Tackling Wicked Problems: The Case for Facilitative Leadership

Martín Carcasson
Director of the Center for Public Deliberation
Professor, Department of Communication Studies

CSU Center for Public Deliberation
Dedicated to enhancing local democracy through improved public communication and community problem solving

EMAIL: cpd@colostate.edu

CPD website: cpd.colostate.edu
CPD Projects, 2006-2016

- Civic mission of schools
- Grade configuration of Poudre School District schools
- Statewide dropout rate
- Colorado Health Care Reform
- Student housing
- Improving higher education
- Childhood obesity
- Bicycle safety
- Diversity Dialogues at CSU Diversity Conference
- STEM education in K-12
- Arts Engagement Summit
- UniverCity Connections (CSU/Old Town collaborative project)
- School budgeting issues/school closures
- Medical Marijuana
- Regional visioning process
- Water and growth issues
- Poverty in Larimer County
- PSD Student Think Tank facilitator group
- K-12 school improvement
- Improving higher education through student-faculty reciprocity
- Politics of food
- Issues surrounding aging
- Early childhood education
- On campus stadium proposal
- Senior transportation
- Campus smoking
- School safety
- Bullying
- Mental health
- Nature in the City
- Larimer County Landfill/Wasteshed
- Diversity and Inclusion in Fort Collins
- CSU Innovation and Economic Prosperity
- CSU parking and affordable housing
Which statements describe your view of the quality of public discussion and debate? (choose up to three)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. High-quality, well-informed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Mean-spirited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Polarized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Involves a broad range of voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Simplistic, uninformed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Dominated by a few loud voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Dominated by experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Robust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Weak/limited, people are apathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. (press 0) Productive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three key questions regarding 21st Century public engagement

What is the nature of the problems we are facing in our communities?

What kind of communication or engagement processes help us address those problems?

How can we best build community capacity to support those processes?
Three key questions regarding 21\textsuperscript{st} Century public engagement

What is the nature of the problems we are facing in our communities?

What kind of communication or engagement processes help to address those problems?

How can we best build community capacity to support those processes?
The Nature of Problems in the 21st Century: Tame v. Wicked Problems

*Tame problems* are problems that are essentially *technical* in nature and can be *solved by experts through scientific means*. They can be divided into *manageable* parts, and efforts to solve them are primarily judged in terms of *efficiency*. (Rittel & Webber, 1973)
The Nature of Problems in the 21st Century: Tame v. Wicked

- Wicked problems inherently involve competing underlying values, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that cannot be resolved by science.

Water in Northern Colorado as a Wicked Problem

Some things we care about:

- Healthy river with healthy ecosystems
- Water for homes & lawns
- Water for local farms
- Recreational opportunities
- Open space and wildlife habitat
- Local food economy
- Economic vitality
- Low cost of living
- Freedom of choice of where to live
We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.
We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.
## Key American Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preamble</th>
<th>Current Phrasing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Tranquility/Common defense</td>
<td>Security/Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Welfare</td>
<td>Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty to ourselves</td>
<td>Freedom (for us)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty for our posterity</td>
<td>Freedom (for future generations)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which is **most** important to you? (choose only one)

1. Justice
2. Security/safety
3. Equality
4. Freedom (for us)
5. Freedom (future generations)
Which is **least** important to you? (choose only one)

1. Justice
2. Security/safety
3. Equality
4. Freedom (for us)
5. Freedom (future generations)
Inherent Democratic Tensions

• Freedom v. Equality
• Our Freedom v. Freedom of Future generations
• Freedom v. Security
• Justice is a tension within itself (justice as the ideal between too much and too little credit or punishment)

Some others

• Individual v. community
• Short term v. long term
• Unity v. diversity
• Top down v. bottom up
• Cooperation v. competition
• Flexibility/Innovation v. Consistency/Tradition
• Best use of resources (money, time, people)
FOOD AS A WICKED PROBLEM

WE WANT OUR FOOD TO BE:

- Inexpensive
- Fresh
- Nutritious
- Safe
- Long lasting
- Delicious
- Convenient (Accessible, Easy to prepare)
- Ethically grown (labor/animal welfare)
- Our choice
- Supportive of a local economy
- Supportive of a agriculture community
- Grown and delivered in a environmentally responsible manner
- Supportive of efforts to reduce hunger locally and globally
HEALTH CARE AS A WICKED PROBLEM

High Quality

Accessible

Low cost
Capitalism as a wicked problem

- The “Triple Bottom Line” of
  - Profit (economics, also tied to jobs and taxes)
  - People (social justice, equality, fairness)
  - Planet (environment)
Parking at CSU as a Wicked Problem

Some things we care about:

- Low cost
- Fairness
- Safety
- Work productivity
- Flexibility

- Aesthetics/
  Campus beauty
- Convenience/
  Low time cost
- Low community impact/
  Good neighbors

- Employee morale
- Environment
- Consistency/Ease of use

- Works for staff
- Works for faculty
- Works for visitors
- Works for students
- Works for working parents
- Works for commuters
Competing values in improving student success

Quality/High expectations
Affordability/Access
Efficiency
Individualized Instruction
Consistency/Stability
Flexibility/Innovation
Fairness/Equality
Completion / Graduation
Focus on the Whole Child
Focus on Basics (Math, Science, Reading, Writing)
The Nature of Problems in the 21st Century: Tame v. Wicked

- Wicked problems inherently involve competing underlying values, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that cannot be resolved by science.

- Wicked problems are not solvable, because any proposed solution to a wicked problem tends to create new problems. Wicked problems are systemic and interconnected.
The Nature of Problems in the 21st Century: Tame v. Wicked

- Wicked problems inherently involve competing underlying values, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that cannot be resolved by science.
- Wicked problems are not solvable, because any proposed solution to a wicked problem tends to create new problems. Wicked problems are systemic and interconnected.
- Optimal solutions to wicked problems often require adaptive changes rather than technical ones. Multiple stakeholders must be a part of any solutions.
Actions to address wicked problems come from multiple levels

- **Public Policy**: national, state, local laws
- **Community**: relationships among organizations
- **Organizational**: organizations, social institutions
- **Interpersonal**: family, friends, social networks
- **Individual**: knowledge, attitudes, skills

The Nature of Problems in the 21st Century: Tame v. Wicked

- Wicked problems inherently involve competing underlying values, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that cannot be resolved by science.
- Wicked problems are not solvable, because any proposed solution to a wicked problem tends to create new problems. Wicked problems are systemic and interconnected.
- Optimal solutions to wicked problems often require adaptive changes rather than technical ones. The public must be a part of any solution.
- Addressing wicked problems thus necessitates effective collaboration and communication across multiple perspectives.
Democratic Communication

Institutional Decision-makers

Public(s)/Advocates

Experts

The Nature of Problems in the 21st Century: Tame v. Wicked

- Wicked problems inherently involve **competing underlying values**, paradoxes, and tradeoffs that cannot be resolved by science.
- Wicked problems are not solvable, because any proposed solution to a wicked problem **tends to create new problems**. Wicked problems are **systemic** and **interconnected**.
- Optimal solutions to wicked problems often require **adaptive changes** rather than technical ones. The public must be a part of any solution.
- Addressing wicked problems thus necessitates **effective collaboration** and **communication** across multiple perspectives.
- Wicked problems often require **creativity, innovation, and imagination**. They can’t be adequately addressed through the accumulation and application of knowledge, but call for the **ongoing process** that relies on collective **wisdom** and the application of sound **judgment**.
Three key questions regarding 21st Century public engagement

What is the nature of the problems we are facing in our communities?

What kind of communication or engagement processes help to address those problems? (not solve)

How can we best build community capacity to support those processes?
Three Primary Models of Public Communication about Problems

• **Adversarial** (competitive, pro/con, activists, campaigns, interests groups, mobilizations, elections, votes, coalitions, etc.)

• **Expert** (experts, data focused, research, facts, technical solutions, bureaucracy, etc.)

• **Deliberative** (cooperative, participatory, collaborative, public participation, conflict resolution and transformation, mediation, community focused, civic participation, etc.)
Drawbacks of Overly-Adversarial Processes

- Often focuses on “winning” vs. solving problems
- Zero-sum game incentivizes “bad” communication, strategic research, and problematizes implementation
- Often focuses on blaming (them) vs. taking accountability (us)
- Relies on narrow value frames (thus avoids tensions)
- Plays into flaws of human nature
- Attracts/privileges organized, entrenched voices
- Negative side effects like polarization, cynicism, and apathy (which then cause even worse communication)
- Assumes a narrow role for citizens (citizens as voters, consumers, or spectators)
Drawbacks of Overly-Adversarial Processes

- Often focuses on “winning” vs. solving problems
- Zero-sum game incentivizes “bad” communication, strategic research, and problematizes implementation
- Often focuses on blaming (them) vs. taking accountability (us)
- Relies on narrow value frames (thus avoids tensions)
- **Plays into flaws of human nature**
- Attracts/privileges organized, entrenched voices
- Negative side effects like polarization, cynicism, and apathy (which then cause even worse communication)
- Assumes a narrow role for citizens (citizens as voters, consumers, or spectators)
So what are we learning about brain science that's relevant to deliberative engagement?
What Are We Learning from Brain Science?

The Problematic

We crave certainty and consistency

We are suckers for the good v. evil narrative
What We Are Learning from Brain Science

The Problematic

We crave certainty and consistency
We are suckers for the good v. evil narrative
We strongly prefer to gather with the like minded
We filter & cherry pick evidence to support our views
## What We Are Learning from Brain Science

### Stages of motivated reasoning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What and who we expose ourselves to</td>
<td>selective exposure /echo chambers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we interpret new evidence</td>
<td>confirmation bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we make attributions and tell stories</td>
<td>egoism, illusory correlation, negativity bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we make decisions</td>
<td>heuristics, self-serving bias, social proof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What we remember</td>
<td>availability bias</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How we interpret new evidence?

“when we want to believe something, we ask ourselves, ‘Can I believe it?’ Then... we search for supporting evidence, and if we find even a single piece of pseudo-evidence, we can stop thinking.... In contrast, when we don’t want to believe something, we ask ourselves, ‘Must I believe it?’ Then we search for contrary evidence, and if we find a single reason to doubt the claim, we can dismiss it“

Jonathan Haidt and Tom Gilovich
# What We Are Learning from Brain Science

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of motivated reasoning</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What and who we expose ourselves to</td>
<td>selective exposure /echo chambers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we interpret new evidence</td>
<td>confirmation bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we make attributions and tell stories</td>
<td>egoism, illusory correlation, negativity bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we make decisions</td>
<td>heuristics, self-serving bias, social proof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What we remember</td>
<td>availability bias</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bush: 'Too often we judge other groups by their worst examples, while judging ourselves by our best intentions'
The Vicious Cycle of False Polarization

Individually developed subconscious biases

Negative interaction effects
Negative Interaction Effects (i.e. Bad Process)

Kathryn Shultz – *On Being Wrona*

- First step: Ignorance assumption
- Second step: Idiot assumption
- Third Step: Evil assumption
The Vicious Cycle of False Polarization

Individually developed subconscious biases

negative interaction effects

the Russell effect
The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts.

-Bertrand Russell
The Vicious Cycle of False Polarization

Individually developed subconscious biases

purposeful partisan manipulation

the Russell effect

negative interaction effects

media focus on conflict
What We Are Learning from Brain Science

The Problematic

We crave certainty and consistency
We are suckers for the good v. evil narrative
We strongly prefer to gather with the like minded
We filter & cherry pick evidence to support our views
We avoid values, tensions, and tough choices
What We Are Learning from Brain Science

The Good

We are inherently social and seek purpose and community.
What We Are Learning from Brain Science

The Good

We are inherently social and seek purpose and community

We are inherently empathetic
What We Are Learning from Brain Science

The Good

We are inherently social and seek purpose and community
We are inherently empathetic
We are inherently pragmatic and creative
We can overcome our bad tendencies and build better habits
The Problem We Face

Most of our processes for public engagement and community problem solving primarily activate the negative aspects of human nature, and rarely tap into or nurture the positive.
Consider our Typical Public Processes

- Our two-party system
- Campaigns, referenda, and elections
- Think tanks
- The media
- Interest groups and lobbyists
- Congressional deliberations and legislative debate
- Social media political engagement
- Public comment and public hearings
- Political debates
- Expert panels
- Letters to the editors and emails to policymakers
Traditional Forms of Public Participation

Inform/Persuade

Govern ment → Citizens

Input

Govern ment → Citizens

Interact

Govern ment → Citizens
Traditional Forms of Public Participation

Citizens -> Government -> Input

Citizens

Govern ment

Citizens

Government

Citizens

Citizens

Citizens

Citizens
Govern
deliberative
engagement
Citizens

Non-profit Sector

Government

Private Sector

Citizens

Citizens

Citizens

Deliberative Engagement
What we need public process to do

• Provide opportunities for voice and public input
• Support listening and genuine interaction
• Build mutual understanding and development of respect
• Help differentiate good and weak arguments
• Spark collaborative learning and the refinement (not just expression) of opinion
• Build capacity for collaborative action and co-creation
Three Primary Models of Public Communication about Problems

• **Adversarial** (competitive, pro/con, activists, campaigns, interests groups, mobilizations, elections, votes, coalitions, etc.)

• **Expert** (experts, data focused, research, facts, technical solutions, bureaucracy, etc.)

• **Deliberative** (cooperative, participatory, collaborative, public participation, conflict resolution and transformation, mediation, community focused, civic participation, etc.)
Drawbacks of Expert-Dominated Processes

- Experts by definition are focused on a specific, narrow aspect of the problem (struggle with systemic issues).
- Experts often focus on being “value free” (they tell us what *is* or what *could* be, not what *should* be)
- Expert perspectives can overemphasize what can be measured and underemphasize what cannot
- Wicked problems can be informed, but not solved by data
- Good data is undermined in a polarized environment
- Facts don’t change minds or behavior
- Expert dominated processes shut out the public
The Bottom Line

• We face serious problems
• Many do not have technical solutions
• They involve paradoxes and competing values that will require tough choices
• Facing them calls for tough conversations, productive collaboration, innovation, and coordinated action across perspectives and many areas of society
• Current communication and problem-solving processes are inadequate and often counter-productive....and we know about much better ways to make tough decisions
What is Deliberative Engagement?

Deliberative democracy
Community problem-solving
Collaborative problem-solving
Participatory decision-making
Slow democracy
Strong democracy
Multi-stakeholder dispute resolution
Public participation
Democratic governance
Collaborative governance
Organic or community politics
Consensus building or seeking processes
Organic politics
What is Deliberative Engagement?

Deliberation is an approach to public engagement and collaborative problem solving in which citizens, not just experts or politicians, are deeply involved in public decision making. Often working with facilitators or process experts who utilize a variety of deliberative techniques, citizens come together and consider relevant facts and values from multiple points of view; listen to one another in order to think critically about the various options before them; consider the underlying tensions, tough choices, and varied consequences inherent to addressing public problems; are willing to refine and adapt their opinions and interests; and ultimately seek to come to some conclusion for collaborative action based on a reasoned public judgment.
Key Components of Deliberative Engagement

- Overall deliberative framing
  - Wicked problem, multiple approaches, broad range of actors
- Discussion guides/backgrounder
  - Base of information, something to react to
- Safe places to gather
- Small, diverse, representative groups
- Deliberative facilitators
- Time (to talk, but also for results to matter)
- Connection with institutional decision-makers/resources
The Cycle of Deliberative Inquiry

- Deliberative Issue Analysis
- Convening
- Facilitating Interactive Communication (Deliberation/Debate/Dialogue)
- Reporting
- Action

(Carcasson & Sprain, 2015)
Resource Guide on Public Engagement

National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation

# Engagement Streams

* A Matrix of Proven Practices *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Engagement Stream</th>
<th>Primary Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>To encourage people and groups to learn more about themselves, their community, or an issue, and possibly discover innovative solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Transformation</td>
<td>To resolve conflicts, to foster personal healing and growth, and to improve relations among groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Engagement Stream</th>
<th>Key Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>To influence public decisions and public policy and improve public knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Action</td>
<td>To empower people and groups to solve complicated problems and take responsibility for the solution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DYNAMICS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING

INTRODUCING THE GROAN ZONE

DIVERGENT THINKING

NEW TOPIC
FAMILIAR OPINIONS
DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

TIME

Groan Zone

CONVERGENT THINKING

DECISION POINT

Sam Kaner, Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making
DYNAMICS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING

INTRODUCING THE GROAN ZONE

Groan Zone

DIVERGENT THINKING

NEW TOPIC
FAMILIAR OPINIONS
DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

TIME

CONVERGENT THINKING

DECISION POINT

Sam Kaner, Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making
Not allowing enough divergent opinion leads to False consensus (dissent not heard, wishful thinking supported, decisions likely either faulty or unsustainable, often attracting strong opposition)

To avoid false consensus: Communities need better processes to insure adequate divergent thinking and that voices are heard.
DYNAMICS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING

INTRODUCING THE GROAN ZONE

Working through the Groan Zone

DIVERGENT THINKING
NEW TOPIC
FAMILIAR OPINIONS
DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

TIME

CONVERGENT THINKING
DECISION POINT
Exiting groan zone too early leads to

False polarization
(sparks misunderstanding, distrust, unsustainable one-sided solutions, wishful thinking can dominate, fact wars develop, spirals of conflict)

To avoid false polarization:
Communities need better processes to help them interact and work through tough issues. Key elements include trusted conveners, high quality issues framing, and opportunities for genuine interaction.
DYNAMICS OF GROUP DECISION-MAKING

INTRODUCING THE GROAN ZONE

DIVERGENT THINKING

CONVERGENT THINKING

NEW TOPIC

FAMILIAR OPINIONS

DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

Groan Zone

TIME
Getting stuck in groan zone leads to Paralysis by Analysis (no decisions, frustrations with process, chilling effect for future engagement).

To avoid paralysis by analysis:
Communities need better processes for convergent thinking and moving from talk to action.
Three key questions regarding public engagement

What is the nature of the problems we are facing in our communities?

What kind of communication or engagement processes help to address those problems?

How can we best build community capacity to support those processes?
The first step is realizing you have wicked problems
Implications

• To public engagement processes
• To the nature of leadership
• To K-12 and higher education
• To experts
Key Elements of Facilitative Leadership

- Takes responsibility for the quality of communication around you
- Focus on process (exhibiting “passionate impartiality”)

Passionate impartiality
The recognition of the tensions between:

- Honoring equality & inclusion
- Honoring sound data & reasoning
- Democracy!
- Expertise!
Key Elements of Facilitative Leadership

• Take responsibility for the quality of communication around you
• Focus on process (exhibiting “passionate impartiality”)
• Work against the negative consequences of adversarial processes and the limits of expertise
• Help your community identify and work through tough choices and address wicked problems
• Work to improve communication and increase productive interaction between decision-makers, experts, and the public.
Table Discussion

What are the most pressing wicked problems in your community?

Wicked problems are systemic issues with inherent competing underlying values.
Table Discussion

Analyzing wicked problems: What are the key underlying values and key stakeholders related to your chosen wicked problem?

Brainstorm individually for a couple minutes, and then share out
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Below, list the key stakeholders relevant to this issue</th>
<th>To the right, list the key interests of the various stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table Discussion

What are the dominant key tensions that must be negotiated?
A tension or tradeoff is a situation where:

- **We can’t have more of something we want without also having more of something we don’t want.** (like more democracy without more inefficiency)

  or

- **We can’t have more of something we want without also having less of something we like.** (like more economic equality without less economic freedom)

  or

- **We can’t have less of something we don’t want without also having more of something we don’t want.** (like less fraud and abuse without more monitoring of behavior)

  or

- **We can’t have less of something we don’t want without also having less of something we like.** (like less bureaucracy or government costs without less oversight, assessment, and information)
Polarity Management
Addressing Key Tensions

Freedom

Security
Polarized:

“\textit{I am for security, you are anti-security (i.e. pro-terrorism)}”

\textbf{vs.}

“I am for freedom, you are anti-freedom (i.e. pro-long lines)”
Aristotle’s Theory of Virtues

• Aristotle defined a virtue as “a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect…virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate”

Cowardice ← ------------------------Courage------------------------ → Recklessness

Lack of ambition ← -------------(Ideal ambition) ------------→ Excess of ambition

Apathy ← ------------------------Gentleness------------------------ → Short temper

Grouchiness ← -------------------Friendliness------------------- → Flattery

Self-depreciation ← -----------------Truthfulness--------------- → Boastfulness

Injustice ← ------------------------Justice------------------------ → Injustice
(gives more and receives less (gives less and receives more than one’s due)
All Freedom  Freedom  Balance  Security  All Security
No Security  >  Security  and  Freedom  >  Freedom
No Freedom

Polarized:  “I am for security, you are anti-security (i.e. pro-terrorism)” vs.
           “I am for freedom, you are anti-freedom (i.e. pro-long lines)”

De-polarized  “We are both for freedom and security, but I believe freedom is
               more important than security, and you think security is
               more important than freedom”
Polarity Management

**LEFT POLE**
- Rigid
- Impractical

**RIGHT POLE**
- Ambiguity
- Lack of Direction

**L+**
- Clear Directions
- Clear Guidelines

**R+**
- Flexible
- Listens to Reason
### Polarity Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Case for Consistency</th>
<th>The Case for Flexibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependable, Clarity, Allowing comparisons, Tradition, Principled, Fair, Just, Reliable, Steady, Standards, Measurability</td>
<td>Innovation, Adaption, Individuality, Creativity, Outside the Box thinking, Pragmatic, Thinking on your feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Case for Consistency</td>
<td>The Case for Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependable, Clarity, Allowing comparisons, Tradition,</td>
<td>Innovation, Adaption,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principled, Fair, Just, Reliable, Steady, Standards,</td>
<td>Individuality, Creativity,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurability</td>
<td>Outside the Box thinking,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pragmatic, Thinking on your feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When Consistency dominates Flexibility ...</strong></td>
<td><strong>When Flexibility dominates Consistency ...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogmatic, Stubborn, Unaccommodating, Stiff, Simplistic,</td>
<td>Wishy-washy, Ambiguous, Inconsistent,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuck in the past, Uninspired, Rigid, Soul-sucking, Obstinate</td>
<td>Erratic, Untrustworthy, Irregular,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unreliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Case for Consistency</td>
<td>The Case for Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependable, Clarity, Allowing comparisons, Tradition, Principled, Fair, Just, Reliable, Steady, Standards, Measurability</td>
<td>Innovation, Adaption, Individuality, Creativity, Outside the Box thinking, Pragmatic, Thinking on your feet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When Consistency dominates Flexibility ...</th>
<th>When Flexibility dominates Consistency ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dogmatic, Stubborn, Unaccommodating, Stiff, Simplistic, Stuck in the past, Uninspired, Rigid, Soul-sucking, Obstinate</td>
<td>Wishy-washy, Ambiguous, Inconsistent, Erratic, Untrustworthy, Irregular, Unreliable,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inherent Democratic Tensions

- Freedom v. Equality
- Our Freedom v. Freedom of Future generations
- Freedom v. Security
- Justice is a tension within itself (justice as the ideal between too much and too little credit or punishment)

Some others

- Individual v. community
- Short term v. long term
- Unity v. diversity
- Top down v. bottom up
- Cooperation v. competition
- Flexibility/Innovation v. Consistency/Tradition
- Best use of resources (money, time, people)
COLLABORATE
CREATE
COMPETE
CONTROL

Purpose
Practice
People
Internal Processes
Open Systems
Rational Goals

Flexible
Breakthrough
Focused
Internal
Incremental
External
Short-term Performance

Human Relations
Polarity Management Worksheet

The Case for __________________

The Case for __________________

When _____________ dominates ______________

When ____________ dominates ______________
Steps in the Basic Exercise

• Polarity or tension is identified and named
• In groups, brainstorm the positives for each end of the polarity one at a time, making the best possible case
• Groups then complete the out of balance problematic alternatives
• Groups can then potentially combine or compare their work
• Individuals can self-identify their preferred spot on the continuum, and their perception of the current state of the tension
• Conversation can then focus on responding to the tension
Responding to Key Tensions

- Recognize tension, still **prefer** one side while accepting the tradeoffs
- Recognize tension, seek **balance** (which may mean moving in one direction or the other, seeking compromise)
- Recognize tension, seek to **transcend or integrate** tension through innovation (seeking win-win)
- **Recognize tension**, focus on **developing nimbleness** to adjust
- Recognize tension, allow **different groups** to seek alternative ends
- **Disagree** with tension
Small Group Discussion

Identify a specific tension, and work to complete the front of the polarity management worksheet.

Brainstorm individually for a couple minutes, and then share out