way* to resolve any given contradiction between different statements or concepts. The most interesting and exciting aspect of the process of dialectical thinking is that one cannot specify a solution to a problem beforehand – that the interesting solutions that arise from attempts to resolve the clash of opposites are those that no one has likely thought of before. And so, there is always a risk that comes from providing a sample illustration of how a political contradiction might be resolved – namely, the risk of *pre-empting* a solution to the problem. To provide an example of how an open-ended problem might be solved might lead people to think that the sample solution is the “right” or “only” solution. Such a conclusion is antithetical to the purpose of dialectical problem-solving.

One *possible* **SYNTHESIS** that can reconcile these conflicting positions is the idea that *people should be held responsible for doing what they can with the abilities and resources that are available to them*. Such a principle would recognize both the role of personal agency and social support in an individual’s capacity to achieve success in life. It might also suggest that successful people should be called upon to “give back” to society in ways that are commensurate with the help that they have received from society.



The Dialectical Resolution of Ideological Conflict

As discussed above, some political disputes can be resolved by seeking to reconcile more or less local “needs” and interests of different parties to a conflict. More deeply entrenched conflicts tend to be involve significant ideological content. A person’s basic ideological beliefs help to determine the nature of the needs and interests that a party is seeking to meet. When this happens, it becomes necessary to engage ideological beliefs more directly.

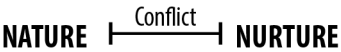
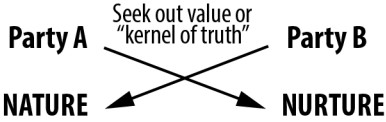
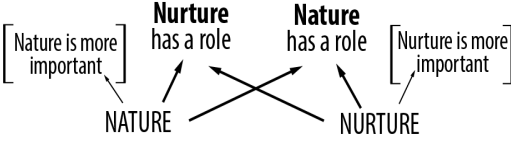
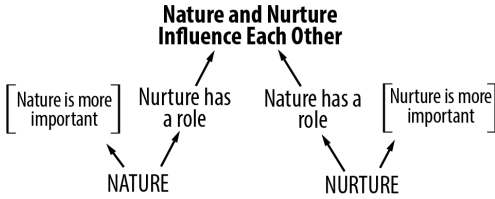
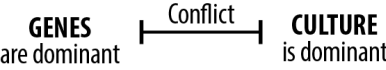
In typical political discourse, the main ways of managing ideological differences is through debate. Parties seek to establish the merits of their ideological stances and solutions over those of the opposing side. Constituents vote on who has the better stance; the stance that accrues the most votes wins. This system is not without its advantages. Its most compelling advantage is that it provides a system for the democratic resolution of disputes without resort to violence. This is a deep advantage. However, as discussed above, the debate format suffers from a series of important challenges. In a debate, the goal is to win. The goal of winning often prompts debaters to put forth ideological designed primarily to *persuade and win voters*. Under such conditions, politicians and debater often resort to tactics designed not to *solve problems*, but instead to appeal to base motives of voters and constituents. Potentially good solutions advanced by “the other side” are either ignored or discredited. Election result in winner-take-all outcomes where winners gloat and losers seek retaliation and revenge. As the struggle for power continues, the best alternative to losing is compromise – a condition that can only be reached when two parties are at a stalemate, or otherwise do not have sufficient power to advance their agendas without making concessions and enlisting some form of support to the other side.

While compromises are often the best that can be achieved in an adversarial system, they nonetheless tend to result in piecemeal rather than systemic solutions to problems. One parties gain is compensated for by the gain achieved by the opposing party. While the democratic processes enable the peaceful transition of power and the non-violent fostering of change, such changes typically evolve slowly in a fragmented and non-systemic way. No wonder that Churchill would quip, quoting an unknown predecessor, that “Democracy is the worst form of government – except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”

Dialectical politics is a way to begin the long and difficult process of building novel ideological beliefs through the differentiation and integration of opposites. In dialectical problem solving, political opponents:

1. Leading with both self-protection as well as empathy and compassion, and thus embrace the dignity and humanity of their opponents.
2. Seek resolution of disputes through collaborative (needs-based) problem solving-solving.

As conflicts become increasingly ideologically entrenched, *within local areas of ideological conflict*, opposing parties seek to resolve conflict dialectically by:

STEP IN DIALECTICAL PROCESS	EXAMPLE
1. Identifying <i>opposing</i> sets of particular ideological beliefs and need – for example, the idea that development is caused by either <i>nature</i> OR <i>nurture</i> .	 <p>NATURE $\xrightarrow{\text{Conflict}}$ NURTURE</p>
2. Identifying “kernels of truth”, “value” or “worth” (i.e., “half-truths”, implied “truths”, or even banal truths) in the <i>opposing</i> beliefs asserted by “the other side” – no matter how small, trivial or seemingly insignificant. Advocates of “nature” and “nurture” views would seek out “kernels of truth” – if any -- in each other’s positions.	 <p>Party A $\xrightarrow{\text{Seek out value or “kernel of truth”}}$ Party B</p> <p>NATURE $\xleftrightarrow{\text{Seek out value or “kernel of truth”}}$ NURTURE</p>
3. Without giving in on core beliefs, each side <i>modifies existing beliefs</i> to accommodate to the “kernel of truth” found in the other side. For example, advocates of the “nature” and “nurture” positions may concede that both “nature” and “nurture” play roles in development.	 <p>Nurture has a role Nature has a role</p> <p>[Nature is more important] \nearrow NATURE \nwarrow [Nurture is more important]</p> <p>NATURE \nearrow Nurture has a role \nwarrow NURTURE \nwarrow Nature has a role \nearrow [Nurture is more important]</p>
4. Collaboratively build up novel and shared principles and beliefs while simultaneously bracketing continued areas of difference for later dialectical conflict resolution. For example, drawing on contemporary research, scholars can synthesize a new conception of development, namely the “epigenetic” view that nature and nurture influence each other and thus cannot be regarded as independent.	 <p>Nature and Nurture Influence Each Other</p> <p>[Nature is more important] \nearrow Nurture has a role \nwarrow [Nurture is more important]</p> <p>NATURE \nearrow Nurture has a role \nwarrow NURTURE \nwarrow Nature has a role \nearrow [Nurture is more important]</p>
5. Continue the process for as long as is practical, moving from more <i>peripheral</i> systems of opposing beliefs to more <i>core</i> systems of opposing beliefs. For example, people might believe that even though genes and environments influence each other, one is more dominant than the other. The process continues.	 <p>GENES $\xrightarrow{\text{Conflict}}$ CULTURE</p> <p>are dominant $\xrightarrow{\text{Conflict}}$ is dominant</p>

Step 3 – the mutual modification of core beliefs in response the “kernel of truth” in the other – is a central part of the dialectical process. This is the part of the process which allows novel forms of belief to arise. It relies upon the establish of an emerging foundation of trust between social partners. In adversarial systems (e.g., debates, competition), each side operates from the standpoint of *fear for the self* rather than *concern for meeting the needs of the other*. As a result, interlocutors adopt a defensive or protective stance toward the other: they seek to advance their interests in opposition to those of their social partners. To the extent that trust builds between parties – a trust in which each party is able to believe that their adversary is genuinely motivated to meet the non-conflicting needs of the self, parties can become increasingly open to seeking out “kernels of truth” in the other. To the extent that fear for the self predominates, parties will tend to see any attempt to understand or validate “kernels of

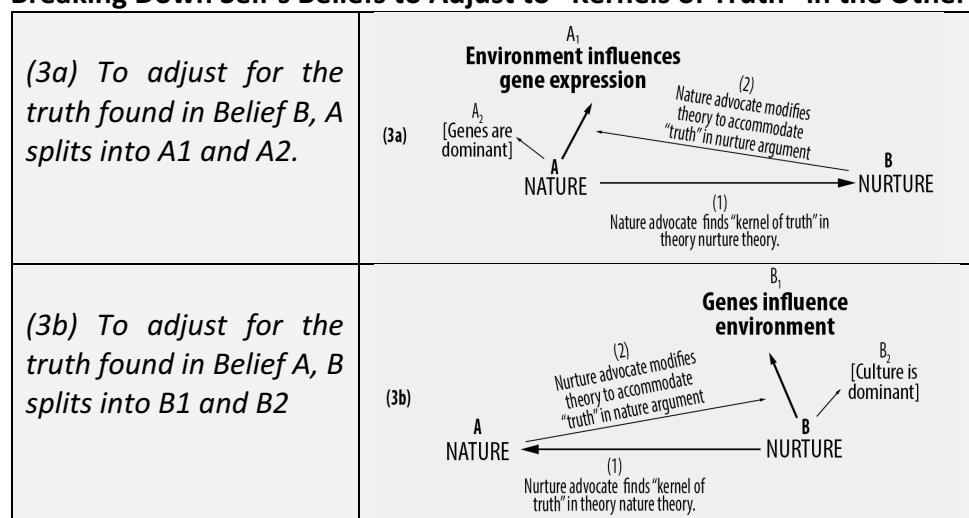
truth” in the other as weakness, concession or as a threat to the self. However, to the extent that fear for the self can be mitigated by trust (even if such fear may always and properly exist in the background of interaction), seeking and finding “kernels of truth” in the opposing views of other need not be experienced as threatening.

Perhaps the most important source of trust between partners is the idea that neither party is being asked to necessarily “give in” or “give up” their core or sacred beliefs. Feeling that one’s core beliefs are not under threat can enable interlocutors to entertain novel forms of thinking – novel forms of thinking that will not require that they give up anything that is sacred or important. It is such feelings, built up gradually over time, that make it possible for parties to engage in other in a confrontation of opposites, and, over time, to consider the process of mutually modifying their beliefs in terms of “kernels of truth” found in the other.

The figure provided below illustrates the process by which existing beliefs held by each side to a conflict can be broken down in “inviolable” and “modifiable” components as a result of the mutual exploration of opposites. For example, at Step 3a (below), a person who adopts a (A) “nature” view on the nature-nurture controversy would (1) seek to identify possible “kernels of truth” in the opposing “nurture” view. There is, of course, ample evidence that environments affect the development of individuals in many ways. An advocate of the “nature” view could (2) acknowledge this point (e.g., A₁, “Environment plays a role in development” or even “environment influences gene expression”) while simultaneously retaining the view that (A₂) “nature” or “genes are dominant” causes of development.

Conversely, at Step 3b (below), a person who adopts a (B) “nurture” view would (1) seek to identify possible “kernels of truth” in the opposing “nature” view. There is plenty of research to show that genes affect development in profound ways. An advocate of the “nurture” view could (2) acknowledge this point (e.g., B₁, “Nature plays a role in development” or even “genes affect environment”) while simultaneously retaining the view that (B₂) “nurture” or “culture is dominant” as a cause of development.

Breaking Down Self’s Beliefs to Adjust to “Kernels of Truth” in the Other

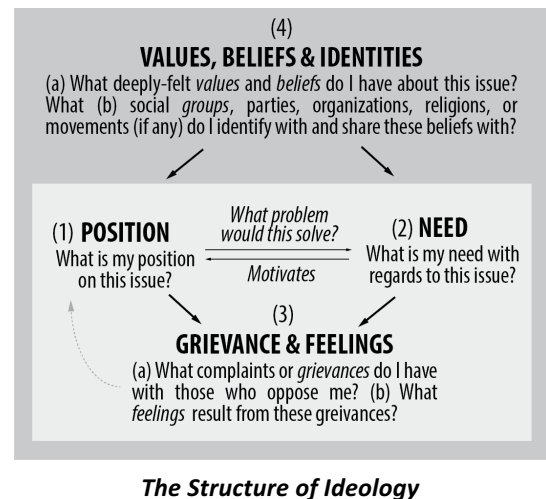


As social partners become increasingly willing to examine and modify their own beliefs in light of “kernels of truth” expressed by the other, the stage is set for the development of new ideas. In the case of the “nature-nurture” example, the capacity of each side of the debate to embrace the idea that genes and environment affect each other *transforms the terms* of the issue at hand. It becomes clear that what was once understood as two independent forces – nature and nurture – are not independent at all. If neither nurture nor nature can work without the other, it no longer makes sense to ask which is more important. The question becomes no longer one of *either* nature *or* nurture, or even “how much” of an effect nature versus nurture has on development, but instead, *how* they work together to produce different types of developmental outcomes. A new idea is created that *resolves* the conflict in question.

CHAPTER 6: IDENTIFYING IDEOLOGIES

As discussed above, an *ideology* is a system of beliefs that explains the world. Ideologies are typically beliefs about the nature and value of political and economic systems. However, social and political ideologies almost always extend beyond merely political and economic beliefs. They also involve *values* and *beliefs* about human nature (e.g., “Are humans basically good, bad or neutral?”), the nature of *morality* (e.g., “What makes an action *right*, *good* or *worthy*?”), *religion* (e.g., “Is there a God? Does God prescribe behavior?”) – as well as local *values* (e.g., “Don’t eat meat”), past *grievances* (e.g., “The police have discriminated against us for years”; “people don’t know how difficult it is to be a police officer”), and *identifications* and identity groups (e.g., national, regional, religious, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, etc.).

Ideologies are deeply-felt systems of beliefs, values and commitments. This is shown in Figure X. We can think of ideologies as composed of at least four basic parts. The first is (1) the *position(s)* that a person adopts on a given issue. As discussed above, positions are motivated by some sort of (2) *interest* or underlying *need*. Ideologies are often, but not always, fueled by (3) *grievances* and deep-seated *emotions*. Grievances occur when a person’s or group’s interests and needs are threatened or unmet. Ideological positions tend to be strongly influenced by historical grievances and the emotions they evoke. Most important, ideologies are structured by sets of (4) *values*, *beliefs* and *identifications*.



The nature of (1) positions and (2) interests (needs) have been discussed at length above. Ideological (3) grievances consist of assessments of the wrongdoings that others have committed against the self. They consist of short- and long-term complaints and resentments against political adversaries or members of some “out-group”. In extreme circumstances, grievances take the form of feelings of marginalization and humiliation experienced by various identity groups who have been systematically exploited by dominant groups (e.g., war, structural racism, sexism, etc.). Since grievances are typically reactions to thwarted and unmet needs, they tend to generate strong emotion – especially emotions that are directed toward those who are seen as opposing the self.

These emotional aspects of ideological systems are very important. This is because *emotions organize behavior*. We often think that “we” – as conscious, thinking individuals – are in “control” of our actions. It is true, of course, that we are able to exert conscious control over our actions. But our capacity to exert conscious control over our actions is not unlimited. Our conscious thoughts are typically organized by our *emotional* states. If we are feeling angry, we are more likely to blame other people when things don’t go our way. When we are feeling afraid, we are more likely to interpret even neutral events as dangerous. When we are feeling joyful, we are more likely to feel optimistic about things that we are trying to do. It would be a

mistake to think of the belief and values that structure political ideologies as merely “rational” or “logical” thoughts. Our ideological beliefs are deeply-felt ones. Emotion is part of what holds ideological beliefs together.

The core of an ideological system consists of the (4) *values*, *belief* and *identification* that given an ideology its content. A *belief* is a statement that one takes or accepts to be true. To believe in something is different than to know: *beliefs* imply some degree of *uncertainty* and perhaps some sort of faith in their truth value (e.g., “I believe that people should have the right own firearms”); *knowledge* refers to more certain forms of understandings – concepts that are taken by some criteria to be true (e.g., “Donald Trump won 304 electoral votes in 2016 Presidential election”). *Values* refer to conditions, states or qualities that people assign importance or worth (e.g., “It is important for families to have dinner together”; “It is good to be compassionate”; “freedom is better than tyranny”). To value something is to indicate its quality, importance, priority or even sacredness in life.

A person’s *identity* and identifications are typically a part of their ideological beliefs – or at least one of the reasons that people come to hold their beliefs. An identity is simply one’s sense of “who I am”. An identity can be a personal one (e.g., “I am a grouchy professor at a small New England College”) or a social one (e.g., “I am a feminist, African-American, Republican, Democrat, etc.”). A social identity consists of one’s sense of belonging in some sort of group. This can include one’s sense of belonging to a group defined by nation, organization, community, movement, political party, race, sex, sexual orientation, club, or some other type of grouping.

Acknowledging a person’s *identity* – whether personal or social – is deeply important. If an identity is a person’s sense of “who I am” – to fail to acknowledge or respect a person’s identity is to dismiss their sense of “who they are”. It is to dismiss the core of their being. To dismiss or fail to recognize the identity of the other is to dismiss that person as a person. This leads to feelings of humiliation and shame, which lead to feelings of anger, rage, resentment – and in its most extreme forms – violence. Humiliation is one of the deepest sources of interpersonal and intergroup conflict. It is for this reason that understanding, acknowledging and honoring the personal and social identities of the other is so important -- even in cases where one disagrees vehemently with the beliefs and values that define the other’s identity. It is possible to honor the person while disagreeing with a person’s beliefs, values and identifications.

Why Ideologies are Hard to Change

Ideologies change slowly. Different ideological systems can rarely be bridged in their entirety. Ideologies change slowly. They typically change when old ways of thinking are gradually replaced by new ways of thinking as groups of people developed new ways of solving old problems. However, while broad-scale ideologies change slowly, there is much that can be done to bridge differences between ideologies at any given point in time.

Ideologies are complex *systems*. A system is any set of elements that *work together* as a single whole. Entire systems rarely change in one fell swoop. Instead, partial changes in a way of thinking tend to precede changes in an ideology as a whole. Ideological change tends to begin with small changes in the parts of a particular way of thinking. Over time, smaller or more local changes can “ripple” throughout an entire ideological system. Changes in the parts call into question larger more central ideological beliefs and commitments. Over time, conflicts and contradictions arise *within* ideological systems themselves. At this point, attempts to resolve conflicts and contradictions that arise *within* a given ideological system can result in the transformation of the entire system as a whole. Gradual changes in the parts of an ideological system can, over time, give rise to massive -changes in the system as a whole. When this occurs, ideological transformation can occur relatively quickly. Abrupt changes in a broad system of thinking can occur relatively quickly after long periods of gradual change in the parts of that system.

We often think of the beliefs and values as if they were products of “rational”, “logical” or “intellectual” thought. We express this when we say, “I don’t understand how the other person can believe...” or “That person must be crazy to believe...” or “there is something wrong with the way that person thinks”. If beliefs and values are products of “rational thought”, then it makes sense to say that some beliefs are “rational” while others are “irrational”. Rational and logical thought may be part of the process by which we create and justify our beliefs and values – but beliefs and values are *not* arrived at through a dispassionate or rational process. To *value* something is to say that it is *good*. Judgments of good are never simply rational judgments: they are judgments that involve and are organized by strong feeling and emotion. It is not always possible to justify our values in a rational way. When we try to justify our ideological beliefs, we often tend to come back to some principle, idea or condition that we regard as *good* for no other reason than because we regard it as *good*.

If this is so, then no amount of “logic”, “rationality” or “convincing” will change a person’s beliefs and values. If we want to bridge the gap between your beliefs and mine, we will have to go beyond attempts to use “logic” and “rationality” in an attempt to “convince” or “persuade” someone to change their beliefs. Logic matters – but it is not the only or even necessarily the most important process that we can use to bridge differences between people. The first step is to seek understanding of the other person’s beliefs and values. This requires compassion, empathy and curiosity – not mere logic or rationality.

An ideology is not simply a set of abstract and emotion-less “ideas” or “thoughts”. People *care* deeply about their ideological commitments – they identify themselves with those commitments. Strong emotions arise when people feel that their values, beliefs and commitments are being challenged. In fact, quite often, ideological beliefs have their history in a series of grievances, hurts and humiliations that groups of people suffer over time. This is but one of the reasons why resolving political disputes can be so difficult.

Although bridging ideological beliefs is difficult, it is not impossible. Doing so requires that we change the way that we think about ideological conflict. It becomes necessary to lead with

emotion and understanding rather than logic, rationality. It requires acknowledging the social and emotional needs to motivate people to adopt the ideologies that they do. The first step in this process is to work toward a *deep understanding* of those ideologies.

Skill 9: Understanding the Ideologies of Self and Other

The first steps toward seeking to bridge differences between competing ideologies is to know that ideological systems exist, to know that they matter, and to be able to identify them. This can be done in a variety of ways.

The most direct way to gain access to the ideologies of self and other is simply to adopt an attitude of deep curiosity and to ask questions about each of part of an ideological system. These questions, indicated in Figure X, are repeated here:

1. What is your **position** on this issue? That is, what is your sense of how this issue should be addressed?
2. Why do you adopt this position? That is, what problems would be solved if this position were to prevail? What **interests** motivate you to take this position? What **unmet needs** are you trying to meet by adopting this position?
3. What complaints, **grievances**, or problems do you have with people who oppose you on this issue?
4. How do these grievances make you **feel**? What feelings and emotions do you have about those who oppose you on this issue? What feelings and emotions do you have about this issue in general?
5. What deep-felt **values** and **beliefs** do you have about this issue? What do you believe or value that makes you take the position that you do on this issue?
6. What **groups** do you **identify with or belong to** that think in the same way that you do? What social groups, movements, parties, organizations, religions (if any) do you identify with that share your beliefs about this issue? What does that group believe?

It is important to ask these questions from an attitude of deep *curiosity* and *empathy*. The goal of asking these questions is to understand the ideological commitments of the other – not to agree or disagree or to convince the other of the merits of your ideological system. Your job is to understand and appreciate the beliefs and experiences of other as completely as possible – even if you do not agree with what the other believes or values. It is to put yourself in the position of the other and to try to experience the world in the ways that the other does – even if you do not agree with the other's values and beliefs. One way to do this is to ask questions of the other in a way that you would want the other to ask questions of you yourself. Try to understand the other with the same depth that you would want them to understand you. Treat the other person as if the other person were you yourself.

Questions and Follow-Up Questions. Asking questions to understand another person's perspective is difficult. It is not sufficient to merely read a question and simply record what the other says in a mechanical way. It is essential that you seek to understand what the other is

saying. When one person asks a question, answer provided by the other person's is usually only the beginning of the process of understanding. It is rarely the case that one person will understand another person's perspective on the basis of a single answer to any given question. Any single answer to a question almost always raises more questions. Thus, for any single answer to a given question, it is usually necessary to ask a series of follow-up questions.

Follow-up questions are those that are asked so that an interviewer *can achieve a full and detailed understanding* of the perspective of the person being interviewed. Follow-up questions cannot ordinarily be specified beforehand. The goal of the interviewer is to understand the *other's* perspective – how the other sees and understands the world. The other's perspective will often be *different* from the interviewer's perspective. Follow-up questions are thus designed to fill in the *interviewer's* understanding of the *other's* perspective. A follow-up question is determined by the *gap* between what the *other is saying* and the *interviewer's understanding* of what the other is saying. The interviewer keeps asking follow-up questions until she feels she has a deep understanding of how the other understands the situation at hand. Follow-up questions end when the interviewer is able to summarize what the person being interviewed is saying to that person's satisfaction. It is the other person who determines whether the interviewer understands what he or she is asserting – not the interviewer. Questioning continues until the *interviewee* feels as though he or she is being understood.

The following provides an example of the use of questions and follow-up questions to understand the ideological beliefs and commitments of another person. Follow-up questions are used to gain clarity about the meaning of an interviewee's responses to main questions. When using follow-up questions, the most important task is to try to understand. It is highly likely that, when seeking to identify the ideological beliefs of someone whose perspectives one does not clearly understand, issues will arise that are confusing or contrary to the beliefs of the interviewer. Under such circumstances, it is natural for the interviewer to want to challenge or take issue with what the interviewee has said. This, however, would be contrary to the goal of seeking understanding. To seek understanding, one must seek to put aside [but not eliminate] one's own beliefs and values long enough to be genuinely curious about the other.

An Example

Relationships between police officers and the citizens of poor, urban communities – often areas housing large populations of persons of color – have often been strained. The *Black Lives Matter* movement was launched after a series of incidents involving the shooting and killing of Black men by white police officers (e.g., the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and others). The *Black Lives Matter* movement spawned a series of counter-movements. Adversaries typically address the conflict in terms of a debate over positions. In an attempt to distance the question of the worthiness of human from the issue of race, some have asserted the counter-position that "All lives matter". Disputants counter by observing that taking the position that "all lives matter" obscures the fact that "Black lives have not traditionally mattered as much as White lives" and thus that, "All lives cannot matter if Black lives do not matter". This process, of course, consists of a debate over positions – a power

struggle in which groups seek to understand each other only long enough to articulate a counter-position to the other. In such emotionally-charged debates, the stakes are high. Born of long periods of grievances, not only are political agendas “on the line”, but so are the egos and identities of all involved. To lose the debate is not only fail to advance an agenda, it also results in loss, humiliation and anger – that is, a failure of face.

The *Police Lives Matter* and *Blue Lives Matter* movements emerged in opposition to the Black Lives Matter movement. These movements emerged out of the sense that police officers were being inappropriately criticized as targeting Black citizens. Police Lives Matter movements called attention to the difficult nature of police work – that police officers routinely risk injury and death, and, in situations involving the perception of threat, must make life-or-death decisions under stressful conditions. The clash between the *Black Lives Matter* and *Police Lives Matter* movements is a deeply ideological one. It is born of long-felt grievances, strong emotions, unmet interests and needs – all of which are played out against the backdrop of deep-seated differences in ideological beliefs, values and identifications.

The following contains a hypothetical interaction between a white male and a person of color regarding the formation of the group “Black Lives Matter”. While the interaction is hypothetical, unless otherwise indicated through the use of *italics*, the content of the interviewee’s statements is derived verbatim from www.blacklivesmatter.com.²

Dialogue	Comments
<p>Self: What need is “Black Lives Matter” intended to address? What problems is this movement seeking to solve?</p> <p>Other: As an organization, Black Lives Matter is committed to struggling together and to imagining and creating a world free of anti-Blackness, where every Black person has the social, economic, and political power to thrive.</p>	<p>Interviewer starts by seeking to understand the need and interests of the group.</p>
<p>Self: Although it may be obvious, can you tell me more about what you mean by “anti-blackness”? That term could mean different things to different people, so I’m trying to understand what it means to you.</p> <p>Other: The impetus for that commitment...is the rampant and deliberate violence inflicted on us by the state. Black Lives Matter began as a call to action in response to state-sanctioned violence and anti-Black racism.</p>	<p>It may or may not be obvious what “anti-blackness” means. To clarify, the interviewer asks for further clarification -- being careful not to challenge the idea of “anti-blackness”</p>

² Because the dialogue itself is hypothetical, any errors in interpreting the meaning of advocates of the *Black Lives Matter* framework should be attributed to the author of this manual.

<p>Self: You speak of rampant and deliberate violence. What do you mean by this? Can you give an example?</p> <p>Other: We have been enraged by the death of Trayvon Martin and the subsequent acquittal of his killer, George Zimmerman. [We are in] search of justice for Mike Brown and all of those who have been torn apart by state-sanctioned violence and anti-Black racism.</p>	<p>It is likely that someone who opposes the Black Lives Matter movement might disagree that the terms “rampant” and “deliberate” are appropriate. At this phase, it is essential to put aside any such beliefs and seek to understand these concepts as experienced by the other.</p>
<p>Self: In what ways do you feel that the violence against Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown are “state-sanctioned”? What does “state sanctioned” mean to you?</p> <p>Other: I couldn’t imagine how in 2013 a white passing person could kill a young boy and not be held accountable. I didn’t want George Zimmerman to be the period to the story. I didn’t want his name to be the name held up over and over again by the media, by his fellow white supremacists.</p>	<p>It is not sufficient for the interviewer to “gloss over” difficult issues. In order for understanding to occur, it is essential to understand the meaning of these ideas from the standpoint of the other. As such, at this point, it is essential that questions do not harbor any suggestion of negative judgment about the ideas expressed.</p>
<p>Self: So, let me see if I understand. <i>Black Lives Matter</i> is an organization whose members believe that anti-blackness is reflected in systemic and deliberate acts of racial violence against Black people. The goal of <i>Black Lives Matter</i> is to create a world free of “anti-blackness” – one in which Black persons are able to succeed socially, economically and politically.</p>	<p>The interviewer’s job it to understand the interviewee’s perspective from the standpoint of the interviewee. Here, the interviewer summarizes the interviewees statements until the interviewee is confident that the interviewer genuinely understands what is being said.</p>

Recording and Representing the Ideological Beliefs of the Other. Answers to each question should be recorded in a systematic way. The recording should convey a clear understanding of the other’s perspective to anyone who reads the recording. There are many ways to record and represent the ideological beliefs of the other. The most simple and direct way to do so is simply to take notes about what the interviewee is saying. Taking notes helps the interviewer not only to *remember* what the interviewee is saying, but also to *understand* the interviewee’s ideology.

An alternative way to represent the ideological beliefs of the other is represent them visually in the form of a diagram. An *Ideological Portrait* allows all of the features of an ideological system to be seen and grasped at the same time. To create an Ideological Portrait, one simply summarizes the interviewee’s response to each question and organizes them in a meaningful way. Here is an Ideological Portrait of the positions, needs, grievances, feelings, beliefs, values and identifications taken from www.blacklivesmatter.com.

Note that the Ideological Portrait depicted below identifies the positions adopted by the social party in question. A major conflict resolution principle is to negotiate from *interests* (needs), and never *positions*. While a full Ideological Portrait contains a representation of the positions endorsed by a particular party, it is often helpful to eliminate reference to positions in actual problem-solving discussions. We have indicated this in Ideological Portraits using the “not” (⊖) symbol.

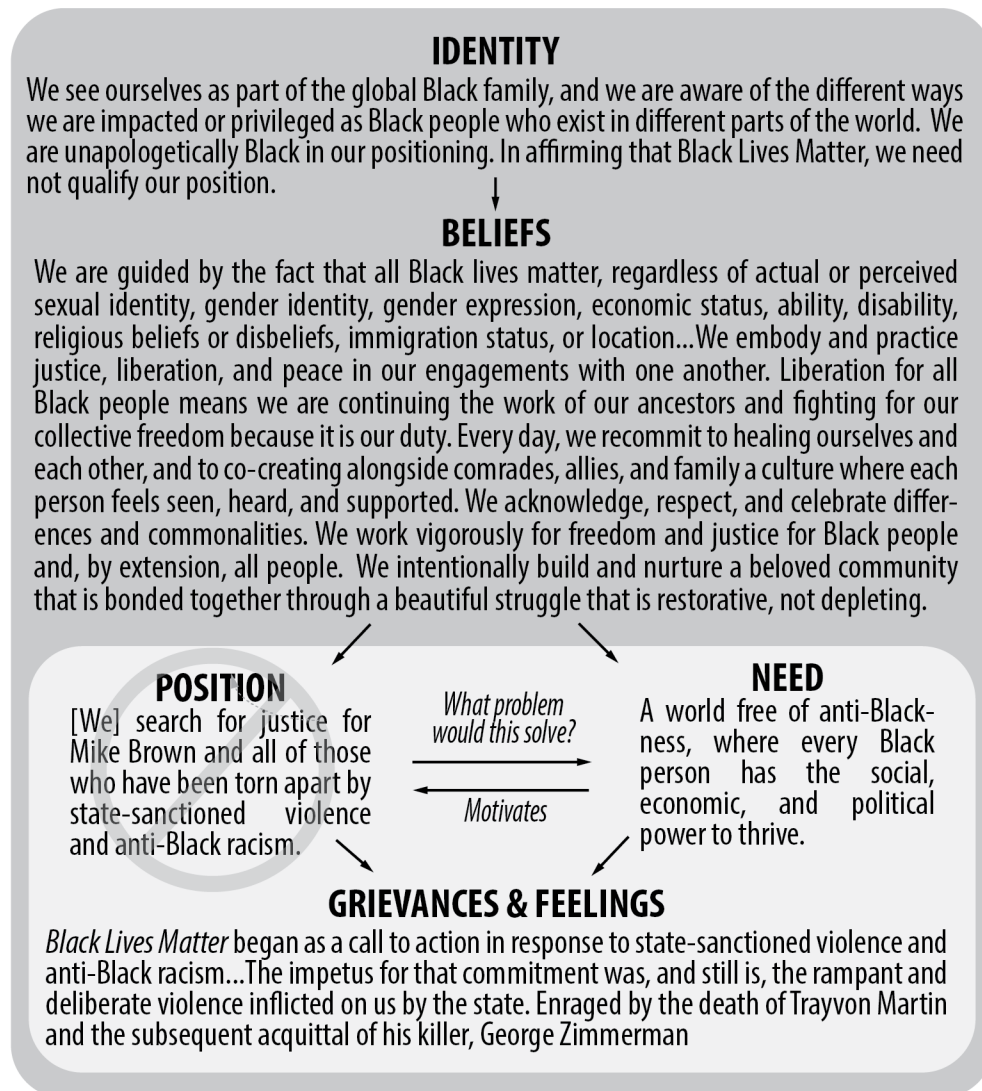


Figure X: Ideological Portrait for Black Lives Matter

Adapted from www.blacklivesmatter.com

A series of movements critical of the *Black Lives Matter* movement have arisen. One such class of movements involves some groups of police officers and police advocates who feel that the Black Lives Matter movement has resulted in backlash and hostility toward law enforcement officials. These include the *Blue Lives Matter* and *Police Lives Matter* movements. The following consists of an Ideological Portrait that might be seen as representative of these movements.

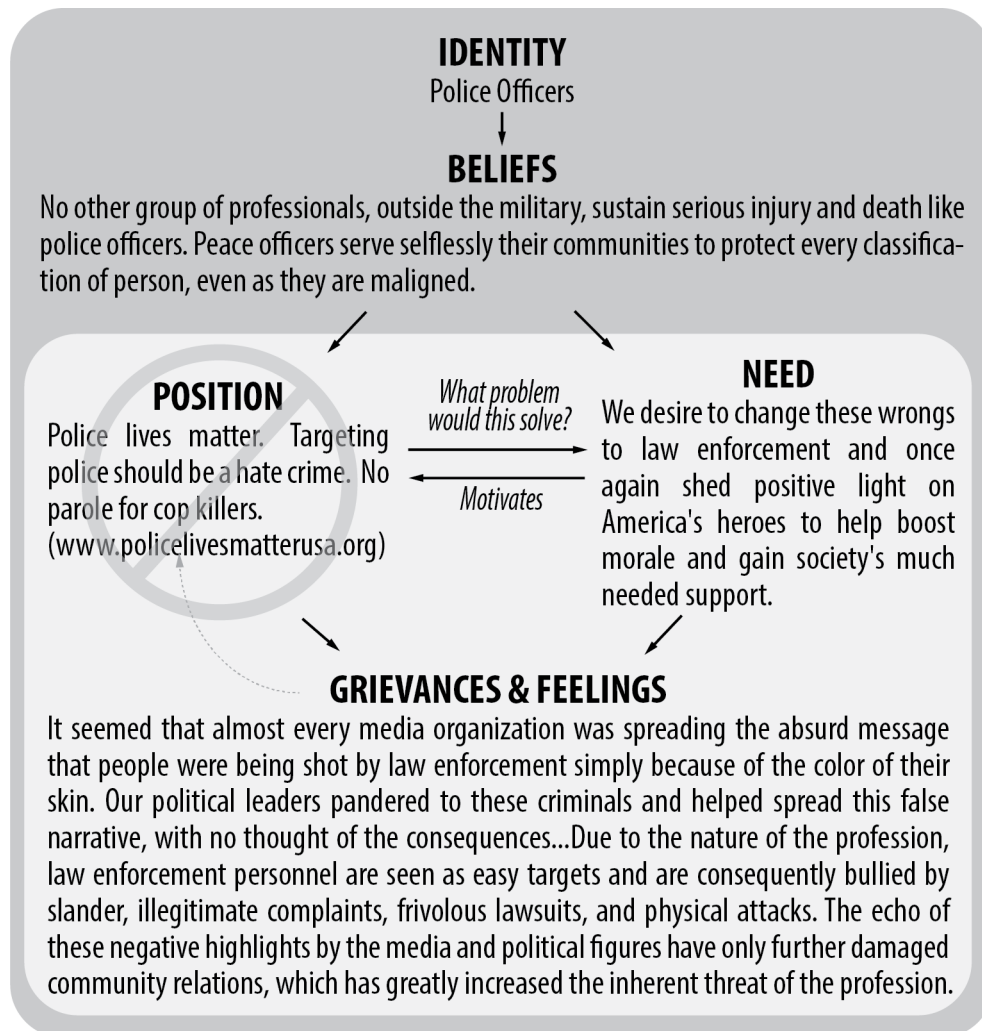


Figure X: Ideological Portrait for Blue Lives Matter

Adapted from <https://defensemaven.io/bluelivesmatter> and www.policelivesmatterusa.org.

Ideological Portraits provide a concise representation of the main ideas that define ideological beliefs of different individuals or parties. When ideological portraits are written in the words of those who hold the beliefs in question, the capacity to refer to them mitigates the tendency to characterize or misrepresent the ideologies of others. In this way, they can provide an effective basis for structuring discussions focused on bridging ideological divides.

CHAPTER 7: BRIDGING IDEOLOGIES

Resolving *ideological* conflict is a long-term and difficult process. Having developed an initial understanding of the ideological beliefs of parties to a political dispute, the task of bridging ideological divides involves process of refining and mutual accommodation.

The process of relating to others involves a persistent and ongoing tension between two emotions: *Fear for the self* (motivated by self-interest) and *concern for the other* (motivated by care and compassion). In situations involving conflict, fear for the self tends to eclipse concern for the other. In situations involving conflict, people take sides and seek to defend the self from the advances of the other. This is a natural and understandable expression of fear for the self. In situations involving conflict, to the extent that fear for the self predominates over concern for the other, the conflict will almost inevitably escalate into a power struggle. At best, power struggles are resolved through debate and compromise; at worse, they are settled – never resolved – through aggression, violence and war.

Does this mean that, in the context of conflict, people should seek to prioritize concern for the other over self-interest? Should they seek to inhibit fear for the self in favor of compassion for the other? Should they resolve conflict through an attempt to meet the needs and demands of the other? In any attempt to resolve conflict, ideological or otherwise, it would be a grave error to inhibit the needs and beliefs and defer to the needs of the other. Such an approach becomes mere placation or appeasement. Conflict is not resolved if one party “gives in” to the other. Conflict cannot be resolved through self-abnegation. In managing interpersonal and intergroup conflict, the error of letting *fear for the self* predominate over *concern for the other* cannot be corrected by elevating the needs of the other over the needs of the self. Such a strategy would commit the same error – only in reverse.

Seeking a Third Way

Power struggles arise naturally. It takes effort and will to transform them into attempts to bridge differences collaboratively. Perhaps the greatest obstacle in launching any attempt to bridge ideological differences is the understandable (but erroneous) belief that it is simply not possible to bridge opposing beliefs. The biggest obstacle in bridging opposing differences is the persistent belief that, if two ideas are in conflict, only one can be right. If this is so, the task of trying to bridge differences would appear to be a futile one.

However, as shown in the last section, the idea that two contradictory ideas – “It is dark” and “It is light” -- cannot be true at the same time only holds under certain background conditions. In everyday conflicts, such background conditions are typically unarticulated and not well understood. What do the statements “it is dark” or “it is light” mean? For example, let’s look at the term “it”. What is the “it” that is either dark or light in these phrases? When we are speaking, for example, about day and night, the term “it” becomes deeply ambiguous. Do we mean the rising of the sun? The presence of any light in the atmosphere? The presence or

absence of light in a particular sphere as viewed by particular people with particular capacities for perceiving light?

The same questions arise for the meaning of the terms “dark” or “light”. IN the context of discussing “day” and “night”, does “darkness” mean something like “pitch black”? Under this definition of “dark”, the night could never be regarded as entirely “dark”. Does darkness mean the inability see the sun on the horizon? Does the determination of “dark” or “light” require the presence of any particular amount of light energy being emitted from a source? If so, who would decide what constitutes “dark” or “light”?

The point is not that such questions cannot be answered, that terms like “dark” and “light” cannot be defined, or that terms like “dark” and “light” have no meaning. No, the point here is simply that in any given situation, what we call “dark” and “light” is determined by a series of background conditions – shared and contested beliefs, assumptions and values that we are not necessarily aware that we even have. The meaning of the term “dark” when I ask “Is it *dark* out yet?” differs if I am trying to determine whether there is sufficient light to work outdoors, whether the Sabbath has arrived, whether it is dark enough to identify evening stars. In each case, we understand the meaning of “dark” and “light” differently. Terms like “dark” and “light” have different meanings to different people in different contexts and for different goals. These are the “background conditions” that determine the meaning of the words that we use.

At this point, it can begin to become clearer how statements that appear to contradict each other under one set of “background conditions” may not contradict each other under a different set of “background conditions”.

When two beliefs clash, it is a mistake to believe that only one can be true, useful, valid or worthy. In any given discussion, the articulation of contradictory beliefs by two parties should be regarded as the *starting* point for conversation – not its end. Often – perhaps much more often than we are prepared to believe – it is possible to build bridges between opposing beliefs. But this requires some faith in the idea that there may be a third (fourth, fifth or n_{th}) way to resolve a dispute – one that is neither *mine* nor *yours*, but genuinely *ours*. While such resolutions may not always be complete ones, or even entirely happy ones – they are nonetheless possible.

The Process of Dialectical Problem-Solving

In light of the ever-present tension between *fear for the self* and *concern for the other*, resolving ideological conflict requires an open-ended willingness toward *transforming existing ways of thinking* while nonetheless *maintaining core beliefs and values*.

As shown in Figure X, the process of bridging ideologies proceeds as series of iterative steps. The first step consists of the (1) awareness of conflict and the initial identification of conflicting ideologies. At this step, building upon the practices discussed in Part I (e.g., connecting with the humanity of the other; empathic listening, regulation strong emotion, etc.), partners adopt a

credulous stance in order to gain a deep understanding of the system of ideological beliefs embraced by the other. The process of identifying and seeking understanding of ideological belief systems was described in Chapter 6.

Part of the process of understanding the ideological beliefs and commitments involves identifying an individual's or group's interests, desires, goals and needs. When addressing ideological conflicts, each party's needs and interests tend to be organized by ideological belief. However, to the extent that it is possible to identify interests that are not ideologically structured or otherwise separate each party's interests from the ideological beliefs that organize them, it is possible to engage in *need-based problem-solving* (Part I). Again, because interests and ideological beliefs are typically intertwined, this is not always possible. To engage in needs-based problem-solving, it is not only necessary to separate interests from *positions* (Part I), it is also necessary to separate interests from the ideological *beliefs*. A benefit of needs-based problem-solving is the possibility that disputants can produce the experience of having basic interests and needs acknowledged, attended to and met prior to moving onward to address more difficulty ideological clashes. However, if a judgment is made that interests and needs cannot be sufficiently separated to engage in needs-based problem-solving, participants should move to the next step – that of mutually engaging opposing beliefs.

The second step occurs as parties (2) begin the process of *mutual engagement*. This is the process of seeking a deep mutual understanding of each party's ideological beliefs with regards to the question or issue at hand. Mutual engagement involves the process of actively comparing different ideological systems, identifying points of both commonality and opposition, and seeking to identify "kernels of truth" in *opposing* ideological beliefs. As shown above (Chapter 5), in everyday life, clashing beliefs are rarely mutually exclusive in their entirety. It is often possible to identify some aspect of the other's belief – however small, hidden, vague or seemingly banal – that one can regard as valuable, reasonable, worthy or in some sense "true". The capacity to seek out "truths" in the beliefs of the other – truths that can be accepted without compromising one's own beliefs – is the first step to entertaining ways in which parties can begin the complex process of slowly adjusting their own ideological beliefs to accommodate to the "truths" they find each other.

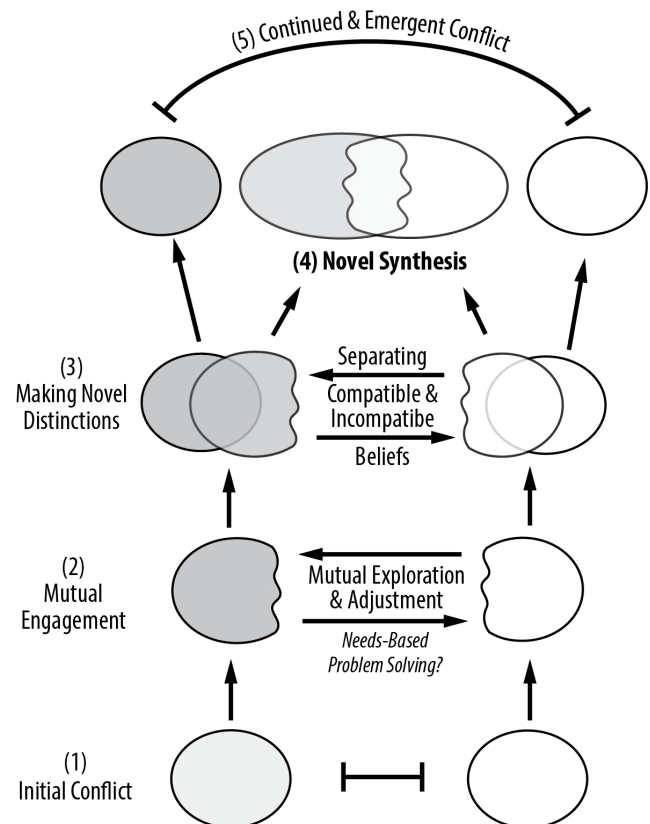


Figure X: From Conflict to Shared Beliefs

The third step – (3) *Making Novel Distinctions (Differentiation)* – occurs as an attempt to resolve conflicts between and among conflicting ideologies themselves – structured systems of beliefs, values, identifications and so forth. This step occurs needs-based problem solving has run its

course (either successfully or unsuccessfully), or when the needs of involved parties cannot be separated from the clashing ideologies that define them. Having identified “kernels of truth” in the opposing beliefs of the other, partners continue to adjust their own beliefs systems to the kernels of truth found in each other’s beliefs. In so doing, they begin to *make novel distinctions* in their own systems of beliefs. In so doing, they begin to identify novel beliefs that are compatible with the beliefs of the opposing party and differentiate them from other existing beliefs that remain incompatible with the other. In this way, partners *break down* their existing beliefs into parts that are both compatible and incompatible with their partner’s beliefs. By continuously seeking to identify “elements of truth” in each other’s expressed beliefs, partners modify and refine their beliefs to accommodate to those “truths” – but without “giving in” on their own inviolate beliefs, values or identifications.

The fourth step – (4) *synthesizing novel forms of shared belief* – occurs after partners have broken down and successfully accommodated their individual beliefs to the truths they find in the other. Having done so, partners can then *bring together* (integrate) their now modified beliefs into a single, novel and shared belief. The new belief consists of a novel SYNTHESIS of ideas contributed by each partner. The SYNTHESIS is often (but not always) an entirely new way of thinking – one that neither partner could have created alone – and one that resolves conflict between the contradictory ideas under discussion. However, no single iteration of problem solving can resolve all (or even a minority) of the conflicts that exist between opposing ideological systems. At best, a successful round is likely to resolve a but one or more local conflicts. Further rounds of problem-solving are needed to seek to reconcile a broader range of conflicting beliefs.

The process of bridging ideological conflict occurs slowly over many iterations. While smaller and more local conflicts are resolvable in relatively shorter periods of time, it takes time and effort to cultivate the level of trust and commitment needed to bridge larger and more complex ideological divides. The bridging of ideological divides – whether local or on a broad scale -- is always likely to be partial at best. In fact, new forms of agreement achieved through the process of dialectical problem solving may themselves give rise to novel forms of conflict over time. While every conflict holds out the possibility for resolving conflict through further development, each new development – each new SYNTHESIS – brings forward the possibility of a novel form of conflict. While new forms of conflict are inevitable, as the process continues, the novel forms of conflict that arise from more stable, interconnected and shared foundations. Building upon such foundations, novel conflicts are much more likely to be resolvable in effective, peaceful and mutually beneficial ways.

Thus, the process of bridging ideological divides involves *mutual transformation* while maintaining the *integrity of the self*. It requires a willingness to engage the other – to entertain ideological beliefs with which one may disagree vehemently and with which one is predisposed to disagree vehemently. The courage and capacity to engage in such process is bolstered by the slow development of mutual trust, and the knowledge that, optimally, neither partner is being asked to give up or give in on their core, inviolate or sacred beliefs and values. Mutual

respect for the integrity of the other is needed to foster and degree of mutual accommodation, and vice-versa.

Needs-Based Problem-Solving in Ideological Conflicts

In Part I, we focused on the need to separate political *positions* from the *interests* and needs that motivate them. In Part II, we focus on situations in which a party's needs are defined and determined by different *ideological beliefs*. As stated above, when needs and beliefs are intertwined, it becomes necessary to seek to reconcile differences in ideological beliefs more directly. However, even in cases of ideological conflict, it is helpful to begin by focusing on interests and needs. When possible, it is helpful to seek to *separate* a party's interests and needs from the that person or party's ideological beliefs. Of course, this is not always possible. This is because a party's political interests and needs often organized by ideological beliefs, values and identifications. It is because ideologies tend to structure interests and needs that dialectical problem-solving – problem solving the focuses on bridging ideologies themselves – becomes necessary in the first place. Nonetheless, there are differences in the *degree* to which an individual's interests in a political dispute are organized by ideological beliefs. Some interests and needs are highly structured by ideological beliefs (e.g., "I want the *market* to decide the rates of rental units" or "It is necessary for the *government* to set limits on the rates of rental units"), while some interests are less strongly defined by ideological beliefs (e.g., "I want the cost of rental units to be *fair*").

To the extent it is possible, at least in part, to separate a party's interests from the ideologies that organize them, it is possible to engage in *needs-based problem-solving* (discussed in Part I) to seek resolution of such disputes. Conflicts in which interests and needs cannot be separated from the ideological systems of which they are a part require a more *dialectical* approach to reconciling opposing ideological beliefs.

Separating Needs from Beliefs

The task of identifying interests and needs is different in the case of ideologically-based conflict than it is in conflicts without significant ideological content. As discussed in Part I, in needs-based problem-solving, it is necessary to begin by separating *interests* from *positions*. To do this, for any given position, one can simply ask, "Why do you take this position?" or "What problem would this position solve for you?" When dealing with ideological conflict, it becomes important not only to separate needs from positions, but also to separate needs from the ideological beliefs and values that structure much of their meaning. To identify the needs that may be associated with different ideological beliefs, it is not sufficient simply to ask "why". When asked, "why do you adopt this belief?", persons typically respond with another belief that they view as more fundamental.

One way to separate needs from beliefs is to inquiry about the conditions that would prevail if the belief in question were *not* upheld. For example, imagine that a gun owner justifies the right to own guns by invoking the Second Amendment of the *United States Constitution*. He

might say, “I believe in the right to bear arms as stipulated in the *Constitution*”. This is a belief. To identify the need that is associated with this belief, one might ask, “What do you worry might happen if there was no Second Amendment – or if the Second Amendment were overturned?” Such questions help people identify the functions of their beliefs – that is, they help identify the circumstances that they are attempting to avoid by holding the beliefs that they do. A gun owner might say, “Well, the government would come and take away our guns”. One might then ask, “Why would this be a problem for you?” “What problems would arise for you if this were to happen?” or “What needs would be unmet if your guns were taken away from you?”

Possible responses to these questions might include: “I would not be able to own guns”, “I would not be able to hunt”, “I would lose my freedoms”, “I would lose a way of life that has been in my family for generations”, “I would not be able to protect my family”, “I would not be able to protect myself against government tyranny”. Each one of these statements points to a different need, namely, the need to *own guns*, to *hunt*, for *personal freedom and choice*, for *preserving a way of life*, *personal protection*, and *protection from government tyranny*. Although each of these needs and interests has some degree of ideological content, they are expressed in concrete ways that limits or otherwise allows interlocutors to “bracket” their ideological content.

Continuing the Example

As shown Figure X, first step involves seeking to understand the ideological systems of each party and identifying points of ideological conflict. As discussed in Chapter 6, this can be done by creating ideological portraits for each side of the issue, and then by identifying central forms of conflict. Ideological portraits for *Black Lives Matter* and *Police Lives Matter* Movements are provided in Figure X and Y. Conflict can exist between pairs of any or all of the various ideological elements, including positions, needs, grievances, feelings, beliefs, values and identifications. The task of resolving tensions between law enforcement and minority citizens of poor, urban communities is a difficult one that will require deep engagement among stakeholders and constituents over long periods of time.

Despite the ideological nature of the dispute, a first step is to seek to identify core needs and interests. In so doing, disputants can engage in needs-based problem solving to resolve non-ideological needs before seeking to address and bridge more entrenched differences. This practice draws on all of the principles and strategies discussed in Part I. As indicated above, to pursue needs-based problem solving in the context of ideological conflicts, in addition to the need to separate *interests* from *positions*, there is also a need to separate – as best as possible – interests from ideological beliefs and values. The following provides a hypothetical dialogue between advocates of the *Black Lives Matter* and *Blue Lives Matter* movements. The purpose of the dialogue is to engage, as best as possible, in needs-based problem-solving as a first step toward bridging ideological differences. The following dialogue is directed specifically toward separating the *interests* of each party from their ideological *beliefs*, and identifying sets of interests on each side that lend themselves to needs based problem-solving.

Dialogue	Comment
MEDIATOR: Let's begin by seeing if we understand each other's core needs. Drawing on your notes or on each other's Ideological Portraits, please try to summarize your understanding of each other's core needs and interests.	Mediator begins by prompting both participants to reflect upon and summarize their understanding of each other's core interests.
Black Lives Matter Advocate (BLM): Your needs are to shed positive light on law enforcement to correct the wrong beliefs that black lives are threatened by police officers. You are saying that the image of police officers as heroes rather than villains needs to be restored. Is this correct?	BLM advocate summarizes PLM needs as represented on PLM's <i>Ideological Portrait</i> .
Police Lives Matter Advocate (PLM): That is essentially correct. Police put their lives on the line, and we often feel that that is not acknowledged.	PLM acknowledges that BLM's summary is correct, and adds additional information.
BLM: I can imagine that it is difficult to feel unacknowledged when you feel that you are putting your life on the line.	BLM expresses empathy for the PLM unmet needs.
PLM: Thank you.	PLM acknowledges.
BLM: I understand your need for respect and recognition. People in the BLM movement feel as though, very often, that police do not act like heroes. In this way, from a BLM perspective, the criticism of the police is not something that is "wrong", but it resonates with the experience of people of color. Police officers act within a culture of White Male Supremacy. It important that Black citizens gain the power to be treated in ways that are equal to Whites.	BLM reiterates respect for the PLM needs. Seeking to avoid blame, the BLM advocate seeks to express areas of disagreement – namely, the idea that their critique is "wrong".
MEDIATOR: Would it be possible to agree that police, like any group, do both good things and bad things. Would it be possible to agree to work on the idea that police have a need to be respected and acknowledged for the good things that they do and that they try to do? That the dangerous and difficult role of the police officer is not always acknowledged and should be? If we can agree on that, we can put aside [bracket] the idea of whether the BLM is "right" or "wrong", and whether police officers should be regarded as "heroes" or "villains". We can return to these issues later in our discussion.	The mediator seeks to identify aspects of the needs of the police officer that would provide a starting point for problem-solving. The mediator differentiates the controversial issue of "wrongness" and "heroes" from the more basic need for human dignity. The mediator suggests that latter as a starting point for discussion.
BLM: As long as we can discuss these other issues later, that would be acceptable to me.	In order for interlocutors to agree on a starting point for discussion, they must not feel pressured to give up their core beliefs and commitments.
PLM: Same her -- I am fine with this, but I don't agree that the criticisms against us are "right".	
MEDIATOR: PLM, can you summarize your understanding of BLM's needs?	The process continues.
PLM: The BLM movement says that black lives matter more than police lives. They want to end racism, but that doesn't mean that all cops are racist.	The PLM advocate fails to summarize the BLM's needs,

		confusing his grievances with the needs of the BLM advocate
	MEDIATOR: You seem to be feeling the sting of the criticism of BLM. I can surely understand why you would feel that way. I want to assure you that you don't have to agree with BLM's criticism, and that we will discuss that issue at length later on. Right now, can we agree to wait to discuss that? Do you think you are able to focus what BLM has stated as their needs and summarize them? Or should we take some time to understand more about how you are feeling?	The mediator acknowledges and empathizes with the PLM feelings. Holding out the possibility of addressing them at the moment, the Mediator seeks to reassure PLM and to see if it is possible to move forward.
	PLM: No, that's okay. I can do that. So, BLM is saying that what BLM wants is to eliminate anti-Black racism, and to create a level playing field for all people. For BLM, Black Lives Matter, and Black people have not always been treated as if their lives matter.	PLM is accepts the challenge of moving on, and demonstrates his understanding of BLM's needs.
	BLM: Yes, you have it exactly. All lives can't matter unless Black lives matter too.	BLM accepts PLM's summary, and extends it further.
	MEDIATOR: So, let's state what we've agreed to address here. It seems as though both BLM and PLM want to feel dignity and respected by each other. PLM want to have their roles as police offices respected and to be acknowledged for the good they do. BLM want to eliminate anti-Black racism in order to provide a level playing field for social, economic and political success. Is that a fair statement of what we've agreed to?	Mediator seeks to represent the compatible needs of both BLM and PLM. In so doing, the Mediator puts aside [brackets] the currently incompatible needs for later discussion.

Through this process, each participant is able to distinguish their core needs from the more contestable ideological beliefs that frame them. Figure X identifies the progress that occurred within this dialogue. As indicated at points (1a) and (1b), both the *Black Lives Matter* and *Police Lives Matter* statements of need contain ideological content that readily lend themselves to objections from their interlocutors. The *Black Lives Matter* advocate speaks of (1a) the need for social, economic and political *power*. While the *Police Lives Matter* advocate respects the need to eliminate anti-Black *racism* (3a), he may interpret the expressed need for *power* as a threat to the legitimate authority of the police (2b). Conversely, the *Police Lives Matter* advocate expresses a need to (1b) reverse perceptions of police that he experiences as *wrong*. He wants the police to be regarded as heroes rather than villains. While the *Black Lives Matter* is able to appreciate that the (3b) *police have difficult jobs* and that they can sometimes *do good*, she rejects the idea that (2b) criticisms of the police are “*wrong*” or that police should properly be characterized as *heroes*.

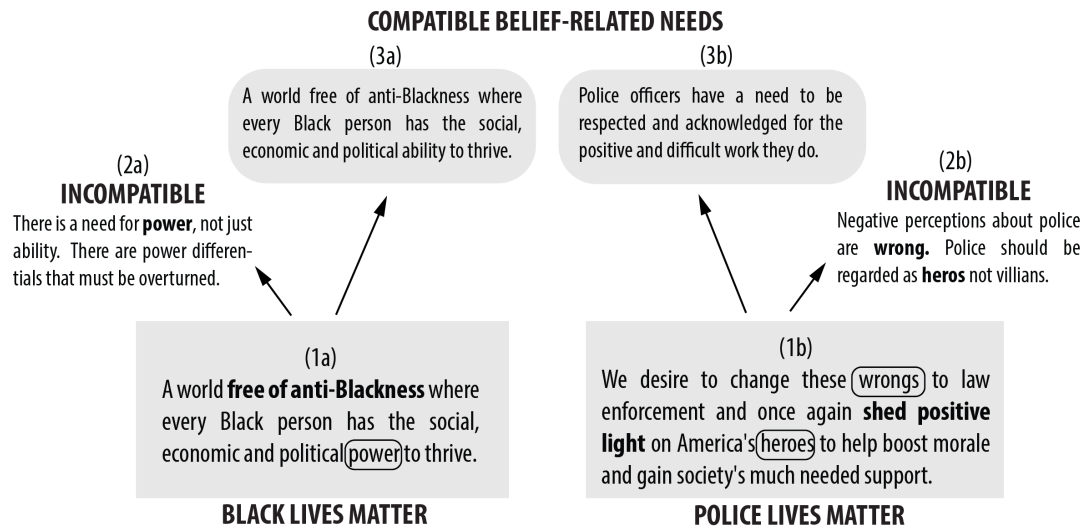


Figure X: Compatible and Incompatible Needs in Political Dialogue

Through this process, points (3a) and (3b) describe some of the core needs of both the *Black Lives Matter* and *Police Lives Matter* advocates in ways that are separated, as much as possible, from the more contentious beliefs associated with their respective ideologies. These statements can then become to foundation for needs-based problem-solving. The next step in the process would involve *brainstorming* possible solutions to the problem of seeking to meet both sets of needs simultaneously. In this particular case, the dyad seeks to identify specific and concrete ways in which they could identify to eliminate anti-Black racism in police-citizen relations while simultaneously fostering respectful relations between police and the citizens.

One example of how this might occur in a concrete way is shown in Figure X. Together, the dyad identifies a series of novel strategies for meeting both sets of needs at the same time. Examples of such strategies are described at Point (4) in Figure X. Some of these proposed solutions would advance the particulate needs of Black Lives Matter movement; others would advance the needs of the Police Lives Matter movement. Still others hold out a promise of advancing the needs of both. Point (5) identifies a novel shared solution that provides an opportunity for address both sets of needs simultaneously. Point (5) thus identifies a novel **SYNTHESIS** – a new solution that neither partner would likely have settle upon alone. The dyad agrees to have members of both groups meet to identify concrete “scripts” that police and Black citizens can use to begin to engage each other in respectful and dignified ways. The novel solution integrates partial solutions proposed by both parties in ways intended to produce maximum mutual gain.

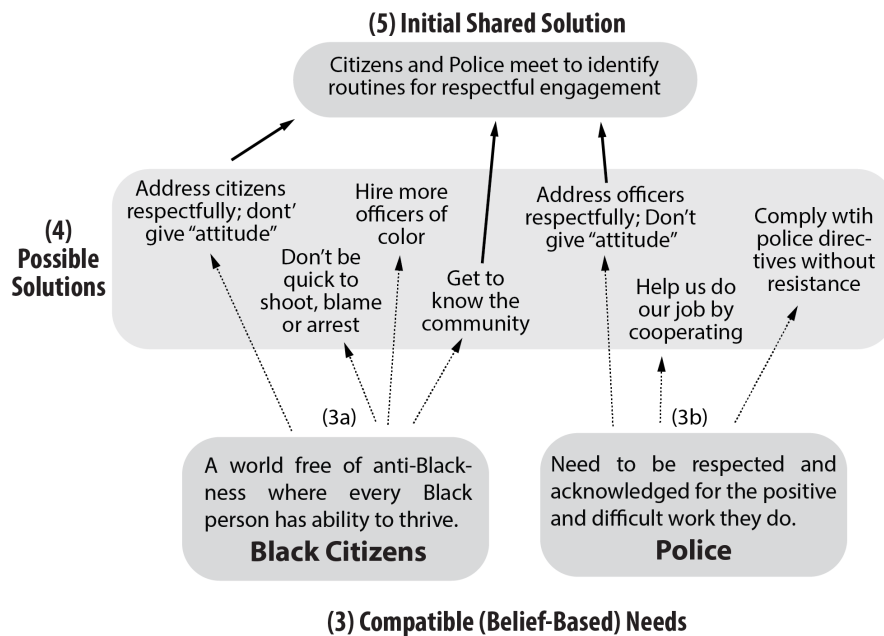


Figure X: Initial Solution through Needs-Based Collaborative Problem-Solving

While ideological clashes require that each party engage the other on the issue of their ideological differences, needs-based problem solving is a process that can and should be used at any point in the process of resolving ideologically-based conflict. To the extent that needs and interests can be identified in ways that are relatively neutral with respect to conflicting ideologies, they lend themselves to needs-based problem solving at any point in the process.

CHAPTER 8: CREATING SHARED BELIEFS THROUGH DIALECTICAL PROBLEM-SOLVING

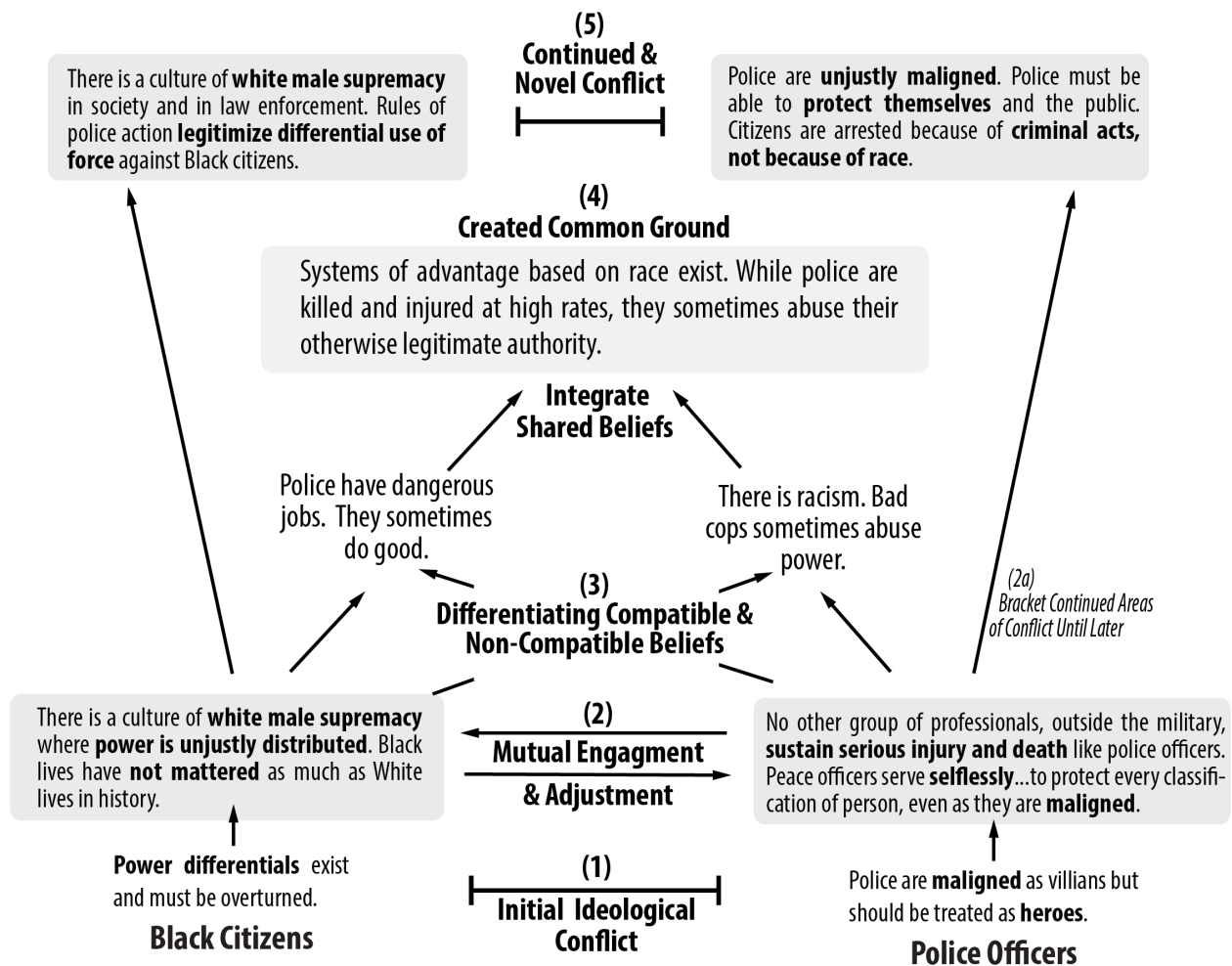


Figure X: Creating New Ground through Dialectical Problem-Solving

The task of managing and resolving ideological conflicts tends to require more than needs-based problem-solving. This is because the conflicting needs of political disputants are typically organized with reference to different ideologies beliefs. When this happens, it becomes necessary to address elements of clashing ideologies more or less directly through the non-violence process of dialectical problem-solving. As indicated in Figure 7.x, Step 1 in this process involves identifying the nature of the ideological conflict and seeking some degree of redress through needs-based problem solving. Step 2 involves the process of mutual engagement in which each party seeks out "kernels of truth" in the beliefs and values of the other, while steadfastly adhering to one's own core beliefs, values and commitments. At Step 3, parties break down and adjust elements of their respective belief systems in order to accommodate to the "truths" found in the beliefs of the others. At Step 4, interlocutors identify ways to integrate or bring novel compatible beliefs together into a novel shared belief or set of beliefs (a SYNTHESIS) -- while simultaneously bracketing sources of continued conflict. The new SYNTHESIS can be either small or large, incremental or transformative or either local or global in scope. In

any case, any novel SYNTHESIS is unlikely to resolve an ideological conflict in full. As a result, a Step 5, disputants turn their attention to continued and novel sources of ideological conflict, and the process iterates indefinitely or until a desired level of resolution is achieved.

Figure 8.1 illustrates the process of dialectical problem-solving in the context of the dispute between *Black Lives Matter* and *Police Lives Matter* movements

Step 1: The Initial Conflict

A description of the process of identifying the initial conflict, comparing conflicting ideological systems and seeking initial resolution of conflicting differences through needs-based problem-solving is provided in Chapters 6 and 7.

Step 2: Mutual Engagement

Having articulated a clear understanding of clashing ideologies, the next step is to begin the process of *mutual engagement*. This involves (a) *identifying “kernels of truth”* in the opposing beliefs of the other and (b) *adjusting existing ideas* to the truths found in the other. Mutual engagement is possible to the extent that each party:

- understands the need to consider and seek to understand difficult to accept beliefs expressed by the other, while bracketing negative judgment and criticism
- that even in the context of deeply clashing beliefs, there is often some “kernel of truth” -- however remote, small or banal – that one can find acceptable or congruent with one’s own beliefs
- that each party is free to accept or reject any aspect of the other’s belief without incurring negative judgment from the other.
- that acceptance of one aspect, part or a belief or belief system does not imply accepting other aspects of that belief or system

Skill 11: Identifying “Kernels of Truth” in Opposing Belief Systems

Identifying “truths” and areas of commonality in the opposing beliefs of the other can be a scary process. We may fear that by being open to the beliefs of the Other – particularly to beliefs about which we disagree – that we open ourselves to attack. We may fear that being open to the other is a sign of weakness in the self. We may fear that if we appear to agree with part of a belief system with which we fundamentally disagree, that we may be seen as accepting the entire system. However, the contrary is more nearly true. To open ourselves up to other beliefs of the other is not a sign of weakness; it is a sign of strength. If we are secure in our own ability to uphold our core beliefs – if we do not fear expressing sentiments that we believe to be true – then we are more open to hearing what others have to say. We can hear what others say without fear of losing ourselves. And can be assured that we will only modify our own beliefs in response to the “truths” we find in the other if we truly regard what the other says as “true”, valuable or worthy.

Seeking to find “truths” in the opposing beliefs of another person is an active process. Most often, the “truth” in the other’s beliefs will be hidden. We have to look hard in order to find it. And when we look hard, we will typically only see *parts* of the other’s beliefs with which we can agree. When this happens, we will typically find ourselves *carving away* the beliefs with which we agree from those with which we don’t. This is an important part of the process of seeking “truths” in the other’s beliefs. We should not avoid this process; we should embrace it. To find something in the other with which we can agree is the first step.

There are several basic ways in which we can find “truths” in the beliefs of the other.

1. We can *agree entirely* with a particular belief expressed by the other:

Person A: There is racism in the police force.

Person B: I agree – there is racism in the police force.

2. We can identify a part of a person’s expressed belief, carve it away from that which with we disagree, and then express our agreement with that part:

Person A: There is a culture of white male supremacy on the police force.

Person B: I agree that the police force *has a culture*, but it is not necessarily one of white male supremacy.

Most of the time, when we are seeking “truths” in the beliefs of others, we rarely identifying beliefs that we can accept wholesale. More often, we see *parts* of the other’s view that we can carve away from other parts about which we disagree. This is an important part of the process of seeking whatever “truths” we can find in the other’s beliefs.

3. We can identify a part of the other’s expressed belief, agree with it, but *transform* the other person’s belief in a way that is acceptable to us.

Person A: There is a culture of white male supremacy on the police force.

Person B: I agree that the police force *has a culture* and *racism* may be a part of that culture.

Here, Person B has transformed Person A’s concept of *white male supremacy* into the concept of *racism*. In so doing, by transforming Person A’s characterization, Person B has agreed part of what Person A has to say and has disagreed with part of it. By clarifying areas of agreement and disagreement, progress can be made and differences sharpened and maintained for later discussion.

4. We can identify a part of the other’s expressed belief, and then modify our own belief as we seek to accept it and make it our own.

Person B: I believe that there is *racism* on the police force.

Person A: There is a culture of *white male supremacy* on the police force.

Person B: I agree that there may be white-against black racism on the police force.

Here, in response to Person A's assertion that there is *white male supremacy* on the police force, Person B modifies *his own characterization* of possible *racism* on the force from racism to possible *white-against-black racism*

Most often, we will be unaware that we are *transforming the other person's assertion* in order to make it more acceptable to us, or that we are *transforming our own beliefs* in order to accept those of the other. This in and of itself is not a problem. This is, in fact, one of the ways in which we modify our beliefs (or our understanding of the other person's beliefs) in order to *create common ground*. However, there are also dangers to this everyday natural way of communicating. It is helpful to attempt to become aware of when and how we are transforming our own and our interlocutor's ideas as we discuss them. When we transform another person's idea to fit our own, the other person *may or may not* be able to accept or agree with our transformation. If the other agrees, partners will have taken a step toward creating common ground. If the other does not, then partners have taken a step toward clarifying the differences that remain between them. Seeking to become aware of when and how we are transforming each other's statements helps us to clarify how we may be moving closer or further away from each other.

An Example

To illustrate, one way of approaching the task of seeking "kernels of truth" in opposing *Black Lives Matter* and *Police Lives Matter* movements might look something like this:

	Dialogue	Comment
	MEDIATOR: Without giving in on any of your core beliefs for values, can you see if you can seek out and find anything in each other's statements that you can regard as "true" or "valuable". It can be virtually anything – no matter how small or seeming trivial – even if you have to carve away part of what the other has said to find something valid or "true".	Mediator starts the phase in which political adversaries confront their opposing positions head on. It is essential that each party understand that the process does not require that they "give up" or "give in" on <i>any</i> of their core values, interests, or beliefs.
	PLM: I can agree that racism exists. Police, just like anyone else, can sometimes be racist. There are good cops and bad cops. But most cops aren't racist.	PLM examines BLM's ideological statements, and identifies what he can find "true" or valuable in BLM's beliefs. Note that in embracing a part of BLM's belief, PLM transforms that to make it more congenial to his own perspective. PLM translates "White Male Supremacy" into "racism" that may or may not exist among individual officers. While

		some meaning is lost, but some commonality has been established.
	BLM: PLM, so what you are saying is that you think racism exists, and that while police can sometimes be racist, on the whole, they are not. That is something that I can agree with.	PLM has embraced only a part of BLM's belief system. BLM summarizes PLM's limited agreement with BLM, and affirms their agreement.
	PLM: Yes, that's what I'm saying.	PLM affirms BLM's understanding.
	MEDIATOR: PLM, is there anything further in what BLM has said that you find to have some grain of "truth" or value? Please try to find something. If you can't, or aren't ready to, you can just say, "I'm okay for now."	Mediator asks PLM if there are additional "truths" that can be found in BLM's ideology. Mediator provides a face-saving way for PLM to decline the request.
	PLM: "I'm okay for now."	PLM declines.
	MEDIATOR: Okay, good. BLM, can you do the same for PLM. Can you find something in what BLM has said that you can agree with – something that you take to be "true" or valuable?	Mediator then asks BLM to switch roles and to identify possible "elements of truth" in PLM's ideological statements.
	BLM: Well, yes. I can agree that police officers have difficult jobs. They have to deal with all types of people. And they have to put their lives at risk.	BLM does not embrace the entirety of PLM's beliefs, but does embrace a part of it. Note how in embracing a part of the belief, how BLM transforms it to make it more congenial to her own ideology. Namely, she translates "selfless" risk of "serious injury and death" into "difficult jobs". Again, while some meaning is lost, but some commonality has been established.
	MEDIATOR: Okay, so, you've both been able to identify something in each other's statements that you agree with or take to be true. PLM, you are saying that you believe that racism continues to exist, and that it is present in the police force to an extent. BLM, you agree that police officers have dangerous jobs that put them in harm's way more often than in most other professions. Does that sound right?	The mediator seeks to determine that both parties agree with the statements that they have both made. (Note: Agreement on any statement can be withdrawn at any time if it is later found that what appeared to be a shared understanding was indeed not shared or not understood in the same way.)

Step 3: Making Novel Distinctions

If parties are always aware that they are able to retain our core values, beliefs and truths, they need not be threatened if they find "elements of truth" in opposing systems of belief. Once we find such elements of truth – since we regard them as valuable, true or otherwise worthwhile – we can consider the extent to which, if at all, we should *modify* our existing beliefs in light of the novel truths that we find in the other. The possibility of modifying existing beliefs becomes possible when we find "kernels of truth" in the other that we had not considered or been aware of prior to engaging the other.

At the very least, making a novel distinction means *differentiating* two ideas where there was once only one. All *new* ideas, beliefs and knowledge come from *existing* ideas, beliefs and knowledge. Consider the following example. How do microwave ovens work? If you are like many people, you might believe that microwave ovens “heat food from the inside out”. If so, the belief that “microwave ovens heat from the inside out” would be an example of our existing knowledge. This would be the starting point in the development of any new knowledge about how microwave ovens work. This is shown in panel of Figure X. This idea is illustrated by the illustration on the right. In this case, we might think of microwaves penetrating an apple until they reach the center of the apple. The microwaves then heat the apple from center outward.

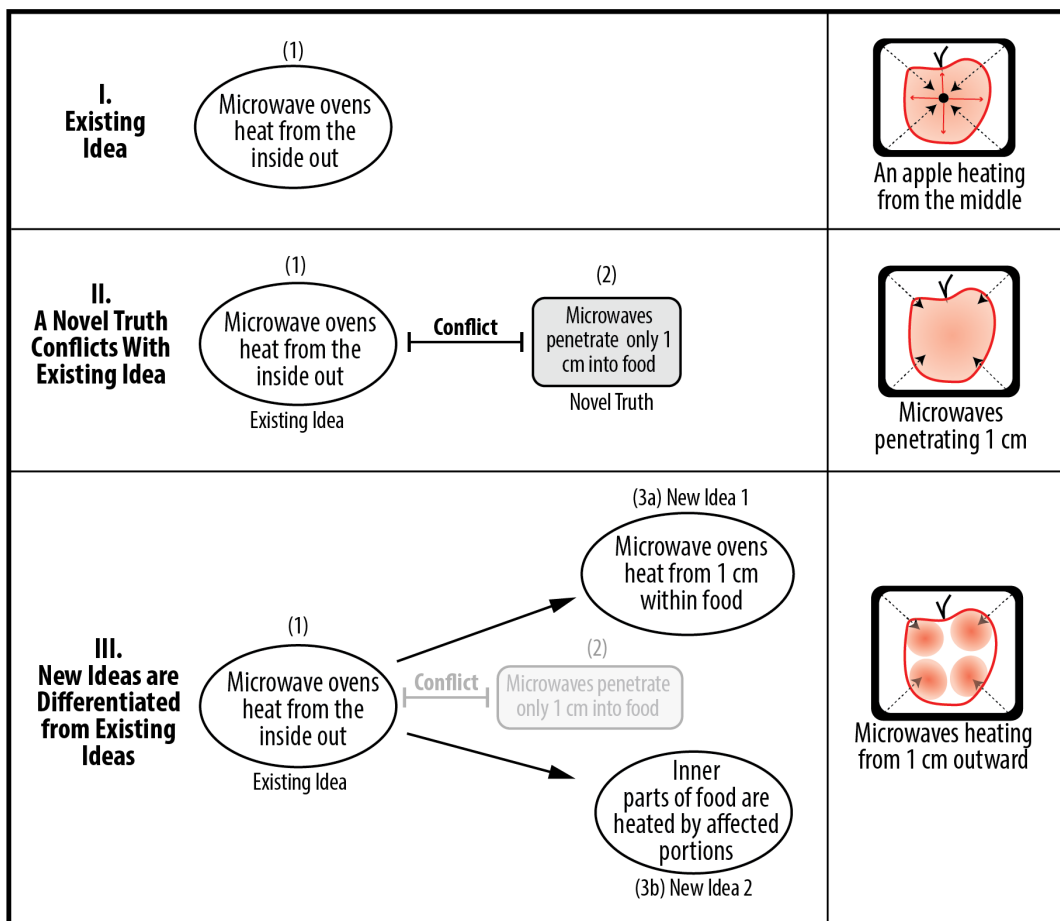


Figure X: New Knowledge Develops by Making Distinctions in Old Knowledge

While this may be a common belief, this is not how microwaves really work. Most commercial microwaves penetrate food only about 1 cm into its surface. As a result, microwaves cannot reach the center of food items that are thicker than 1-2 cm. This is illustrated in the diagram in the second row of Figure X. When we encounter this new idea, we experience conflict: the new idea conflicts with our existing understanding of how microwaves work.

The conflict between our existing knowledge (i.e., microwaves heat from the inside out”) and this new knowledge (i.e., “microwaves penetrate only about 1 cm of food) motivates us to try

to resolve the conflict. How can we make sense out of this new information? There are many ways to do this. We could, for example, simply ignore the new information. This would allow us to resist the challenge of having to make sense out of this new information. By ignoring the new knowledge, we get to keep our existing knowledge. The problem here, of course, is that we fail to develop.

Another strategy is to abandon our old knowledge and simply accept the new knowledge. But the new knowledge – while it conflicts with our old knowledge – doesn’t invalidate it altogether. There is a sense in which microwaves heat from the “inside out” – they just don’t heat from the “center” of food items, which is what we might normally think.

How can we reconcile these two beliefs? We do so by revising our existing knowledge in order to accommodate the new information. This is shown in the bottom panel of Figure X. We make a new distinction in our existing knowledge by breaking it down into two new and more refined ideas: namely “Microwave ovens start heating about 1 cm into food” and “inner parts of the food are heated by the heated portions”. This is illustrated in the diagram in the bottom panel.

In this way, all new knowledge evolves out of existing knowledge. When we face a new truth, we adjust our existing knowledge to the new information. When we do this, we make new distinctions in our old knowledge. We make novel distinctions in our more simplistic existing knowledge to create new and more differentiated knowledge.

Making New Distinctions: An Example

The hypothetical discussion between *Black Lives Matter* and *Police Lives Matter* advocates continues. In the next segment, the mediator helps partners continue to make novel distinctions in their beliefs in response to the truths they find in each other’s statements. In so doing, the mediator helps each party separate the beliefs that they hold that are *compatible* with those of the other from beliefs that hold that remain incompatible. When this step is completed, each partner will have broken down their respective beliefs into those that are compatible and incompatible with their interlocutors. Delaying discussion of incompatible beliefs until later, it is the compatible beliefs that will be further refined and eventually brought together into a *single new belief* that can be shared by both partners. Before this can happen, there is still work to be done:

MEDIATOR: PLM, at least for this part of what you have said, do you feel that BLM has understood what you are saying about the dangerousness of being a police officer?	Mediator checks to establish that PLM feels appropriately understood by BLM.
PLM: Yes, that’s about right. But I also said that police officers get killed and injured more often than any other group except the military.	PLM agrees, but identifies the area in which BLM has not addressed.

MEDIATOR: BLM, do you see any “truth” in PLM’s statement about police officers being killed and injured? Is this something with which you agree?	Mediator seeks to establish the limits of the “truth” that BLM finds in PLM’s statement.
BLM: Well, I can agree that they get killed and hurt more than a lot of other professions. But do they get killed more than Black people who are killed by cops? I don’t know.	BLM finds a “truth” in the other but does not embrace the entirety of what PLM has said. She then makes a counter-point – a remnant of positional debate intended to counter the merits of PLM’s argument.
MEDIATOR: Would it be fair to say to say, at this point, that police officers get killed or injured at rates that are higher than most other professions? This can be true regardless of how often different categories of people are injured or killed by police officers or anyone else. Would this be acceptable?	Mediator senses the counter-point its capacity to foster a debate over positions – rather than an exploration of different beliefs and needs. The Mediator seeks to establish the merits of PLM’s assertion independent of the question of whether other groups are killed in higher or lower numbers.
PLM: I’m okay with that.	PLM agrees.
BLM: Yes that’s okay for now.	BM agrees.
MEDIATOR: Okay, so, you’ve both been able to identify something in each other’s statements that you agree with or take to be true. PLM, you are saying that you believe that racism continues to exist, and that it is present in the police force to an extent. BLM, you agree that police officers have dangerous jobs that put them in harm’s way more often than in most other professions. Does that sound right for now?	At this point, each party has modified their beliefs in response to the truths of the other, while simultaneously maintain beliefs that they hold to be true but which continue to conflict with the other. Mediator identifies the particular ways in which both parties have articulated their respective beliefs. In so doing, mediator helps the dyad to identify novel compatible forms of belief between them.
PLM: Yes.	PLM agrees.
BLM: That sounds right.	BLM agrees.
MEDIATOR: Good. Now, let’s see if we can figure out where we are disagreeing, and if there are any other points of agreement. So, BLM, you have heard what PLM has said. What, if anything, do you disagree with? Where does your thinking differ from PLM’s?	Having identified compatible beliefs, the mediator seeks to identify points of continued conflict. This helps clarify exactly what is agreed upon and what is not, and lays the ground for further engagement.
BLM: I appreciate your statement that racism continues to exist. From our standpoint, however, the problem is not simply racism – it is White Male Supremacy. This is a type of Anti-Black racism that is built into our social and economic system. It is a system that not only advantages white males, but which defines that is good and right from the perspective of white males. From this view, the standards of white males are understood as proper, and black ways of being are seen as	BLM articulates how the concept of White Male Supremacy is different from the ordinary concept of racism.

	<p>somehow inferior. We want to draw attention to how White Male Supremacy structures how people think – without people even knowing it's happening.</p>	
	<p>PLM: (Curiously) I'm not sure I am understanding -- are you saying that Police Officers are white supremacists?</p>	<p>PLM is aware of a conflict of beliefs. Instead of countering those beliefs, he seeks further clarification.</p>
	<p>BLM: No, that's not what I'm saying. I'm talking about institutionalized anti-black racism. It's not about any one person or police officer – it's the system that is biased against Blacks. Police officers – like the society at large – act within a culture that defines what is good or right or true in terms of beliefs and values held by White mean. For example, when police see a Black man running across the street, they are more likely to think that that person is a criminal than if they saw a white man doing the same thing.</p>	<p>BLM clarifies her position, differentiating the idea of white male supremacy as an institutionalized form of racism instead of as a description of particular police officers.</p>
	<p>PLM: So, it's not the police officer who is racist, it's the system or culture of the police officer that is racist and anti-Black. Police officers see black people from the perspective of white people, where the white perspective is taken to be true or correct?</p>	<p>PLM summarizes his understanding of BLM's distinction.</p>
	<p>BLM: Yes. And most people don't even know that that's happening!</p>	<p>BLM affirms PLM's understanding, and extends it further – perhaps with a sense of excitement about being heard.</p>
	<p>PLM: But wait – there are Black men and women who are police officers – are you saying that they see the world through white male supremacy culture too?</p>	<p>PLM identifies another source of conflict between his understanding and BLM's statements. He seeks clarification.</p>
	<p>BLM: Well, I'm saying that there is White Male Supremacy in our culture. Black men and black women who are police officers have to deal with that too. They are victims of it as well. And sometimes they internalize those beliefs and believe it themselves. And sometimes, they are trained in ways that are Anti-Black without knowing it.</p>	<p>BLM again differentiates between institutionalized versus personal racism, and indicates that Black police officers – men and women – can act out of White Male Supremacy culture as well.</p>

	MEDIATOR: Remember, PLM, it's okay for you to disagree, if you do. If you do, write down your disagreement if you have to – but at this point, try to simply understand what BLM is saying.	Mediator senses the possibility of emotional escalation, and reminds PLM of ways to regulate strong feeling in order to continue the discussion.
	PLM: So, you are saying that police officers hold racist beliefs because they are born in a culture in which white ways of thinking are the norm. And we don't always know when we are thinking in Anti-Black ways. Is that right?	PLM responds by summarizing his understanding of BLM's statements – without expressing disagreement or hostility to those ideas.
	BLM: Yeah, well that's close enough.	BLM affirms PLM's understanding.
	MEDIATOR: PLM: Is there anything in what BLM said that you take to have an element of truth – even the slightest thing. Is there anything that you can accept in what BLM is saying?	Mediator asks PLM to seek further truths in BLM's statements. The mediator is essentially asking PLM to see if he can parse away something true from anything he regards as false in BLM's statements.
	PLM: Well, I agree that racism continues to exist. And there is racism among police. And I can agree that White people may think differently than Black people -- but isn't that a racist thing to say -- But there is a culture in which white thinking is the norm, and we don't know it. I can imagine something like that is true, but I don't think that means that there is "White Male Supremacy" culture in the force.	PLM identifies his belief that racism continues to exist. Here, he differentiates the concept of <i>racism</i> (and the idea that "white thinking" may be a norm) from the concept of <i>White Male Supremacy</i>

As shown at Point 3 in Figure 8.1, the by adjusting their beliefs to the truths that they find in the opposing beliefs of their interlocutors, participants were able to break their respective beliefs into areas of agreement and continued areas of disagreement. Focusing on the now compatible beliefs, the stage is set to further refine and bring together these compatible beliefs into a single novel belief (SYNTHESIS) that can be shared by both partners.

Step 4: Synthesizing Novel Distinctions into Shared Beliefs

At this point, as shown in Figure 8.1, the parties, having engaged each other in (1) understanding their ideological differences, have (2) identified "elements of truth" in each other's systems of belief and (3) separated these areas sharable understanding from continued sources of continued conflict. The *Police Lives Matter* advocate is able to agree that "there is racism in society and on the police force, and that police sometimes abuse their power". The *Black Lives Matter* advocate is able to agree that "Police officers have dangerous jobs where they are killed and injured at rates higher than other professions." The task now is to bring together (synthesize) these two ideas into a single shared belief.

Skill 12: Understanding the Concept of Synthesis

The concept of synthesis is a special one. A synthesis occurs two or more separate elements (in this case, beliefs) are brought together to create a third idea that resolves some earlier contradiction between beliefs. The new belief is not simply a *combination* or *addition* or *juxtaposition* of two beliefs. A genuine synthesis is one that changes each of the novel beliefs on which it is based as they are brought together. The concept of synthesis is reflected in the everyday idea that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”. In a synthesis, the whole of something has new qualities or meanings – qualities that are not in the parts taken in isolation.

The simplest example of a synthesis is the creation of water (H₂O) from the coming together of hydrogen (H) and oxygen (O). Separately, hydrogen and oxygen are both *gasses*. When two molecules of hydrogen gas bond with one molecule of oxygen gas, a new compound is created. However, this new compound is a *liquid* and not a *gas*. Apart, hydrogen and oxygen are gasses; together, in a particular way, they form a liquid – a substance whose properties (e.g., wetness, liquidity) cannot be found in their base elements. The whole is more than the sum of its parts.

The same idea holds when we synthesize novel beliefs from formerly conflicting beliefs. This is shown in some of the examples described above. In the nature-nurture conflict, the concept of *epigenesis* – the idea that genes and environments influence each other – is different from either the “nature” (i.e., “genes cause development”) or “nurture” (i.e., “environment causes development”) seen in isolation from each other. The old nature-nurture controversy was based on the idea that genes and environments were independent of each other; epigenesis stipulates that genes and environments cannot work without each other. That is a new and different concept.

Continuing the Example

The following dialogue shows how novel distinctions made by both *Black Lives Matter* and *Police Lives Matter* advocates can be integrated or brought together to form a new shared belief:

	MEDIATOR: Is there a way we can summarize what you both have said in a way that you can both agree with?	Mediator invites the discussants to find a way to bring together the “truths” on which they have agreed into a single shared statement of belief.
	PLM: How about “Even though police officers often are injured or die serving their communities, racism exists, even on the police force, but not all cops are racist.”	PLM offers a statement.
	BLM: This makes the police seem as if they are always benevolent and good. How about “Systems of advantage based on race exist, both in society and in the police force. Police officers are often killed and injured, they also abuse their power.”	BLM agrees, but feels that the statement depicts police officers as overly benevolent.
	Mediator: Remember, there will be areas that we will, at least for now, agree to disagree on. We	The mediator, sensing that the parties may become defensive and self-protective, reminds them that

	are trying to establish areas of agreement. So we don't have to get everything in there – just what can be agreed upon in a basic sense.	the statement need not solve all of their problems at once. It is only necessary to identify basic agreement.
	PLM: Okay, but how about “Systems of advantage based on race exist. While police officers are killed and injured at high rates, they sometimes abuse their otherwise legitimate authority.	PLM offers a modified statement. Worried that the statement suggests high degrees of racism in the police force, he suggests an alternative statement. He also replaces BLM's term “power” with “otherwise legitimate authority”.
	BLM: I can live with that.	BLM somewhat reluctantly agrees.
	Mediator: But we want you to be able to do more than simply “live with it”. We want you to be able to embrace it fully. What can we do to change the statement to make that happen?	Sensing her reluctance, the Mediator presses BLM to identify the source of her disagreement.
	BLM: I would prefer to say that police often abuse their power.	BLM does so.
	PLM: Okay, but how about “Systems of advantage based on race exist. While police officers are killed and injured at high rates, they sometimes abuse their power and otherwise legitimate authority.”	PLM offers an alternative, to which BLM agrees. This is a developmental accomplishment. Where there was first conflict and contradiction, the partners have constructed a novel – although limited -- understanding (a SYNTHESIS) on which they can both genuinely agree.

This novel shared belief is indicated at Point (4) in Figure 8.1. Through the collaborative process (in this case, mediated by a third party) of (4) *integrating* those sharable truths (bringing them together into a single shared understanding), they *synthesized* them into a new (although limited) shared perspective. Through this process, the participants *created* some initial common ground in the form of a shared belief that might be summarized in terms of a statement like:

“Systems of advantage based on race exist. While police officers are killed and injured at high rates, they sometimes abuse their power and otherwise legitimate authority.”

To be sure, there remains much disagreement. Nonetheless, the capacity to identify and integrate truths in opposing belief systems provides an important starting point for further dialectical problem-solving.

APPENDIX I: Procedure for Sharing “I-Stories”

Purpose

Welcome. The purpose of this conversation is to learn from one another and to hear each other’s perspectives as well as to feel heard about issues of need, nutrition, and programs that address them. It is not to persuade, debate, convince each other of our positions but to try to understand your hopes, concerns and understand more about your differences.

Hopes for the Dialogue

We hope that you get a chance to reflect and speak deeply about your own experiences and values and listen with resilience when you hear something that might differ from your viewpoint.

We hope that you will come away with some new understandings about what is important to others and a clearer understanding of what is important to you.

Our Role as Facilitators:

- To guide you through the dialogue, ask a series of opening questions and make sure everyone gets a chance to speak.
- To present the agreements for your approval and/or amending.
- To remind you of the agreements, if people need reminding

The Structure of the Dialogue

We will begin by reviewing the **Communication Agreements**.

We’ll pose an **opening question**, give you a few minutes to reflect and then you’ll speak in a “go-round.” Each person will have an equal amount of time to respond to the question. If you have questions for people, write them down, you’ll be able to ask those directly to each other later.

Then we will open the space in a less structured time for you to have the opportunity to **ask each other questions** to increase your understanding of others in the room.

Then we’ll close by asking each of you to **reflect on your experience here** together and say something that will help you bring this to a meaningful conclusion.

So, that’s the structure of how you be spending this time together. Let’s get started now with the Agreements.

Agreements

In order to have a constructive conversation, where people speak thoughtfully and listen respectfully, we have proposed the following agreements.

Could we go around the circle and read them out loud? Here is the handout.

We will...

- Allow people to pass/pass for now
- Honor confidentiality
 - Do not share what you hear in such a way that the Jaime could be identified without the Jaime's permission
- Speak for ourselves
 - Do not speak for others, nor ask anyone to speak for anyone other than themselves
- Share the airtime – make space for everybody to contribute
- Not interrupt except to indicate that we cannot hear a Jaime

Aspirations

We will try to. . .

- Express our different viewpoints in a thoughtful and respectful manner
- Listen with resilience: Hang in when something is hard to hear

Does anyone have any questions about these?

Does everyone agree to follow these agreements? (Get nods or yeses)

OK, so these are the Agreements that you're all committing to doing your best to follow. Your commitment also serves to authorize us as facilitators to remind you if need be.

Opening Question

The Opening Question is designed to open a fresh conversation about some of the formative experiences around having needs met. I'm going to ask the question, make sure that it's clear, and then give you two minutes in silence to reflect on what you want to say. Then we will ask one of you to begin and we will go around the circle again.

Sample Question 1 (Food Insecurity)

Tell us about an experience you've had – at any time in your life – when you were aware of needing something that you either did not have at the time or you weren't sure how you would get, and its effects on you. This should be an experience that affected you and has that stuck with you in some way.

(Repeat)

Take x minutes to think and make some notes about what you're going to say, so that you'll be able to give full attention to each other when others are speaking.

After 2 minutes:

As you listen to each other, listen to understand, not to judge or find fault. You also may hear things that you want to ask about – write your questions down as you think about them, you'll have time to ask each other later. Don't interrupt at this point – unless you are having a hard time hearing.

I am going to keep time for you. So, when you are ready to speak, I am going to start the x minutes. When the X minutes are up, I will let you know and then you can find a quick way to finish your speaking – you finish your sentence, but not your paragraph.

- *Turning to a person next to you) Would you like to start?*
- *Go-around.*

Before we go on to the next question, reflect back on what you heard. Is there a question that you would like to ask later that you are curious about – something you heard just now that you wish you could hear more about – jot that question down so you will have it when we get to the section meant for questions.

Question #2

Now we're ready to move on to the second question—and the intention of this question is to offer you the opportunity to reflect on what you just said and heard, and how it fits with your role as a potential health professional. You will have X minutes this time to answer the following question:

Sample Question 2:

You've gained some experience working with a population in need through your service-learning in this class, and maybe before that in other volunteering or work you've done. What lesson, value, or principle do you take from your own experience that informs the way you approach policies and programs aimed at addressing food insecurity?

Repeat the question, ask if it is clear and then tell people they will have two minutes to reflect. After two minutes, ask someone to begin.

Now take a minute to reflect back on what you heard. Is there a question that you would like to ask later that you are curious about – something you heard just now that you wish you could

hear more about – jot that question down so you will have it when we get to the section meant for questions.

Questions of Genuine Curiosity

This is the time to learn more about what others have said and to make connections between what is on your mind and what you've heard. It is important to remember that you are not here to debate or persuade but to explore your curiosity, to better understand others.

Is there something someone said that you are curious about or would like to understand better? Ask your question of the group or of particular individual or individuals. Other members of the group are welcome to reflect and comment as well.

You will have 15 minutes, and I will let you know when you have about 2 minutes left. Please take a moment now to think of the questions that you have for others. When someone has one – please begin.

- *Remember to track who has asked and who has answered so that everyone has an opportunity to participate.*
- *After X minutes, tell people we have about 2 minutes left.*
- *After completion, tell people something like the following:*

There's never a perfect time to end this section, but we want to be respectful of the time that you have committed to be here and so we're going to move to the Closing section.

Closing

The purpose of this section is to bring your dialogue to a conclusion and to map the conversation in terms of new ideas and issues for further conversation. We ask you to respond to the following question by writing on these stickies:

- 1) What are two things you are taking from what you heard here that you want to continue to think about or dialogue about?
- 2) What new realization did you have that feels important to mark or name?

Take a minute to reflect on one or both of these questions, and then I will ask someone to begin. We will post the stickies on the wall afterward.

Confidentiality

We have one final piece of business and that is to review the confidentiality agreement that you made at the beginning of this dialogue. You have all agreed to:

- Honor confidentiality [not sharing what you hear in a way in which the Jaime could be identified without the Jaime's permission]
- Does everybody feel comfortable with this level of confidentiality?

Today you may have taken the risks of speaking what's true for you and listening deeply to others. Though this dialogue experience is ending, our hope is that the speaking and listening will continue. Thank you for your participation.

**APPENDIX II:
A Sample Debate Over Positions: Gun Violence**

- A:** Does gun control violate the Second Amendment?
- B:** Yes, (**POSITION**) guns do not kill people, people kill people. (**REDIRECT → POSITION**) I don't understand why you want to keep trying to isolate the attention on guns. (**REDIRECT → SOLUTION**) Let's go after the people that misuse guns. Doesn't make any sense to me.
- A:** Now, B, we do regulate automobiles? (**REDIRECT → POSITION**) Automobiles also kill people (**COUNTER**); or is it people that cars kill people who happen to be driving cars? (**IRONY**);
- B:** If automobiles kill people, let's get rid of them all like you want to do. Let's put safety latches on the doors and stuff like that or (**COUNTER, IRONY**)
- A:** I don't want to get rid of all of them, but (**DEFEND**)
- B:** Dogs kill people. Let's get rid of dogs in society (**COUNTER, IRONY**).
- A:** But since you're making it a matter of scale or a matter of availability, there are currently more guns or enough guns on the streets of America today to basically give two to every adult in America (**REDIRECT → EVIDENCE, POSITION**)
- B:** What's your point? There's a lot of guns (**CLARIFY, POSITION**).
- A:** We don't need that many (**POSITION**).
- B:** So, there's a lot of them in the United States. Do we get rid of stuff there's a lot of? (**COUNTER**)
- A:** M&Ms don't kill people, but guns do. (**COUNTER**)
- B:** No, that's a good point. You could choke on an M&M. Should we get rid of the M&Ms? (**COUNTER**) I mean, there are people who are doing individual behavior and we're trying to take stuff away from them and not address the behavior (**POSITION**).
- A:** But let's go to the original question: does the Second Amendment guarantee every person in this country the right to own a gun? (**REDIRECT**)

Key

STRATEGY	DEFINITION
POSITION	Statement of stance on an issue
COUNTER	Argument made to refute stance taken by other.
REDIRECT →	Attempt to focus the discussion in a different direction
CLARIFY	Questioning
DEFEND	Argument made to support counter advanced by other.
EVIDENCE	Invocation of data to support point
SOLUTION	Indicating approach toward resolving issue
IRONY	Expressing meaning through opposition for rhetorical effect

APPENDIX III: Managing Strong Feelings

Political conversations are occasions for strong emotion. Why wouldn't they? Political issues are issues about what should be done. They are issues about how to meet people's interests and needs. They raise issues of power. When political issues arise that go against what we want and what we believe should be, negative emotions arise – anger, resentment, shame, humiliation, anxiety, and others.

Political conversations often evoke anger. This makes sense. Anger is a moral emotion – it arises when events occur that are not only unwanted, but are contrary to our beliefs about how things *should* or *ought* to be. Political discussions, of course, are typically conversations about what *should* or *ought* to be. In political conversations, we say, “there ought to be a law...”, “that’s night right”, “that’s not the way it should be”, “it should be different”.

The Nature of Anger

As shown in Figure x, any emotion has at least three parts: a *thought*, a *feeling* and an *action*. The *thought* is a kind of interpretation or judgment about the situation that is causing us to feel a certain way. IN emotion, the thought is our awareness of the fate of our motives: how does this situation affect what I want or think should be? The thought that triggers anger is typically that an event is not only something that we don't want – but it is a violation, from our perspective, of what *ought* to be.

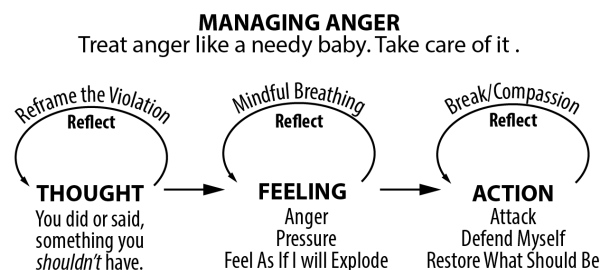


Figure X: The Parts of Anger

In anger, our sense that something should be otherwise creates an internal experience – a *feeling*. Anger *feels* a certain way. We typically experience anger as a kind of inner “pressure”; we feel “as if we were going to explode”. In anger, we feel a *strengthening of our will* or *resolve* to *do something* about the situation. We feel stronger, emboldened, more resolute. We feel as if we must “let the anger out”.

Indeed, in anger, we are motivated to do something – we are motivated to remove the violation to what ought to be – to correct the wrong situation – to fix the injustice – to restore the event back to its legitimate state. This is the *action* of anger. Anger emboldens us to move against the person or thing that is *responsible* for the wrongful situation. We are motivated to move against and attack the other, either physically or symbolically. We attack in order to

restore the moral balance: You did something that affects me. But you not only affected me negatively, you did something *wrong* – it needs to be *corrected*!

What Causes Anger?

As discussed above, anger occurs when we interpret a situation not only as contrary to what we desire, but also as contrary to the way it *ought* to be. In anger, we *blame* someone for a wrongdoing or for violating a *standard* of some sort. When we are angry, hold the other responsible for actions that we judge could have been performed otherwise.

In anger, we see the other as able to control his or her actions, and we judged that he or she *should* have done something different. In anger, we can even blame entities for events that cannot properly be held responsible for causing an unwanted situation. We may become angry in a traffic jam – directing our anger to some imagined person or entity that can be held responsible – the police, the people who planned the highway, modern society, or something similar. We may “know” that there is no one responsible for the traffic jam, but we nonetheless find someone or something to blame. This is the nature of anger.

What types of things get us angry? In political situations, there are several major culprits. Remember – anger is a “moral” emotion; it is a response to our sense of what ought not to be. In political discussions, we become angry when:

- ...someone *insults* us or characterizes our position as unworthy;
- ...we feel *disrespected, shamed* or *humiliated* by someone else (insults do this all the time);
- ...we feel that our *worth, capabilities* or *sense of self* is being attacked or questioned;
- ...our *core values* (our sense of what ought to be) are challenged;
- ...we experience an event as *unfair* or as an *injustice* of some sort.

Political ideologies are systems of ideas about how both the world *is* and how it *should be*. In political debates, when parties attack each other’s political ideologies, they are often attacking deep-seated values that a person believes to be true. As a moral emotion, it is understandable that anger easily arises.

How Political Polarization Spawns Anger

Our current political climate is characterized by deep *polarization* – at least among people who hold strong partisan beliefs. Polarization means that people who identify strongly with a political party tend to adopt extreme positions – on the extreme poles of a dimension. When people become polarized, liberals become very liberal; conservatives very conservative – there is little moderate ground.

But something important happens when in the situation of political polarization. *People tend to think that they are right*. People become very *certain* that the moral positions that they adopt

are the correct ones. When this happens, each party believes that they are morally correct and the other party is morally wrong.

When people begin to doubt that they can be wrong, they begin to see the other party as “out of touch”, “bad”, “crazy”, “morally inferior” and even “evil”. People begin to dehumanize each other – to see each other as less than human. When this happens, the mere articulation of a political position by any particular person or party becomes a kind of *moral violation*. It evokes *moral disgust* (which is quite similar to physical disgust). The other person becomes disgusting, impure, beyond the pale. People can come to feel polluted, contaminated or impure simply by taking the other person seriously – treating the other person with dignity and respect – in a political conversation. The reasoning goes something like this: “If the other is morally inferior or morally impure, then to treat the other seriously is to condone his or her morally inferior position. The proper response is to “call out” the other person, to identify his or her moral inferiority.

When this happens, the other is shamed. Shame creates anger – and we become caught in a vicious cycle:

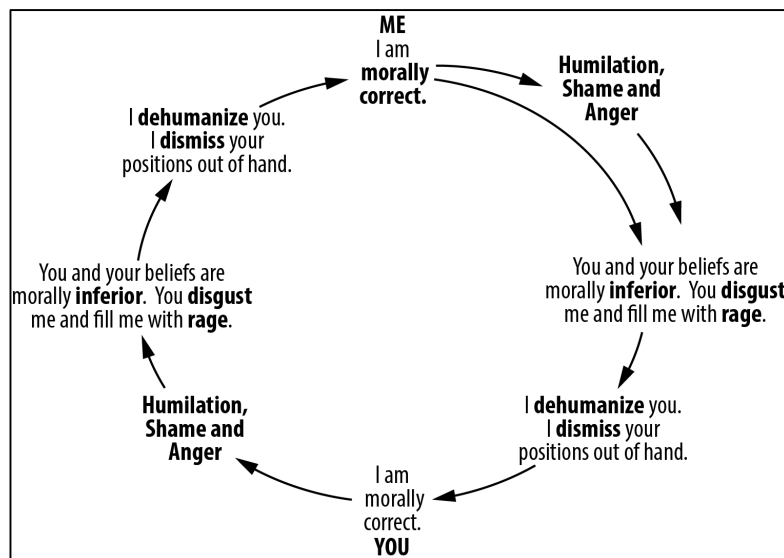


Figure X. The Shame-Anger Cycle

The interplay between shame and anger in political dialogue is one of the reasons why honoring the dignity of the other is so important in political discussions. It is difficult, however, to honor the dignity of the other when one party experiences themselves as morally superior to the other. An important consideration, therefore, in managing anger, shame and related emotion is the cultivation of *moral humility*. Moral humility is the simply the idea that there are always limitations to one’s moral principles and beliefs. Moral humility consists of the idea that one’s moral beliefs may be limited, incomplete, inconsistent or in some cases, simply wrong. It is the idea that even when we disagree with the moral beliefs and convictions of the other, that there may be something the other understands that we do not. Even in the face of deep

disagreement, seeking deep understanding of the moral perspective of the other may reveal valuable insights or even aspects of “truth”. It is the belief that it may be possible to learn something from moral differences.

Managing Strong Feelings in Political Discussions

Perhaps the most common ways of dealing with anger is either to *suppress* it or to engage in some sort of *verbal attack*. Neither of these approaches is particularly helpful. While it is helpful to try to suppress an outburst in the moment of anger, the decision to push an angry experience away for longer periods of time typical breeds resentment. When this happens, the issue that caused the anger fails to be addressed. It becomes more likely that the suppressor will withdraw from constructive discussion or that anger about the issue will resurface at a later time. Conversely, an angry outburst is unlikely to be helpful. Unregulated anger functions to alienate the persons to whom it is directed. Anger tends to foster defensiveness, and the shame-anger cycle escalates.

Perhaps the most important principle for managing anger is to acknowledge anger when it occurs rather than suppressing it. There is a need to address the anger without either suppressing it or succumbing to an angry outburst.

In his book simply entitled *Anger*, the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh has what some might view as some rather strange things to say about anger. Amongst the various points he makes is the idea that one should treat one’s anger as if it were one’s *baby*. Unlike anger, babies are cute and cuddly. What could Hanh possibly mean by this? While it is true that babies are cute and cuddly, they are also quite needy and dependent. A crying baby must be cared for. A crying and fussy baby will continue to fuss until its needs are taken care of. And the crying baby depends on you to take care of it in order for it to be calmed. It is possible to think of your anger in the same way: Your anger indicates some unmet need that must be addressed. Like the crying baby, that unmet need is not going to go away by itself; it must be tended to. When a crying baby is in your care, it is you that has to take care of it.

And finally, to take care of your anger – like taking care of your baby – is an act of love and self-respect. It says, “There is nothing wrong with being angry. Our anger tells us something – that we have a need that we need to address. Forgive yourself for feeling this way. Instead of suppressing or acting on your anger, acknowledge it. Give yourself the permission to feel angry (if that is an issue for you), and then then seek to meet the needs that are expressed by your anger. There are a variety of ways to manage anger and other strong emotions in political discourse. Here are a series of interconnected strategies that can help manage strong emotion when the discourse gets heated.

Fostering community and the role of the group. We ordinarily think that the task of managing strong feelings is a personal one. It is the individual who feels the emotion who is primarily responsible for managing and regulating emotion. To be sure, ultimately, it is the individual person who must find ways to manage anger. However, angry feelings arise in discussions with

others. To the extent that political discussions occur within a larger group, the other people in the group can play an important role in helping to manage anger. This requires a change in attitude: instead of thinking about anger as something that is only the responsibility of the individual, it is possible to see that everyone in the group has a role in helping to manage angry or other difficult feelings.

First, to the extent that a conversation can be governed by some agreed upon rules, the likelihood of anger becomes diminished – but by no means eliminated. The use of empathic listening, I-Statements, descriptions rather than characterizations are deeply effective in reducing the likelihood of blame and attack, and increasing the feelings of respect, trust and compassion. A shared commitment to compassion, honoring the dignity of the other, and moral humility can go a long way towards engendering the type trust necessary to modulate strong feeling over the course of conversation.

Second, when difficult feelings arise, group members, or the mediator, if there is one, can play a role in a variety of different ways. A group member can:

- **Acknowledge the individual's anger;** “It seems that that comment was upsetting to Pete” or even “I want to acknowledge that Diana seems uncomfortable with what Dennis just said.”
- **Suggest that the angry person engage in an anger-management strategy.** “Beth, I see you’re getting upset. It’s okay – do you want to try breathing?”
- **Invite the person to take a break if needed.** “Marissa, you seem upset. Do you need a break? We would be happy to wait.”
- **When parties are calm, invite the person or group to process the incident.** “Would it be a good idea to talk about what just happened between Tim and Eunice?” Use empathic listening and I-statements to identify the source of the anger and to seek to repair it.
- **If intervening seems intrusive, monitor the situation, but do nothing.**

Anger Management Strategies. Figure 1 shows that experiences of emotion are made up of three basic parts: thoughts, feelings and actions. There are ways of different ways of managing anger that are associated with each of these three parts.

- **Reframing Thoughts and Oughts.** In anger, we experience an event as a violation of what should be. We blame others and hold them responsible for their actions. One way to manage anger is to reframe one’s thinking about the infraction that occurred. Perhaps the best way to do this is to reflect on your thoughts in the moment in order to (a) identity the *ought* or *should* that the other has violated, and then, at least temporarily, (b) *let go* of your commitment to that *ought* or *should*. For example, you can say to yourself, either out loud or in your head:

- “Thomas seems to be suggesting that I’m a racist. That pisses me off. Okay, I’m going to let go of my concern about what he thinks of me right now.”
 - Regis thinks that mothers on welfare need to be told how to parent. That is parent shaming. I could ring his neck. Okay, that’s on him, not on me.”
 - How dare she tell me that I don’t understand “gun culture”! My father owned guns! Julie is being ignorant. I don’t have to buy into her ignorance.
 - How dare she tell me that I don’t understand “gun culture”! My father owned guns. Hmm... Might she be right? Is there something I don’t understand about Julie’s gun culture?
- **Regulate the Feeling Itself (Mindful Breathing).** There are powerful ways to focus on regulating bad feelings themselves when they occur. Mindfulness and breathing techniques are quite effective in disrupting the flow of anger, calming the self, and regaining composure.
 - Stop talking. Close your eyes. Breathe in and breathe out deeply. As you continue to breathe deeply, attend to your breathing. Block out everything else and attend to your breathing for 5-10 inhales and exhales. This typically brings strong feelings to a more manageable level.
 - As you get better at breathing, exert control over your breathing by breathing in more slowly than you breathe out.
 - While some people may find that it makes them feel silly, if you can, consider some form of “self-talk” as you inhale and exhale. For example, imagine breathing in calmness, and breathing out anger; or breathing in energy and breathing out compassion.
 - If you need to, take a break and leave the situation. On your break, practice mindful breathing. Then, as you become calmer, move on to another anger-management strategy (reframing thoughts, constructive expression, etc.).
 - **Express Anger Constructively.** Anger is functional – it indicates that something has gone wrong that needs to be addressed. There is nothing wrong in feeling anger. Problems arise with how anger is expressed. To express anger constructively, if necessary, use other anger-management techniques to begin to calm your feelings. Then calmly engage your partner.

Identify your feeling and the need or standard (ought) that has been violated. Then, calmly express your *feeling* and the *unmet need* or violation that has produced the feeling. (It is sometimes difficult to identify our needs and feelings. Feel free to consult Appendices III and IV for lists of words that name different types of needs and feelings). In anger, it is possible to express one’s feelings without blame by using expressions in forms like this:

I am feeling _____ because I have a need for _____.

I am feeling _____ because my need for _____ isn’t being met.

Note how these statements express feelings and needs using I-Statements. They express how the angered person feels and what needs have been violated, but do so in a way that points primarily to the self, and not to the other. This minimizes blame. For example:

- I am feeling **angry** right now because my **need** for **respect** isn't being met.
- When you said "that's racist", I feel **angry** because I feel neither **understood** nor **respected**.
- When you said "that's racist", I feel **angry** because my need to be **understood** and **respected** is not being met.
- When you said "mothers on welfare need help parenting", I felt **hurt** because I know what it's like to be a mother on welfare.
- I'm feeling **guarded** because I'm not feeling **safe**
- I feel **afraid** to speak because I don't feel **safe** to say what I think

Meta-Strategies

Meta-Strategies occur when we reflect on larger issues, values and beliefs about the other party and about the process of political communication itself. One way to assuage anger is to continuously remind ourselves that the individuals with whom we are conversing are people. As people, it is helpful to think of others as always doing their best given their personal histories and the resources that they have available to them. From this view, we can say to ourselves that if the other person could do better, they would. Reminding ourselves of the humanity of the other helps us to have compassion, and helps us to "forgive" the other for hurtful remarks.

APPENDIX IV: Feelings Inventory

The following are words we use when we want to express a combination of emotional states and physical sensations. This list is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place to support anyone who wishes to engage in a process of deepening self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.

There are two parts to this list: Feelings we may have when our needs are being met, and feelings we may have when our needs are not being met.

FEELINGS WHEN NEEDS ARE MET

AFFECTIONATE

compassionate
friendly
loving
open hearted
sympathetic
tender
warm

ENGAGED

absorbed
alert
curious
engrossed
enchanted
entranced
fascinated
interested
intrigued
involved
spellbound
stimulated

HOPEFUL

expectant
encouraged
optimistic

CONFIDENT

empowered
open
proud
safe
secure

EXCITED

amazed
animated
ardent
aroused
astonished
dazzled
eager
energetic
enthusiastic
giddy
invigorated
lively
passionate
surprised
vibrant

GRATEFUL

Appreciative
moved
thankful
touched

INSPIRED

amazed awed
wonder

JOYFUL

amused
delighted
glad
happy
jubilant
pleased
tickled

EXHILARATED

blissful
ecstatic
elated
enthralled
exuberant
radiant
rapturous
thrilled

PEACEFUL

calm
clear headed
comfortable
centered
content
equanimous
fulfilled
mellow
quiet
relaxed
relieved
satisfied
serene
still
tranquil
trusting

REFRESHED

enlivened
rejuvenated
renewed
rested
restored
revived

Feelings When Needs are Not Met

AFRAID

apprehensive
dread
foreboding
frightened
mistrustful
panicked
petrified
scared
suspicious
terrified
wary
worried

ANNOYED

aggravated
dismayed
disgruntled
displeased
exasperated
frustrated
impatient
irritated irked

ANGRY

enraged
furious
incensed
indignant
irate
livid
outraged
resentful

AVERSION

Animosity
appalled
contempt
disgusted
dislike
hate
horrified
hostile
repulsed

CONFUSED

ambivalent
baffled
bewildered
dazed
hesitant
lost
mystified
perplexed
puzzled torn

DISCONNECTED

alienated
aloof
apathetic
bored
cold
detached
distant
distracted
indifferent
numb
removed
uninterested
withdrawn

DISQUIET

agitated
alarmed
discombobulated
disconcerted
disturbed
perturbed
rattled
restless
shocked
startled
surprised
troubled
turbulent
turmoil
uncomfortable
uneasy
unnerved
unsettled
upset

EMBARRASSED

ashamed
chagrined
flustered
guilty
mortified
self-conscious

FATIGUE

Beat
burnt out
depleted
exhausted
lethargic
listless
sleepy
tired
weary
worn out

PAIN

agony
anguished
bereaved
devastated
grief
heartbroken
hurt
lonely
miserable
regretful
remorseful

SAD

depressed
dejected
despair
despondent
disappointed
discouraged
disheartened
forlorn gloomy
heavy hearted
hopeless
melancholy
unhappy
wretched

TENSE

anxious
cranky
distressed
distraught
edgy
fidgety
frazzled
irritable
jittery
nervous
overwhelmed
restless
stressed out

VULNERABLE

fragile
guarded
helpless
insecure
leery
reserved
sensitive
shaky

YEARNING

envious
jealous
longing
nostalgic
pining
wistful

APPENDIX V: Needs Inventory



The following list of needs is neither exhaustive nor definitive. It is meant as a starting place to support anyone who wishes to engage in a process of deepening self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people.

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CONNECTION

acceptance
affection
appreciation
belonging
cooperation
communication
closeness
community
companionship
compassion
consideration
consistency
empathy
inclusion
intimacy
love
mutuality
nurturing
respect/self-respect

CONNECTION continued

safety
security
stability
support
to know and be known to
see and be seen
to understand and
be understood trust
warmth

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

air
food
movement/exercise
rest/sleep
sexual expression
safety
shelter
touch
water

HONESTY

authenticity
integrity
presence

PLAY

joy
humor

PEACE

beauty
communion
ease equality
harmony
inspiration
order

AUTONOMY

choice freedom
independence
space
spontaneity

MEANING

awareness
celebration of
life
challenge
clarity
competence
consciousness
contribution
creativity
discovery
efficacy
effectiveness
growth
hope
learning
mourning
participation
purpose
self-expression
stimulation
to matter
understanding

