



The Problem

In nations from the US to India to Israel, intergroup animosity has reached new heights, threatening democracy and fueling violence. Concerned citizens are working to bridge these divides, but the most popular strategies have critical limitations. Dialogue initiatives are limited by self-selection, involving people who are already amenable to civil discussion. Critically, such programs often fail to reach the most entrenched individuals. Dialogue programs are also difficult to scale, requiring face-to-face interaction and active facilitation.

Our Solution: Tango

[Tango](#) is a cooperative quiz game that turns members of opposing groups into teammates. Participants get paired up online, get to know each other by chat, answer questions together as partners, score points, and (possibly) win prizes. The game challenges preconceptions across lines of division with thought-provoking questions that reveal and acknowledge uncomfortable truths for both sides.

Developed by [researchers at Harvard University](#), Tango has the following key features:

- **Scalability:** As a fully digital tool, Tango can be integrated into institutional programs and reach a broad audience
- **Enjoyability:** Unlike most bridge-building interventions, Tango is fun, reliably getting high enjoyability ratings. This enables it to reach people who are reluctant to connect with outsiders.
- **Customizable Content:** The quiz content can be tailored to each cultural context, with the right mix of fun and serious questions and an ideological balance that makes all participants feel represented and respected.

Evidence

In five randomized controlled trials in the US, we've found that playing Tango increases warmth toward the opposing party by an average of 9 degrees, equivalent to rolling back approximately 15 years of increased polarization. We find effects lasting up to four months after just an hour of gameplay. We also see increased acknowledgement that the other side makes valid points and increased support for compromise. (See our [research paper](#), under review)

In August of 2024, we ran our first field test with the incoming students at Cornell University's Dyson School. We found that twenty minutes of gameplay increased students' openness to different ideas and different people, prompting most students to voluntarily share their contact information with their partners. The modal enjoyability rating from students was 10/10.

Next Steps

Want to run a Tango with your institution or organization? Contact Tereese Semple-Smith at tereese.smith@globaldevincubator.org. We are working with a range of US universities (including Harvard, Cornell, Northeastern, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, and Longwood) and are looking to expand to other countries. We are grateful for funding from Schmidt Futures, Open Philanthropy, The Templeton World Charity Foundation, the John Templeton Foundation, and Beyond Conflict.



DRAFT Report on Tango Field Test Cornell Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management August 2024

Background

Tango is an evidence-based tool for promoting collaboration, respect, and connectedness on college campuses, at work, and in other civic spaces. It's a quiz game in which two participants get to know each other by chat, answer questions together as partners, score points, and (possibly) win prizes. Because it's fully digital, it can reach participants at scale and virtually. And because it's fun, it can reach a broad range of participants, including those who are reluctant to engage across lines of division. Tango is joint effort between the laboratory of [Prof. Joshua Greene at Harvard University](#) and The [Global Development Incubator](#).

In our prior research, we conducted five randomized controlled trials (RCTs) showing that Tango can reduce political animosity and increase respect between Republicans and Democrats, with effects of a single hour of gameplay lasting up to four months. (See our [research paper](#), under review)

More recently, we've adapted Tango for higher education and have completed our first field test, which was conducted with the incoming class of undergraduates at Cornell University's Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management. Dyson students are politically diverse, split approximately equally between self-identified liberals and conservatives.

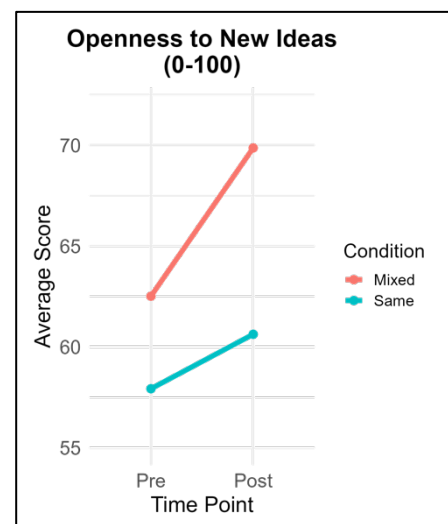
Method

For this pre-registered RCT, students were assigned partners randomly, resulting in some mixed pairs (liberal-conservative) and some similar pairs (liberal-liberal, conservative-conservative). The Tango quiz questions are designed to challenge both liberal and conservative worldviews, providing a learning experience for all students, regardless of who their partner is. Our key measures are openness to new ideas, openness to new people, enjoyment, willingness to recommend, and willingness to be connected (non-anonymously) with one's game partner.

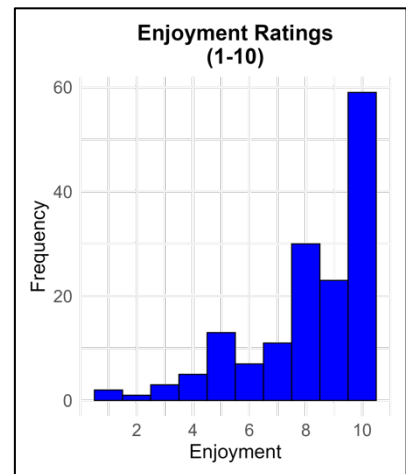
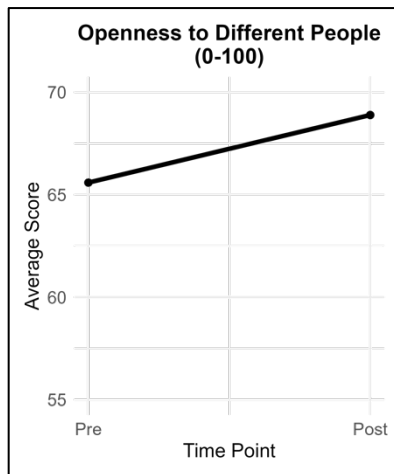
Results

188 students completed all measures. 154 had partners who completed all measures.

Openness to new ideas: Playing Tango **significantly increased students' perceptions that both liberals and conservatives can make valid points**. This effect was **stronger for students who played with a partner with differing ideological views**. (Mean increase of 4.9 points overall and 7.4 for dissimilar partners, on 0-100 scale; $p < .001$)



Openness to people with different viewpoints: Playing Tango significantly increased students' interest in getting to know students with different ideological views. (Mean increase of 3.3 points overall on a 0-100 scale; $p = .002$). This effect was independent of partner type.



Enjoyment and Recommendation: The **modal enjoyment rating was 10/10**, and the median was 9/10. Likewise, the modal response for whether participants would recommend Tango to others was 10/10, and the median was 9/10.

Sharing contact info with partners

After playing anonymously, the **majority of participants**—60% in ideologically similar pairs and 73% in mixed pairs—**chose to share their names and email address with their partners**. This resulted in mutual connections for ~35% of our similar pairs and 46% of our mixed-party pairs.

We received the following comment from the Cornell Professor who implemented our field test:

"We asked all our first-year students in the Dyson School at Cornell to play Tango, and I was thrilled to see immediate and tangible results. The beauty of Tango lies in its 'show don't tell' construction: showing students the lessons through description rather than telling them through exposition. As a professor, I couldn't feasibly ask students to talk to someone with more liberal or conservative views and tell them, 'Hey, trust me, I'm sure you'll both emerge with a more open mind.' Their guard would be up from the beginning. Instead, Tango simply shows students the way through guided questions, and as instructors we don't even need to callout the learning outcomes by name. Students just experience it for themselves, and that is powerful enough. Using Tango in the classroom gave me a renewed sense of hope that our future business leaders will find meaning in their connections with others, regardless of political views."

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Conclusion

Results from this field test indicate that Tango can be used on college campuses to **increase openness to challenging ideas and people with different viewpoints**. They also indicate that Tango can create opportunities for **conversations and personal connections across ideological divides**. Finally, we find evidence that students **enjoy playing Tango** and consider it worthy of **recommendation to friends**.