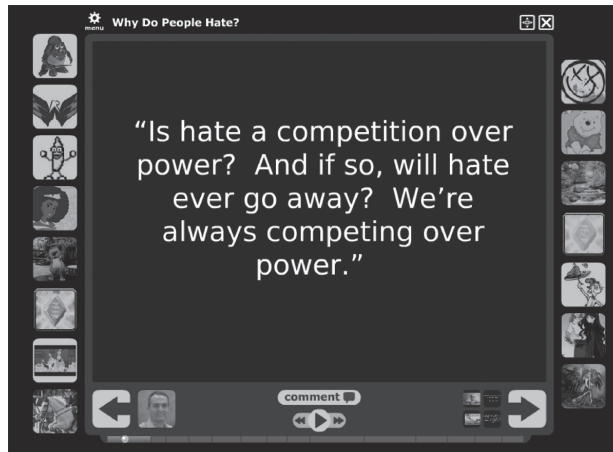


## What Can Digital Conversations Look Like?

A group of middle school students using pseudonyms recently extended a Socratic circle on hatred by having an asynchronous conversation together on Voicethread (<http://ed.voicethread.com/share/88781/>). Use this handout to study one strand from that conversation, in which students reflected on a quote from their original seminar.



### Student Conversation

**Darth Tater:** Here's an interesting quote on hatred that came from a seminar on hatred in my classroom. What do you think the connections are between hatred and power? Do hatred and a quest for power go hand in hand?

**Evil Barney:** I think that the quest for power just sets the stage for hatred to occur. Whenever I play the game Risk, I notice that I become frustrated with other players that stop my conquest. I bet when people are trying to gain power on a large scale in real life, that frustration builds up like lava in a volcano and comes out as violence and hate all at once.

I don't think power is completely to blame for hatred, but it definitely helps hatred come along. What else do you think power does for hatred?

**Mearan:** Hate, most of the time, is competing over power. For example, you are nominated for president. Then, another candidate wins the election. You aren't going to be very happy are you? You will end up generating hate to that person, even if it is only a small bit.

Now, hate cannot be stopped, for it is a natural human emotion. As I have said before "we could create the illusion of it disappearing, but it will never be true." Saying that, we could lessen people's will to be in a higher power. It could lessen the hate, but it would never go away. Is there anyway to eliminate the humans need to be at the top of power?

**The Happy Man:** Mearan said: Is there anyway to eliminate the humans need to be at the top of power?

My answer is that there really isn't. The only thing we can do is to either get rid of that power, or to make power a little less glamorous. Most likely neither of those things is going to happen. The most anyone can do is wait for something to happen that does eliminate that need.

But in the grand scheme of things is there really any need for one person to have all that power?

**Student Conversation**

**Pooh Bear:** Evil Barney said: “I think that the quest for power just sets the stage for hatred to occur.”

This really grabs my attention. Everyone keeps on saying that hate is expressed because of power. But what Evil Barney says is that power is kind of a step up to get to hatred. It leads to hatred . . .

When you feel power or the more you want it, it forces your hate to come out even stronger. A lot of the time in life, for some reason, people want to be powerful. I don’t understand. What is the significance of this? Why is control such an exciting word to people?

It’s kind of like and evil scientist or somebody in a movie. You might gain something so great, and so wanted by other people that it can get out of hand. By people wanting that thing (power) so much, you feel hate against them because they want the power that you have and you don’t want to be taken away.

So I guess my overall question is: Why do people love the feeling of power and control?

**Mearan:** Evil Barney said: “I think that the quest for power just sets the stage for hatred to occur,” and Pooh Bear said: “Power is kind of a step up to get to hatred. It leads to hatred.”

I somewhat agree with this. However, I see power as more of a fuel. Let’s think of hate as fire. The more the quest for power occurs, the more fuel you will have. So, if you have lots of fuel and then light the flames hatred, the flame will be big. Depending on the amount of fuel you had at the start, the flames of hatred will last longer, or it will be bigger.

So a quick clap for your new way of thinking. Anyone else see this from a different viewpoint?

**Questions for Reflection**

1. What types of conversation comments (starter, kicker, pushback, answering) can you find in this sample strand of collaborative dialogue?
2. If you were to rank these comments in order from the most important to the least important, what would your rankings look like? Why?
3. If you were to improve one of these comments, which would you choose? What revisions would you make?
4. If you were to join this conversation, what type of comment would you add? Where would you place it?
5. Which participant do you think made the most significant contributions to this sample strand of comments? Which made the least significant contributions? Explain your thinking.