



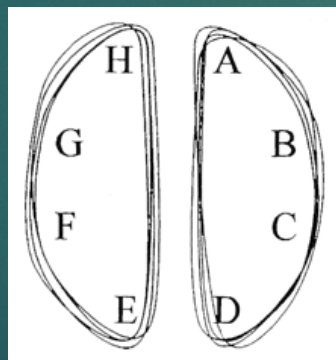
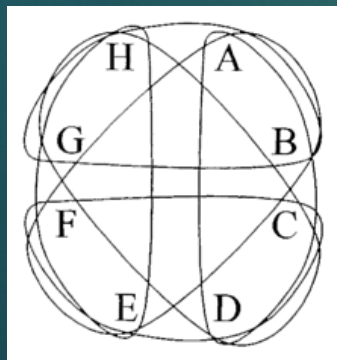
When the Center Does Not Hold: Leading in an Age of Polarization

PRESENTED BY DAVID BRUBAKER (WITH CREDIT TO LENORE BAJARE-DUKES)

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What Is Polarization?

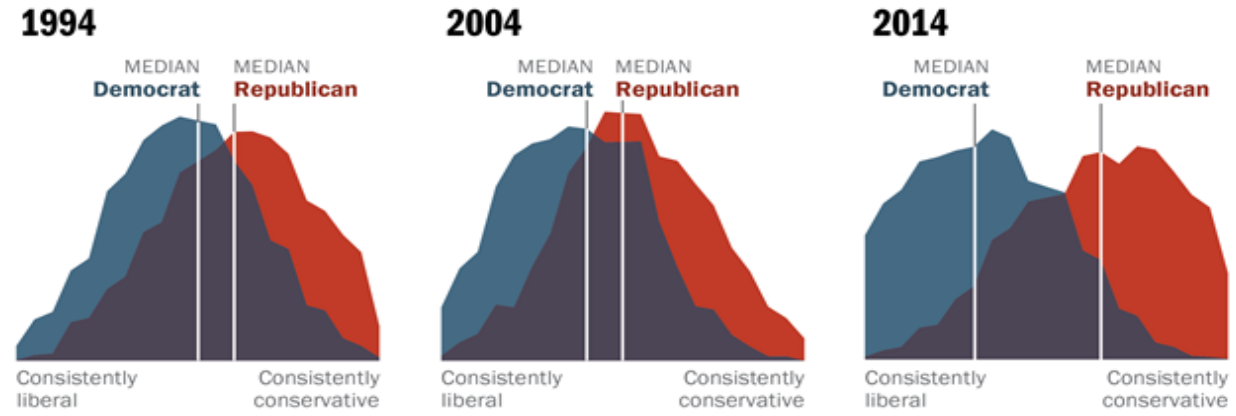
1. A **process** by which more and more people within a social group come to hold opinions at the extreme ends of a spectrum, while the number of people in the center dwindles.
2. A **process** by which multiple, overlapping conflict relationships collapse onto a single axis.



“Cross-stitch” model -
Ron Kraybill

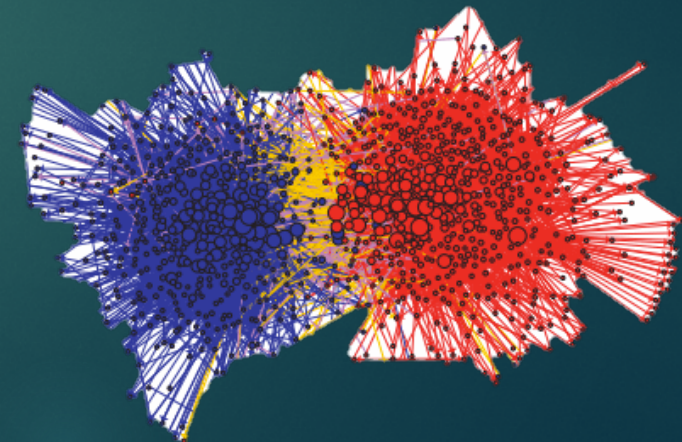
Democrats and Republicans More Ideologically Divided than in the Past

Distribution of Democrats and Republicans on a 10-item scale of political values



Pew Research Center

3. A **process** by which agents within a social system coalesce into opposing groups and social ties between the groups erode or become negative.



Conflict Intensity



Leas' Conflict Intensity Scale:

1. Problem to Solve
2. Disagreement
3. Contest
4. Fight/Flight
5. Intractable Situation ("Holy War")

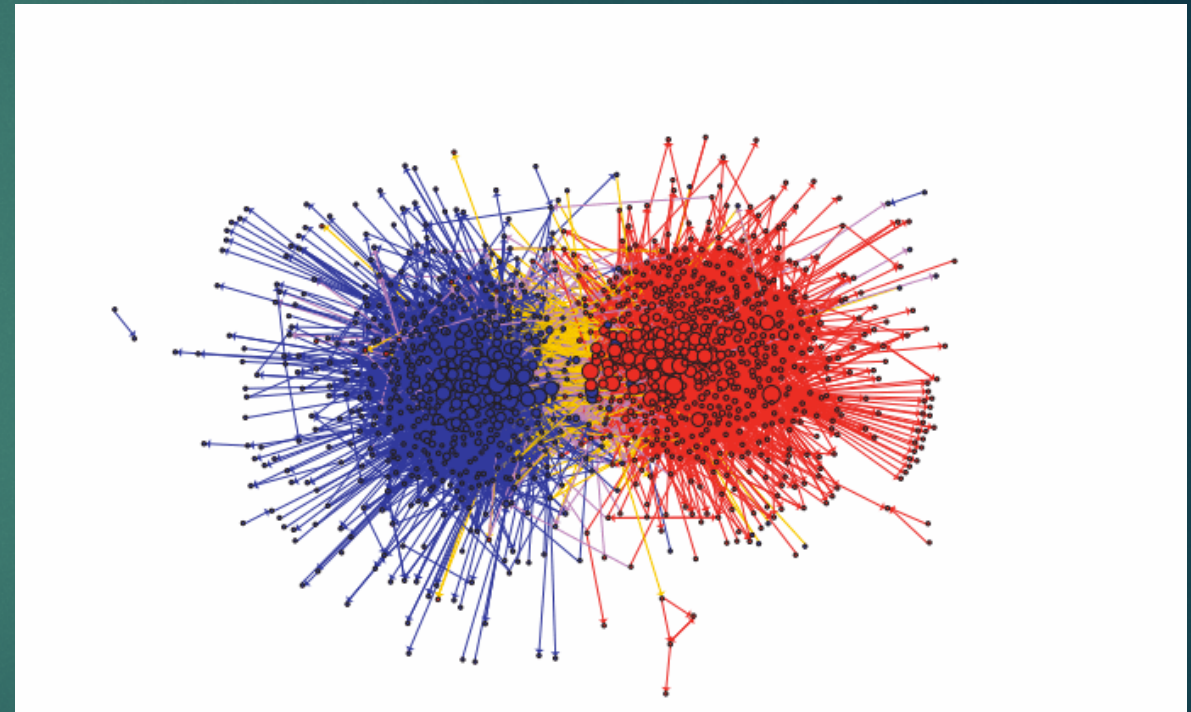
Polarization in American History

- ❖ American Revolution (Patriots vs. Tories)
- ❖ Civil War (Compromise of 1850)
- ❖ 1960s (Civil Rights and the Vietnam War)
- ❖ Other Times?



Drivers of Polarization

- ▶ Economic Stratification
- ▶ Identity Threat
- ▶ Racism and Racial Inequality
- ▶ Sexism and Gender Inequality
- ▶ Differing Moral Universes (Haidt)
- ▶ Global Nationalism and Wall-Building
- ▶ Balkanization of the Media
- ▶ Political Structure
- ▶ Social Sorting
- ▶ Leadership-Driven Polarization



Necessary Conditions for Polarization

Economic + Identity + Articulated = Polarization
Stratification Threat Grievance

Environment matters...

Resiliency.....Stress

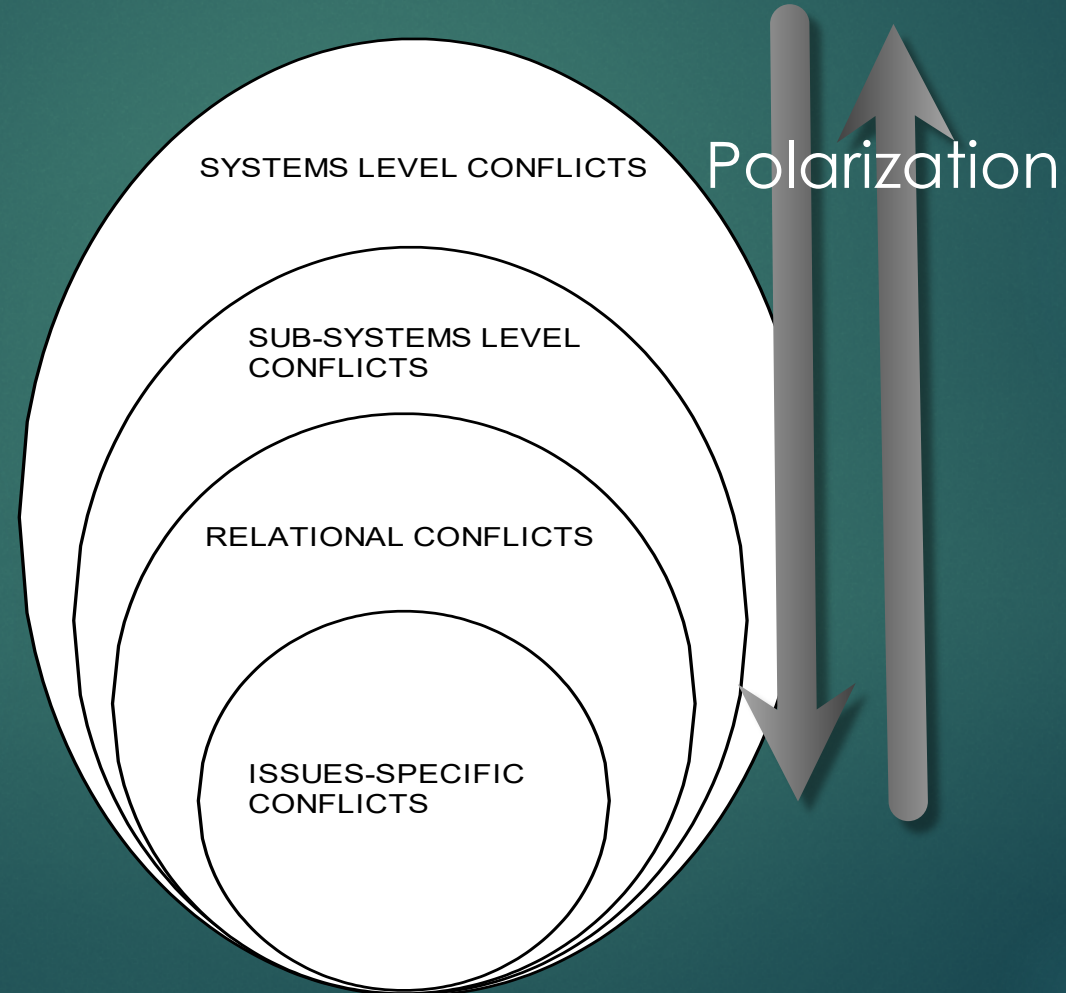
Dugan's Nested Model

Workbook Figure 1

A Nested Model of Conflict

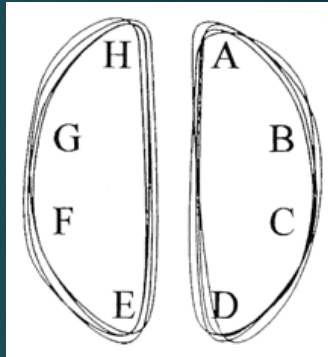
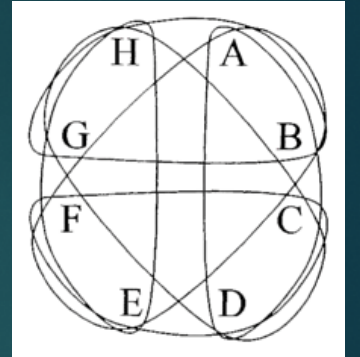
Conflicts originate and manifest at different levels, and conflict resolution strategies must address the most salient levels in order to succeed.

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How does polarization affect systems?

- ▶ Intractability becomes more likely
- ▶ "Stuckness" in the pattern of polarization (attractors)
- ▶ Identity
 - ▶ becomes more salient
 - ▶ Social identity threat in response to conflict resolution efforts
- ▶ Diminished relatedness
- ▶ "Sorting" of people along increasing number of issues/identities
- ▶ Purity principle takes hold → fragmentation
 - ▶ Intragroup splintering
- ▶ Sense of existential threat & vulnerability
- ▶ Split universes of truth (divergent worldviews)



"Cross-stitch" model -
Ron Kraybill

Communicating Across the Divide (Everett Brubaker)

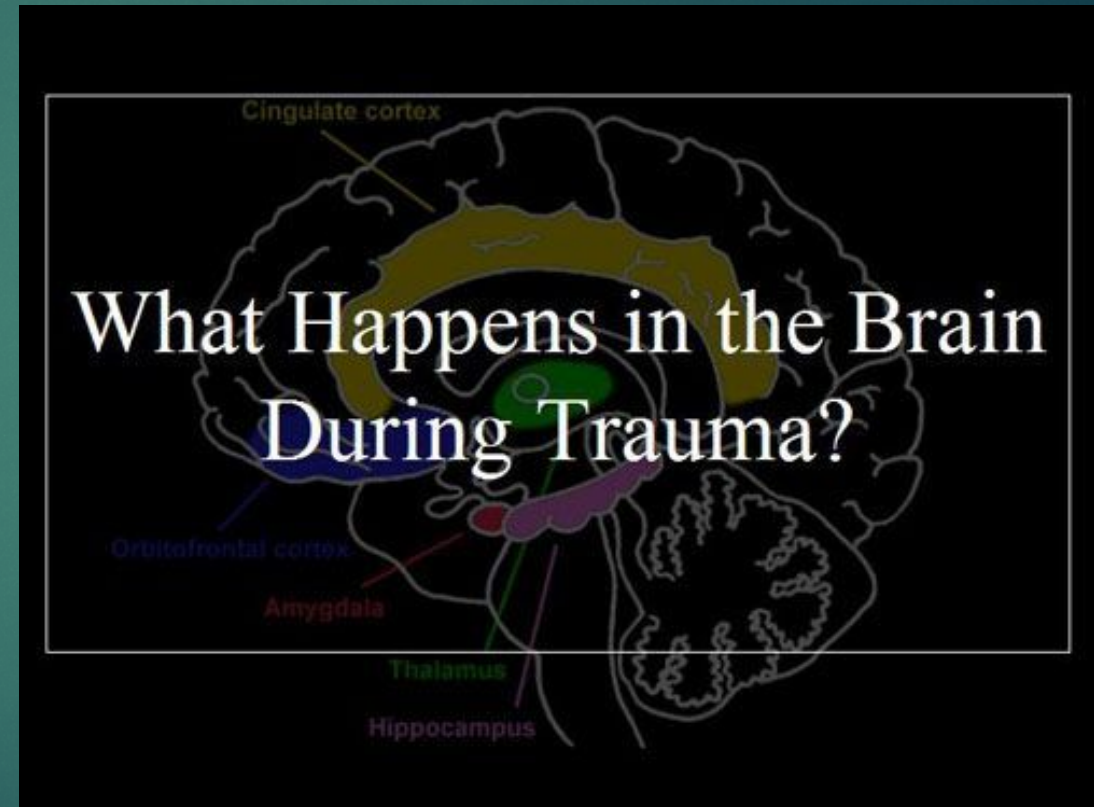
- Overcome Binaries
- Consider the Message
- Consider the Messenger
- Consider the Audience
- Practice Mindful Communication



Trauma and Resilience

(Carolyn Yoder and Teresa Haase)

- ▶ Traumagenic Events (e.g., 9/11 and the Iraq War)
- ▶ Trauma and Polarization
- ▶ Addressing Trauma
- ▶ Leaders as “Connectors of People”
- ▶ Cultivating Resilience
- ▶ Self Care



Leading in an Age of Polarization

1. Within Yourself: Refuse Contempt, Honor Dignity, Broaden Binaries.
2. With Others: Seek First to Understand, Invite Disagreement, Stay Connected.
3. Reweave connections at the local level (esp. congregations).
4. Surface underlying Trauma or Dysfunction in your Congregation or Organization.
5. Build Relationships with Individuals and Groups that do not share your worldview (“Gang of Six” example).
6. Advocate for greater economic equality and enhanced safety for all.



**When the
Center Does
Not Hold**

LEADING IN AN AGE
OF POLARIZATION

DAVID R. BRUBAKER