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Bashert: How I Found Dispute Resolution and It Found Me

By *Andrea Kupfer Schneider*

My story of how I got involved in negotiation and dispute resolution began in my first year of law school with a class in negotiation. I don't recall why I chose this elective in the first-year curriculum. Perhaps I thought it fit with my interest in international law. Perhaps it seemed close to a business school course, which interested me because I was still contemplating trying to get a joint degree (an idea I

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later dropped). Perhaps I signed up for the course because I subconsciously thought it fit my personality or family background. Perhaps, as in so many choices students make, first impression and convenience played a part: the course sounded interesting and fit perfectly in my schedule. Whatever the reason, I am confident that at the time I had no idea it would change the trajectory of my career. In retrospect, I think it might have been *bashert*, which is Yiddish for “destiny.” Something I was meant to find.

Getting to Dispute Resolution

Harvard Negotiation Project

Roger Fisher, who usually taught the negotiation course, was on sabbatical that year, so Bruce Patton was the professor, and he was a terrific teacher. I enjoyed the class immensely and realized that I wanted to do much more work in this area. To figure out how to accomplish that, I met with Elizabeth Kopelman (later Borgwardt), a 3L who was Roger Fisher’s research assistant. Liz, who wound up hiring me to replace her, later became a mentor and co-author. I was very excited to step into her shoes.

I met Roger Fisher for the first time in the fall of 1990. He was almost a foot taller than I am, and that day he looked both daunting and friendly. He peered down at me. “I understand that you are to be my research assistant,” he announced. And that was that—it was meant to be.

Working for Roger for the next two years was a whirlwind of everything from class preparation to research on current events to preparation for his Senate testimony and his other high-end commitments. Because of Roger’s focus on international events, those two years confirmed for me my interest in conflict resolution and how international law was only one piece of the puzzle of how countries should relate to one another.

For example, in December 1990, after Iraq invaded Kuwait, the United States was still debating whether to send troops. I worked on Roger's Senate testimony, and he allowed me to co-author an op-ed piece with him and Doug Stone, who was then an associate at the Harvard Negotiation Project. The op-ed in the *Boston Globe* pointed out that Saddam Hussein was not crazy—and that “crazy” was too glib a label to give to other leaders when we disagreed with them. Hussein, I learned, did not just show up in Kuwait and claim the oil but set forth his claim in elaborate and law-based arguments: 1) that Kuwait was really a 19th province of Iraq, as the Western powers that had drawn the maps after World War I had gotten it wrong (which was not a crazy point at all) and 2) that Kuwait had been tunneling under Iraq to steal its oil. If even supposedly “crazy” Saddam Hussein was claiming that he was permitted to act under international law, having a legal standard from which to negotiate must be vital. This also made me realize that one key challenge in negotiation is to listen and try to understand the other side—even when you think they are absolutely wrong.

I also appreciated that Roger's perspective on the Middle East was quite different from mine. I had visited Israel and back in 1990, I pretty much viewed Israel as the hero in any narrative (a view that has become far more nuanced in the last 30 years). Roger didn't necessarily disagree, but he had much more appreciation for the views of the Arab countries, which helped fill in my narrative.

By the time I became a teaching assistant for the Negotiation Workshop in January of 1991, I was hooked. Bruce Patton again took the lead—this time in teaching all the teaching assistants how to teach. And even though the workshop was harder and more time-consuming than anything I had ever done, I loved it and decided that this was my future career. I've always felt blessed to have figured

out this part of my destiny by the second year of law school because with that clear direction, I could map out my next steps more thoughtfully.

Looking back, I'm amazed that I realized so early on my desire to build a career in negotiation and be a law professor. I had come to law school thinking that I would like to be in-house counsel for IBM, which at the time was the largest company in the world, and travel around the globe. Of course, in retrospect, my choice seems entirely logical. My mom, dad, and stepmom are all professors, and their knowledge and experience in their respective fields have served me extremely well over my career. I've co-authored a book with my dad about negotiation in academia, focusing on faculty in medicine and science. And I was pleased to be able to guest lecture about the Nuremberg trials in my mom's class on the Holocaust, after she came down with the flu while I happened to be home. When I later got the opportunity to see her teach, I realized how similar we were in running a classroom. This would not be surprising to anyone outside the family, but I still remember being shocked to understand that I had really grown up to be her.

In my third year of law school, I was the head teaching assistant in Roger's undergraduate class "Coping with International Conflict." In addition to learning the course materials, I learned how to hire other students and manage a team. I also got to see the thoughtful analyses that we had presented to diplomats and the Senate the previous year be used by undergraduate students with the same understanding and effectiveness—a great lesson in how good theory and clear concepts can be applied in many different contexts. As Roger used to say, the students would be able to learn about South Africa or India and Pakistan, but perhaps more important, they would also realize that they could negotiate more effectively with their roommates and their families.

This lesson has really stuck with me. Settings and applications will change, but good frameworks and theories can be applied across the board and provide insight and support, even for someone who is not an expert in that context. In some ways, this is what a mediator does—providing process expertise regardless of substantive knowledge. This recognition has given me the confidence to expand my “context” past where I have direct experience. Working on the materials for this class also led to my first two publications in the field, both with Roger and other colleagues: the popular book *Beyond Machiavelli: Tools for Coping with Conflict* and the textbook *Coping with International Conflict: A Systematic Approach to Influence in International Negotiation*.

Stanford and Interdisciplinary Learning

I had marvelous good luck when Robert Mnookin, who was then a professor at Stanford Law School, visited Harvard in my second year. After I took a family law class and worked with him in the January workshop, he, too, became a mentor who helped shape my career. Bob was very clear and direct about what it would take to become a law professor, and I went about “checking those boxes” for the remaining time at Harvard. I worked on the *Harvard International Law Review*, kept striving for better grades, published two student notes, and secured a coveted clerkship with Judge Irving Kaufman of the Second Circuit. When Judge Kaufman died late in my third year of law school, shortly before I was to start my clerkship, it was Bob who fortunately provided my soft landing and offered me a teaching position at Stanford for the fall of 1992, turning adversity into an opportunity.

The semester at Stanford was eye-opening for all sorts of reasons—from learning about how different faculties operate and get along (Stanford was quite different from

Harvard) to the amazing interdisciplinary focus of the Stanford Center on Conflict and Negotiation (SCCN) in the 1990s. I also was exposed to yet another take on the world of negotiation. Each of these lessons informed my future work. In particular, SCCN was renowned for working with leading lights in the emerging field of behavioral economics and psychology, including Lee Ross, Amos Tversky, and Daniel Kahneman. Although my undergraduate work had been interdisciplinary, law school perhaps inevitably focused on cases, case studies, and law reviews about and from lawyers. This was true even in the negotiation class. Being at Stanford was a key reminder that interdisciplinary work was crucial to creating negotiation theories that were robust and applicable.

The semester at Stanford also gave me a distinct comparison between the kind of writing and theory and practice that Roger was producing and what was happening at Stanford, with its high-end empirical work. Harvard was best known (in negotiation) for Roger's famous book *Getting to Yes*, which is easy to read, with no citations, and is still assigned in classes around the world, having sold millions of copies. On the other hand, the wonderfully rich and empirically based *Barriers to Conflict Resolution* produced by Stanford was not being assigned in any law school classes, let alone being read by practicing lawyers (Mnookin et al., 1995). It would take years before this material would be "translated" for law school use and then popularized by Kahneman's own later writing. For me, this was a realization that there was a whole world of research that *could* inform best practices in negotiation but would not unless and until people were actually reading it. This was a lesson I put into action years later with Chris Honeyman, creating and editing *The Negotiator's Fieldbook*, followed by *The Negotiator's Desk Reference and Negotiation Essentials for Lawyers*, translating theory into prac-

tice (and in my dispute resolution textbook, co-authors, Carrie Menkel-Meadow, Lela Love, Jean Sternlight, and Michael Moffitt, I found partners who were equally committed to interdisciplinary readings and approaches).

Visiting in DC

Fast forward: I returned to the East Coast from Stanford, worked in Washington, DC, for two years at a law firm where I continued to conduct trainings in negotiation (my law firm, first skeptical about an associate who wanted to teach, later hired me to do that), and then landed a position visiting for one year at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs. Roger had connected me with a group of international negotiation scholars based in political science and involved with the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins (SAIS), George Mason, and other intellectual centers addressing issues of international relations from their own disciplinary perspective. This group's monthly lunch meetings provided me another opportunity to get different perspectives on topics I enjoyed so much. I was honored to join professors Bill Zartman, Saadia Touval, and others who added to my reading list of "things I should know." Saadia was instrumental in connecting me with the Elliott School when people there were scrambling to fill a last-minute opening in their international law offerings. (I remember feeling that this connection I had built, too, was *bashert* because I had already decided to quit my law firm within a few months. I was clear with the lunch group about my goal to teach, and Saadia remembered that when this job opened up.)

And so I ended up teaching international law and international conflict resolution to undergraduate and graduate students in political science. The classes were terrific, but in some ways, the conversations each day with my new col-

leagues in the political science department were even more instructive in how different disciplines do research and approach the world (for example, the empirical research on the Supreme Court done by political scientists was fascinating to me, as they often focused on overall voting patterns while in law school we had primarily focused on legal reasoning).

Landing at Marquette

The visiting position lasted only a year, so in 1995, I went on the teaching market for a full-time faculty position. I landed a job at Marquette, where I have been since the fall of 1996. I've taught dispute resolution and negotiation almost every year since then and have also moved through a series of additional classes that have continued to inform my thinking about dispute resolution. When I arrived at Marquette, I focused on international law (and international conflict, based on the undergraduate course at Harvard). Over time, I have also taught human rights, European Union law, and art law but slowly settled into dispute resolution, negotiation, international law, and a seminar of rotating topics—all topics that I have chosen, written about, and loved. Against my will (but a switch I am now totally delighted with), I shifted out of international law more than a decade ago into teaching ethics. Other classes now include Restorative Justice and Alternative Criminal Processes.

On reflection, this seems like a pretty straightforward path into academia and a steady career of writing, teaching, and training in the field. Yet many of us have noted family influences on our choice of field. Did they perhaps also play a role?

Family Matters

My parents divorced and remarried when I was relatively young, bringing our combined families on each side to six kids (my children have more than 20 first cousins!). I was the eldest of my parents' "core four," so there was no question about my being in charge or acting like the mom as we navigated the divorce and realignment of our family. (I am sure that each of my siblings has stories of me bossing them around, and I am also sure that I still do that now at times.) And, as the eldest, I was usually the one to manage communications between parents who did not necessarily want to communicate with each other. My guess is that this responsibility trained me as a mediator, developing my ability to hear a point of view even when I did not agree with it. Arguments among the kids (and sometimes with the adults) were loud, vocal, heated, and probably quite healthy in getting everything out. Although I still don't think I went into dispute resolution because of all of this, I do think that this early experience gave me a better understanding of how different people, including myself, manage—or do not manage—anger.

In my first-year negotiation class at Harvard, managing anger was the personal skill that I worked on. A bit of background: each year, the negotiation class professors called on psychologists to work with the class for a few sessions so that each student could identify one interpersonal skill the student wanted to improve and work on it with a psychologist. Students created a scenario that required this skill and then were videotaped showing different responses, exercises designed to help us be more in control and effective. I knew that I could express anger in family relationships, particularly with my youngest sister, since she and I were quite good at pushing each other's buttons until we were both in tears. And I'd seen anger between divorced parents who were still parenting four children. So

I was good on that. What I knew I needed was the ability to express anger professionally. How do you tell someone, such as a boss or a colleague, that what they did was out of line?

This was the skill that Bruce Patton worked on with me, work so impactful that I can still recall it clearly. It was okay to be angry, and it was okay to share that fact—it just needed to be deliberate and purposeful. I loved watching the videotape of me reacting to Bruce (who had learned how to push my buttons) with cold, calm disappointment rather than out-of-control rage. This was another moment when I realized how, in teaching negotiation, you can push people to be a better version of themselves. And it inspired (and still inspires) me to encourage personality stretching. It also reminds me that we are not “set” at age 25, an idea that is very useful both in teaching negotiation and in teaching ethics.

Academic Concentrations

My ongoing work as an academic has focused on three main areas. Both their origin and their possible futures, I think, are worth exploring.

International Law and Conflict

In high school I competed in debate and speech and after my freshman year discovered that I loved extemporaneous speaking. Extemporaneous speaking, as an event, was a competition in which each participant was given a question, 30 minutes to prepare a speech, and seven minutes to deliver it. The questions could cover any domestic or foreign current event, so performing well required a lot of advance work. For background, I regularly read the *New York Times*, the *Economist*, the *Christian Science Monitor* (which in that day was known for its foreign policy cov-

erage), the *Wall Street Journal*, and *The Financial Times*, among other publications. My teammates and I cut out relevant articles and created huge files about each country/leader/crisis and toted those around to different competitions. In retrospect, I realize that pre-Internet, we created our own portable Wikipedia that we could dive into at a moment's notice. My best friend and I, who traveled to state and national championships together, were both quite talented. I doubt that anyone who knows me today would be surprised to learn that I won trophies for talking, but I didn't recognize then that this exercise—researching and delivering a very short speech in a very short time—would serve me better than almost anything else I've ever done.

It also gave me a terrific grounding in international affairs, which led me to apply to the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs for my major in college. And, although I hadn't been out of the country until my junior year in high school, traveling abroad became a pursuit in and of itself. The summer after my sophomore year at Princeton, I went to Paris to work in the regional government, at the Préfecture de la Région Ile de France, and was captivated by the debate over allowing EuroDisney into the outskirts of Paris and the fear that it would ruin French culture. This, perhaps for the first time, showed me how different people view the world differently depending on their own experiences and perspectives (what I now understand to be partisan perceptions).

In my junior year, and as part of a “task force” class titled “US Policy toward Greece & Turkey,” we took a trip to Greece and Turkey over spring break. Again, speaking first with one group of politicians and then another (who opposed most of the policy initiatives of the first group) was eye-opening.

In my senior year, realizing the value of in-person visits as well as wanting more travel, I set about (successfully)

persuading Professor Frank von Hippel that the “task force” for which I was the senior teaching assistant should go to Europe. The class was called the “Conventional Defense of Europe,” and for our trip, we visited not only the headquarters of NATO and SHAPE (the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers in Europe) in Belgium, but also US troops stationed at the Fulda Gap, the geographic trip wire for an East German invasion of West Germany; NATO and Warsaw Pact officials in East and West Berlin; and Warsaw Pact and Polish officers in Warsaw. This was invaluable, firsthand learning: I met all the individuals involved in executing military and political strategies, people whom I had only read about, and learned directly from them about their challenges, concerns, and thoughts.

I realized that when we visit other countries and other cultures we learn much more than book learning (and that even book learning sticks better when we have people, places, and experiences we can attach to it), so in my teaching today, I create the same opportunity for my students. I started in 2008 with a trip to Europe to study international courts and for the last 10 years have taken students to Israel to study the Israeli-Palestinian conflict up close. My students and I also went to Cuba when it opened in January 2016 and, most recently, to Northern Ireland in early March 2020.

Even though I know that most of my law students will not go into foreign relations, I think learning about international conflict helps with lawyering in general. Realizing that things are not black and white, that headlines are only part of the story, and that there are multiple interpretations of any event allows students to reflect on conflicts and problems that are not their own and to apply the tools that we teach. This is true of issues with clients, problems in society, politics, and other big matters. Hoping to show how conflicts taught in the classroom can be used in real

life, I usually end my Dispute Resolution class by giving students a dispute system design challenge such as advising the police department about designing a civilian complaint system (an exercise that seems especially relevant and important in today's troubled world).

One last note on the international focus of my career. For my senior thesis at Princeton, I wrote about the Musée d'Orsay. I wanted a thesis topic that would get me back to Paris and combine policy with art history, which was my quasi-minor, and my French professor suggested writing about the new museum—again, *bashert*. Looking back now, I realize that my research focused on decision points and conflicts in the creation of the museum. I loved writing the thesis, and the book that grew out of it, and I still love visiting the museum. The topics most interesting to me at the time were the debates (and therefore negotiations) about the starting and ending dates of the collection, the interior architecture of the museum, and the role of outreach and history in the museum. My research allowed me to interview the major players involved in these decisions, and—once again—reinforced my recognition that everyone has their own view of what happened and why.

I learned two important things about negotiation in working on that thesis. To conduct the research, I had to cobble together funding for a trip to France from four or five different university departments, related organizations, and alumni groups, which meant I had to create a negotiation plan and ask for what I needed to make the trip happen. I also had to learn how to get interviews with all the important players. Once I landed one “side,” landing the other was easier. (I managed to get an interview with a journalist from *Le Figaro* through connections with my French professor, for example, and then told the journalist from *Le Monde* that it would be a travesty if I talked only to the more conservative paper.) Only later was I able to name

the negotiation concepts that helped me persuade everyone to talk to me in the short three weeks I was in Paris.

Women and Negotiation

I was relatively oblivious to gender differences in negotiation until I took the law school negotiation course. On the one day devoted to differences, I remember watching a video from the 1980s that provided advice on how women could negotiate more effectively. I don't actually recall what it said, I just recall feeling appalled and surprised. Who were these women who needed advice on being assertive? As I have often said in my presentations on gender, no male member of my family—no husband, brother, father, or son—has ever worried that the females in his life were not being sufficiently assertive. And while this is mostly a joke, I realize that I was raised with stories about strong women in my family succeeding at negotiation and bending rules that were seen as sexist.

I used to call my grandmother, Mama, an anti-feminist feminist. On the one hand, it was important to her that I could cook, had kids, and wore heels. On the other hand, she herself was a math teacher who then was my grandfather's accountant—and fully supported my career from the start. She would tell me stories about her aunt, my Great-aunt Rayah, who was a doctor for the White Army in the Russian revolution and later emigrated to the United States. Great-aunt Rayah delivered both my mom and uncle and then helped my grandmother bend the rules to keep her job. Back in the day, female teachers were supposed to quit the moment that they got pregnant—but then return to work immediately if they wanted to keep their job. This rule did not work for my grandmother, or her aunt. Mama, apparently twice, did not quit her job until she was showing and couldn't hide her pregnancy—she needed the money—and great-aunt Rayah then duly explained the

“premature” births to the school system. Of course, since the babies were “fragile” each time, my grandmother had a doctor’s note saying she could not return to work for several weeks after the birth. These women created their own maternity leave policy.

My grandmother also told me stories about her mother, Anna (my namesake), who had come to America on a boat from Russia by herself at age 15 and then worked to bring the rest of her family over. My favorite story of my great-grandmother’s successful negotiations was when she went to a store (after it went bankrupt during the Depression) and literally sat on the furniture she had purchased to ensure its delivery. (And as a child I was told that I was a great negotiator myself when I convinced my younger brother to clean my room each week for 10 cents, pocketing the remaining 15 cents that my parents paid me to do it.)

Other gender stereotypes also did not seem to fit me. For example, I loved building things in the workshop at my dad’s lab and constructed and wired a dollhouse for my sisters rather than playing with the dolls myself. (In eighth grade, when I asked my mom for a doll, since I didn’t yet have one, she explained that I had broken them all when I was younger.) And I loved math and science all the way through high school. I switched to social science only after taking—and not understanding—a linear algebra class at Carnegie Mellon as a high school student. (In retrospect, I wonder whether in another era or with another professor I would have had more encouragement and mentorship to stick with it, but that’s just speculation.)

In short, it had never occurred to me that I would negotiate differently because of my gender. My first research project about women and negotiation was to rerun Gerry Williams’s 1976 study on negotiation styles, in which he found that legal negotiators behaved primarily either in a cooperative or a competitive manner, with 65 percent of

lawyers falling into the cooperative style (Williams, 1983). His original study had not even had enough women in the sample pool to pull out any negotiation differences, so I wanted to run a new study to see if there were. By 1999, I had completed what I thought would be enough law review articles for tenure and turned to working on the longer project of running this study. In 2001, I had the results and could demonstrate that lawyers assessing the behaviors of other lawyers barely found any gender differences at all. So I moved away from the topic of gender, convinced that there were negligible gender differences, if any.

Yet a few years later, when the book *Women Don't Ask* came out, I was troubled by the results (Babcock & Laschever, 2007). It indicated that younger women at the start of their careers were not negotiating the terms of their employment. This caused some reflection on my part and prompted me to do additional research. I realized that I, too, had not negotiated my first salary offer. I don't think that was related to the fact that I was a woman, but rather that no one had told me that I should negotiate. (Perhaps that itself was gendered?) I also wanted to think about the broader lessons: When should we negotiate? How should we be trained? How do we even create the expectation that you should negotiate? My next research project examined whether my own law students were negotiating upon graduation. I discovered to my delight that the women were negotiating at the same rate that the men were and were getting just as much or more money.

This helped me realize that blanket guidelines about how all women negotiate are far too broad. I also noted that most research focused on assertiveness, rather than additional negotiation skills. My research since that time has tried to home in on the contexts in which we see stereotypes at play as well as the far more common situations when gender is just one more difference negotiators

have that may—or may not—affect how we negotiate. It's also made me realize that negotiation skills cannot remedy everything. Early articles would blame pay inequity on women for not negotiating harder, for example, but we know that such structural inequities cannot be fixed by negotiation alone.

Ethics

More than a decade ago, I was asked to take on teaching ethics to allow a junior colleague to be able to teach international law. At first I pushed back—I was not interested in ethics. But now I love this class—perhaps this was *bashert* again—destiny found me, and I was willing to grab it. I was ready for a new challenge and enjoy being exposed to a larger percentage of the student body since this is a required class. I've used the problem method, talking about what actual lawyers would do in a challenging ethical situation, a teaching methodology that ends up being close to how I have taught dispute resolution classes.

Dispute resolution focuses on more effective ways to resolve conflicts—how we want our students and future lawyers to communicate with each other and with their clients to be able to “get” more, protect their reputation, and behave in ways that allow them be good people. Similarly, international law focuses on how countries should behave toward their own citizens and toward other countries (with the emphasis on “should”). Thus, the focus on legal ethics fits quite well as I can talk about the world we want and how thoughtful (ethical) decision-making promotes that vision. It's not that we can eliminate conflict between countries or lawyers or clients—it's that we can handle it better.

Some commentators have suggested that ethics professors should not do more than teach the rules of professional responsibility, that they should make sure that students know the rules and that's all. Because students need to pass

the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE) to pass the bar, this is an understandable priority. There is also a natural hesitation on the part of teachers who don't want to be accused of trying to challenge family or personal religious values.

We could assume that law students are sufficiently moral by the time we get them or that it's already too late—their morals are already set—but I think this is a dodge for several reasons. First, the more we know about brain science, the more we know that brains and moral decision-making are still evolving when people are in their 20s. Second, there are plenty of “legal” situations in which morals come into play, such as the tension between loyalty to a client and a risk to public safety. And then there are circumstances, such as conflicts of interest, where morals are not the key but rather, understanding what the ethical rules are and what client obligations we have are crucial. In short, I think we have the opportunity in these classes to talk about what type of person each student wants to be and discuss the challenges to that goal that might arise in terms of financial pressure, family strife, career concerns, and stress—all of which can lead to poor decision-making.

Criminal Context

In some ways, this leads directly into my most recent foray into a new subject area—criminal law and alternative criminal processes. I started learning about restorative justice from my colleague Janine Geske, who started the restorative justice initiative at Marquette, when I sat in on her classes and visited a prison with her and our students. When Janine retired, I co-taught this class for several years until we found a talented alumna to take over. And, after colleague Cynthia Alkon approached me about writing together, we published the first textbook on alternative criminal processes for use in law school called *Negotiating*

Crime: Plea Bargaining, Problem Solving and Dispute Resolution in the Criminal Context (2019). I am not the only person to believe that our current criminal justice system is broken, with far too many mistakes, injustices, and racial divides. And I hope that applying a dispute resolution lens to that problem might be a slightly new way to help move sorely needed reform in the right direction.

Conclusion

Looking back on my career, I see a few themes. From my lawyer grandfather, I was taught early on that curiosity and humility will lead to taking pleasure in a life of learning. If we assume there is more out there, we must continue to push ourselves out of our comfort zone, out of our discipline and push ourselves even out of the country. I have regularly sought out perspectives and experiences that are different from my own. My best friends from college and I did not share religion, region of the country, or political views when we all showed up freshman year, and that, to me, defined a good college experience.

I still try to purposely engage with different people. On our student trip to Cuba, for example, I strongly disagreed with a law professor who spoke to my students about international relations, but I was intrigued by her perspective. That empathy, maybe even humility, continues to stretch me, and I try to convey to my students the importance of challenging themselves. This is not to say that I'm not opinionated. I know I am. And I know I'll be more persuasive if I'm genuinely inquisitive and understand the other side.

The study of dispute resolution has given me a home for my interest in other people and places. It gave me frameworks and theories to structure my curiosity and understand why and how these concepts could be useful. I probably would not have been so compelled to work, teach, and write in this field unless something in it reso-

nated with me in some innate, profound way. And the colleagues in the field—my mentors, co-authors, co-bloggers, and friends—are like the soulmates that *bashert* implies.

I have had many opportunities that seem like luck, and I have also been prepared to embrace them to create my own destiny. I have found mentors all along the way; through my choices, tried to open doors rather than close them; and have been willing to take risks or try new routes. Sometimes, I've responded yes to an invitation that pushed me in a new direction. Other times, as in creating the *Indisputably* blog or the dispute resolution works-in-progress conference, I've created the community I desired. I've tried to practice what I preach to my students—to listen, be open, be curious, and assume there is more to learn—while also being prepared to persuade and assert myself to move forward and take advantage of opportunities. I feel blessed to have found my *bashert* in dispute resolution.

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