

# Framing Workshop

Cognitive Metaphors and Communication

By Sarah A. Rice and Clai Rice, August 14, 2006

**Seneb  
Consulting**



# About the Speakers

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## Sarah A. Rice

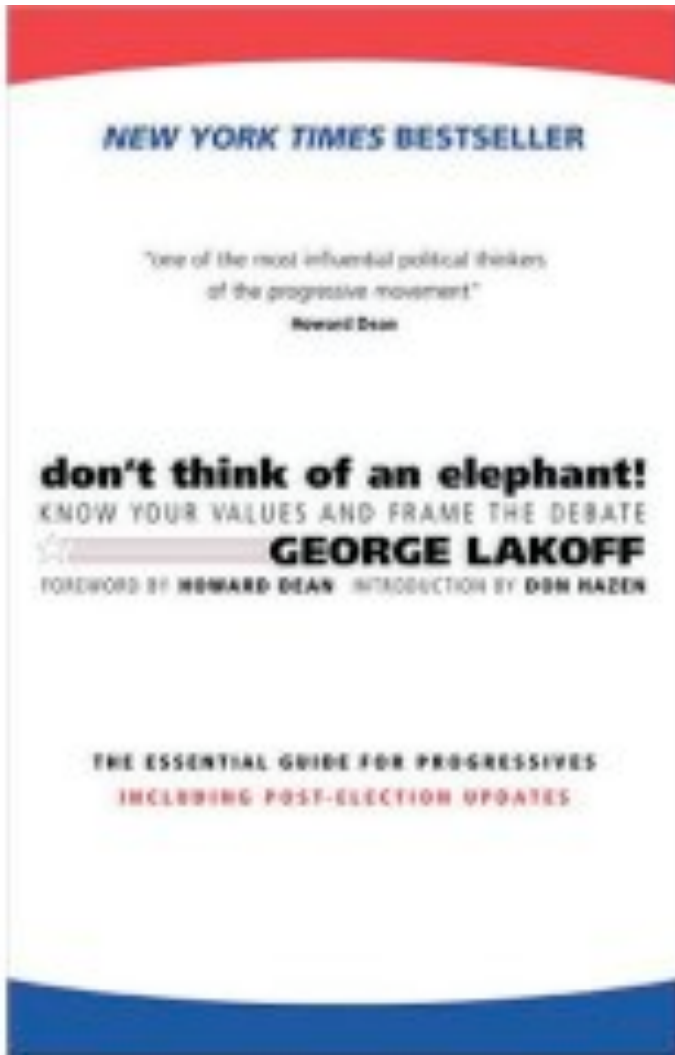
- 11 years experience in Information Architecture
- Established independent consulting firm, Seleb Consulting
- Degrees in Philosophy and Library & Information Science

## Clai Rice

- Professor of English at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette
- PhD in English (UGA)
- Research focus on Cognitive Linguistics and Poetry

# The Story

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- Blending is a powerful tool



# Workshop Outline

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- Cognitive Metaphors, Schemas, Conceptual Frames
- Blending
  - What it is
  - How it works
  - Types of blends
  - Methodology
- Why and how Frames affect everyday thinking
- Leverage Frame thinking for **understanding** and **communication**



# Cognitive Metaphor

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What is a Cognitive Metaphor?

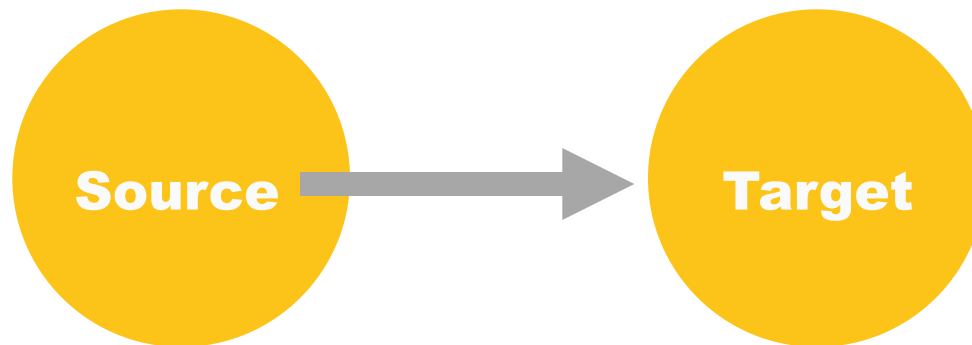
- Using knowledge about a concrete domain of experience to **talk** about an abstract domain
  - Life is a Journey
  - Argument is War
  - Ideas are Things
  - Time is Money
- We have experiences of life, arguments, ideas, and time, we just have a hard time putting them into words



# Cognitive Metaphor

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Metaphor is not just a matter of substituting words, as Aristotle thought. Instead, a cognitive metaphor is a systematic structure applied from one domain (source) to another (target), so that lots of expressions depend on a single cognitive metaphor (hence the cognitive part of the name)





# Cognitive Metaphor

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- *Ideas are Things*
  - Where did you get that idea.
  - We were brainstorming just throwing out ideas.
  - He was full of ideas.
  - I don't think he had half an idea of what was coming.
- *Argument is War*
  - He parried all of the objections well
  - His defense of his idea was brilliant.
  - He anticipated little opposition to his proposal
  - He won (or lost) the argument
- *Life is a Journey*
  - I've faced many obstacles in my life, but none of them has kept me from reaching my objectives.
- *Time is Money*
  - My time is valuable
  - How do you spend your time these days
  - Is that worth your while
  - He was frittering his time away (playing video games)



# Schemas

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- Basic Cognitive Metaphors are constructed of schemas
  - Journey (life is a journey)
    - Source, path, goal
    - Often represented visually, but not necessarily
    - Journeys have difficulties
  - Things (ideas are things)
    - Substance
    - Volume
    - Coherent and unified
- A schema is a very simplified representation of roles and relations that has
  - Internal structure (subparts/relations)
  - Gestalt properties (the parts only make sense in the context of the whole)





# Schemas

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- Why do we care about schemas? Because there are probably quite few of them (maybe less than 300) and many of them reappear over and over in metaphors, so we can predict that they will be
  - Used to understand existing frames
  - Used in new frames
- Once we understand how some of these basic schemas work within frames, we can use them to analyze frames and create new ones



# Conceptual Frames

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- Also known as complex metaphors (Lakoff)
- Definition: ways of characterizing background knowledge about a large domain
  - Example: Communication (Conduit Metaphor). Several metaphors that work together:
    - Put your ideas into words (words get packed up; ideas are things; words are containers)
    - Send words across (via a conduit)
    - Receiver gets words and unpacks the meaning
  - Default values
    - Values that speakers and hearers have when they are unspecified
    - Examples for Conduit Metaphor:
      - Speakers usually have an audience.
      - A sender is usually a person (not a machine)
      - Conduit is straight



# Conceptual Frames

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- Mental spaces are organized by frames
- When elements and relations of a mental space are organized as a package, we say the mental space is “framed”
- Frames are entrenched (very frequently repeated) mental spaces that we can activate all at once



# Frames for Time

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- I am still and time is moving towards me (Time Moving)
  - The deadline is approaching
  - The summer went by
- Time is a fixed line, and I am moving along it towards the future (Ego Moving)
  - We are approaching our deadline
  - Leave those sad days behind
- These are 2 different frames we use in English to talk about time
- Scenario: You have a meeting scheduled for Wednesday. The boss calls and says “the meeting has been moved back 2 days.” What day will the meeting take place?
- What the literature says



# Frames for Time

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- Experiment
  - Standing in line at the cafeteria
  - Waiting for a train
  - Riding on the train
- Experiment (Gibbs)
  - Blindfolded football field



# Blending

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- “Conceptual integration is at the heart of imagination. It connects input spaces, projects selectively to a blended space, and develops emergent structure through composition, completion, and elaboration in the blend.” (p. 89)
- “Understanding blending allows us to formulate certain problems and think about possible solutions.” (p.90)
- “Blending gives us global insight, human-scale understanding, and new meaning. It makes us both efficient and creative.” (p.92)

The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities.

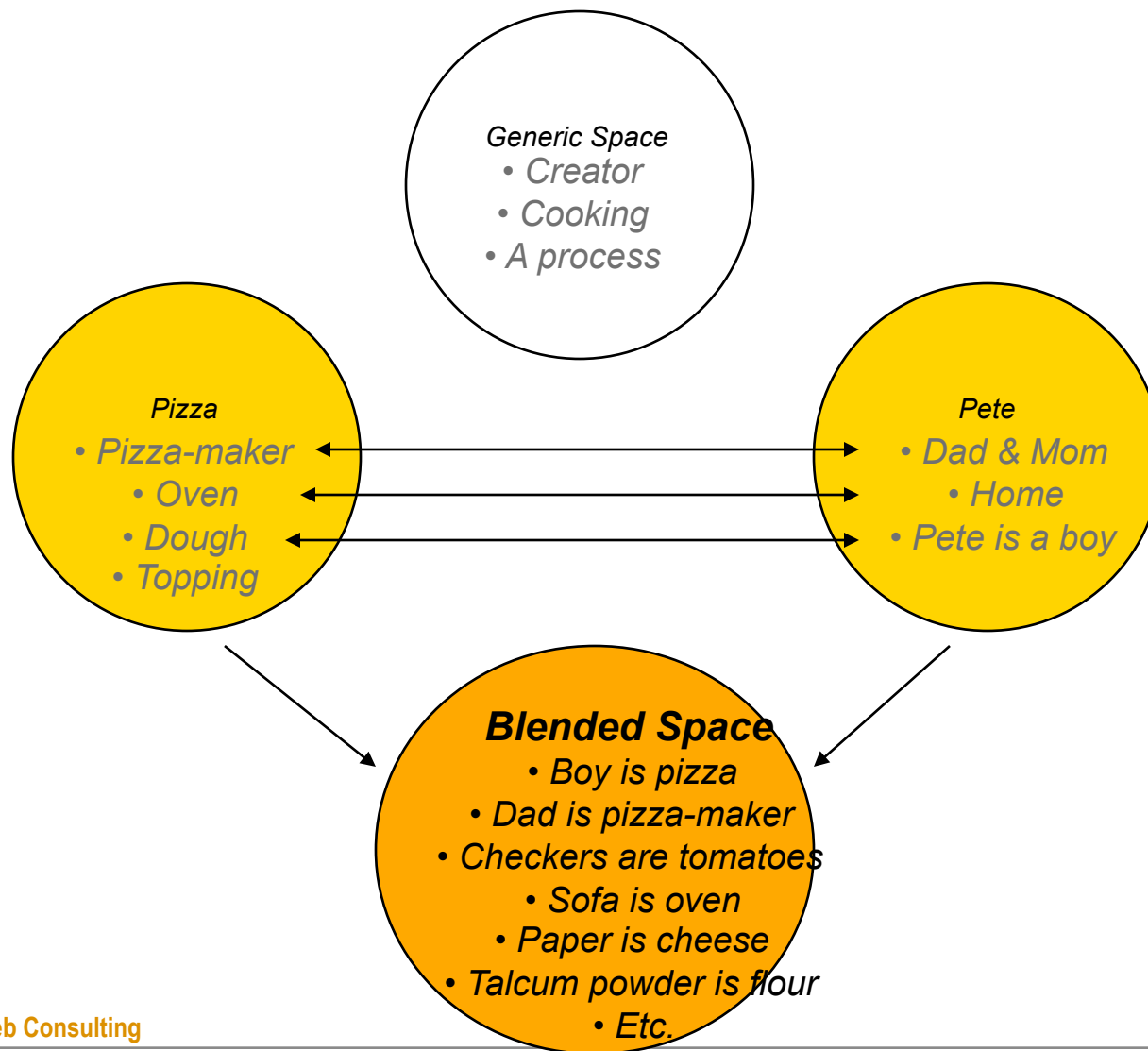
# Blending

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# Pete's a Pizza Blend

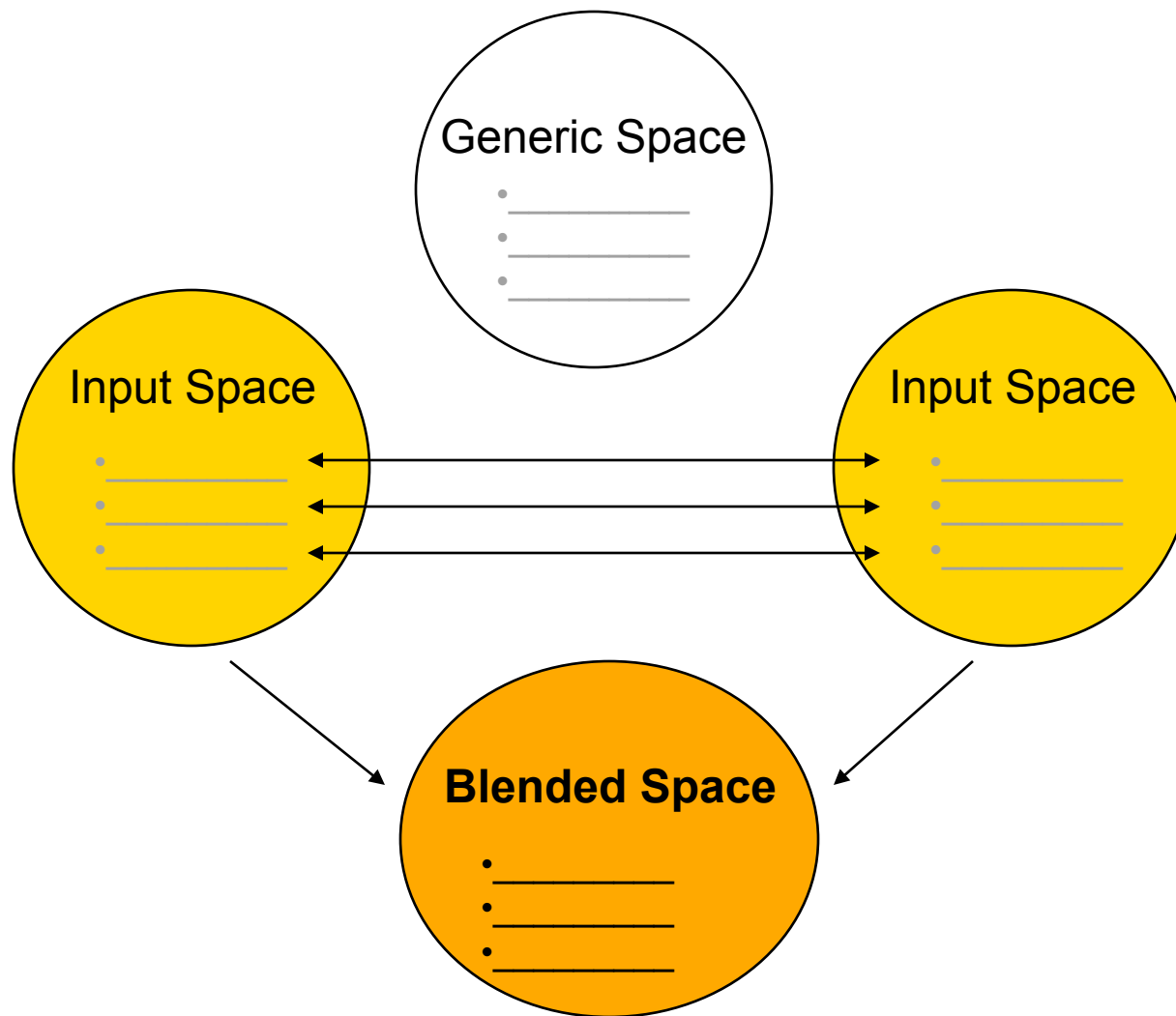






# Anatomy of a Blend

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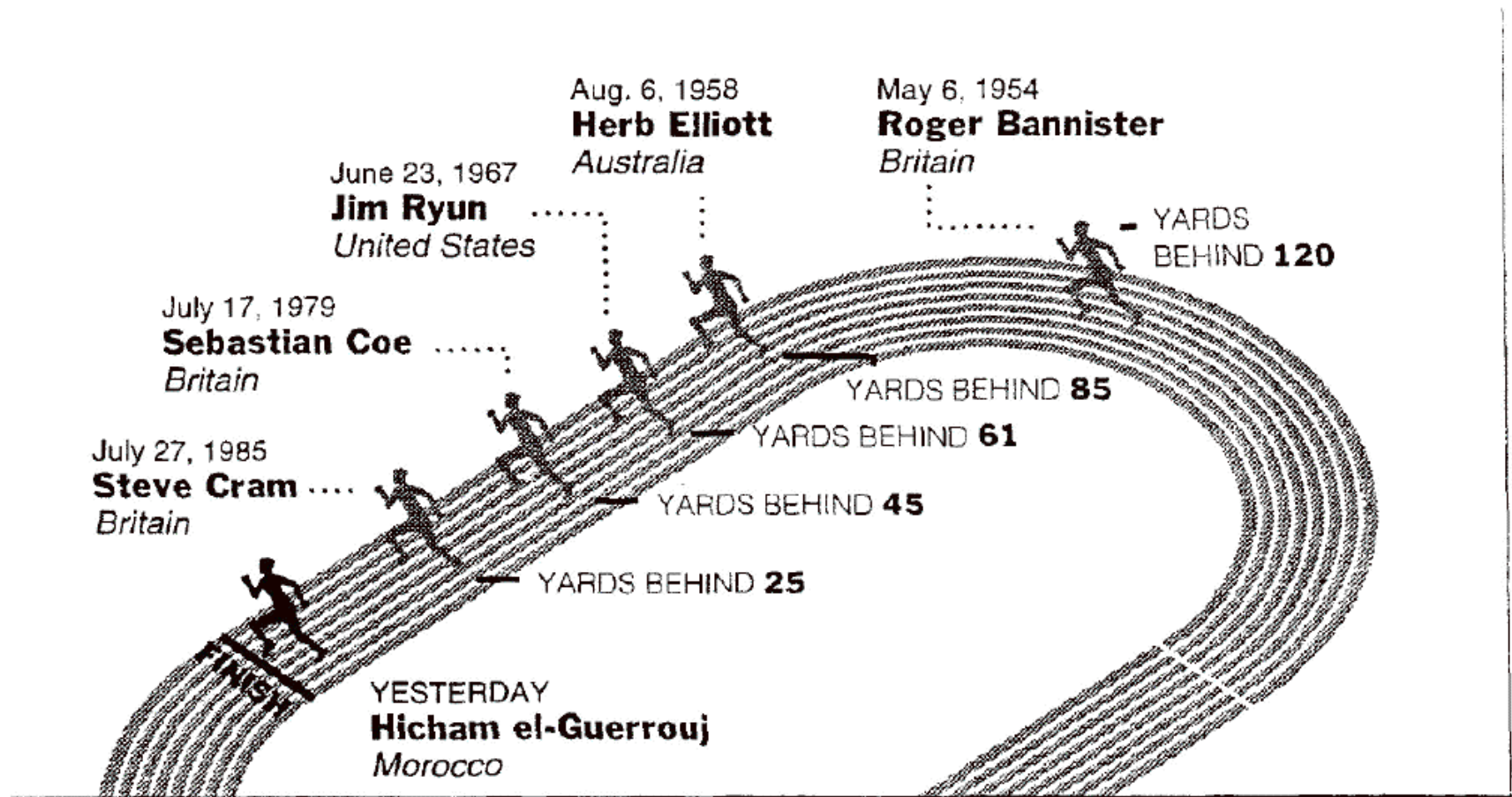


# Blending

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- Blending is selective; not mechanical
- Blends have emergent structure
- Blends prompt pattern completion
- Blends provide for elaboration
- Blends fuse elements together (composition)
- Blending is open-ended

# Blending



The New York Times

## World Record in the Mile



# Blending

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- Regatta
- “At this point, *Great American II* is 4.5 days ahead of *Northern Light*.”



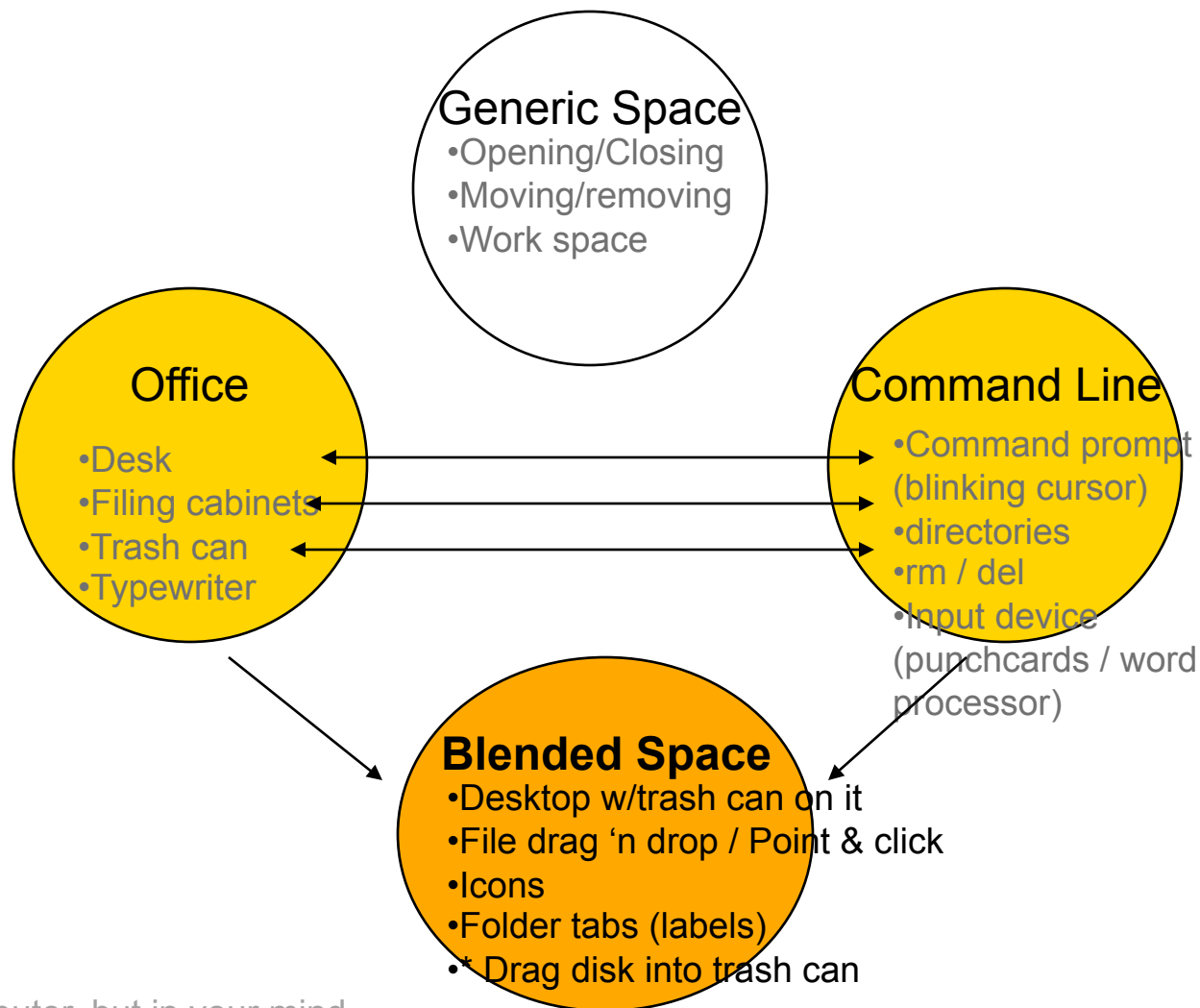
# Types of Blends

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- Simplex – (Paul is the father of Sally); no clashing between input spaces; often not thought of as a blend
- Mirror – (Mile Record, Regatta); all spaces share an organizing frame.
- Single-scope – (Boxing CEOs); 2 input spaces with different organizing frames, one of which is projected to organize the blend
- Double-scope – (Computer desktop); 2 input spaces with different organizing frames; parts of each are projected to organize the blend; possible clashes provide rich possibilities for emergent structure.

# Computer Desktop Blend

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Blend not in computer, but in your mind

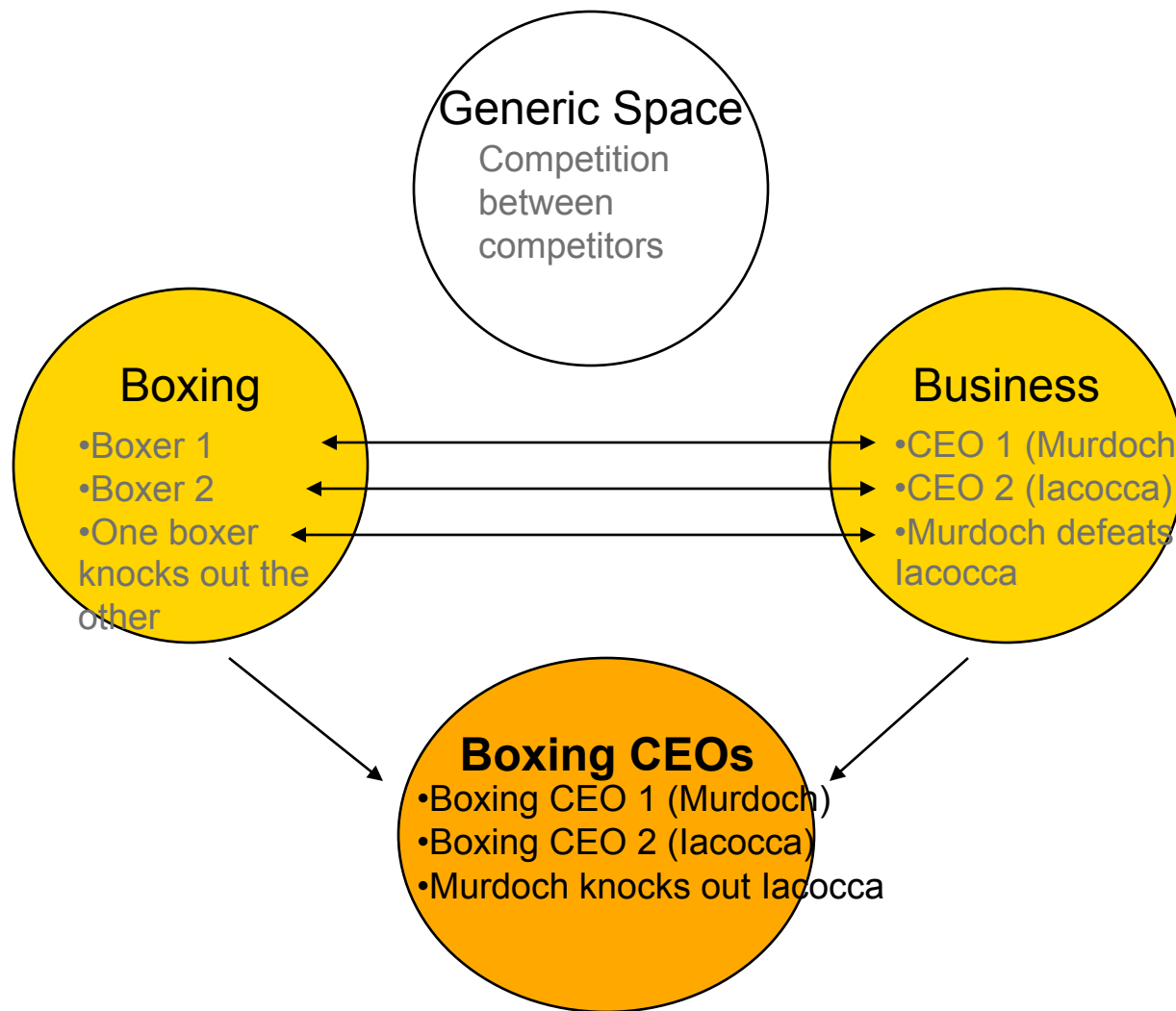
\* Blend elements are not arbitrary

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# Boxing CEOs Blend

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# Blending

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- Elaboration
- Entrenchment
- Compression
- Vital Relations (properties of mental spaces)
  - Change
  - Identity
  - Time
  - Space
  - Cause-Effect
  - Part-Whole
  - Role
  - Representation (a picture of a baby can represent the actual person, the baby)
  - Analogy
  - Disanalogy
  - Property
  - Similarity
  - Category
  - Intentionality
  - Uniqueness



# Blending Case Study: KickStart

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- KickStart: non-profit organization which uses for-profit techniques to combat poverty
- 2 cognitive frames blended together
- Potential donors continually asking questions which showed they did not completely understand KickStart's program
  - “why don't you give your pumps away?”
  - “how can I become an investor?”



# Blending Case Study: KickStart

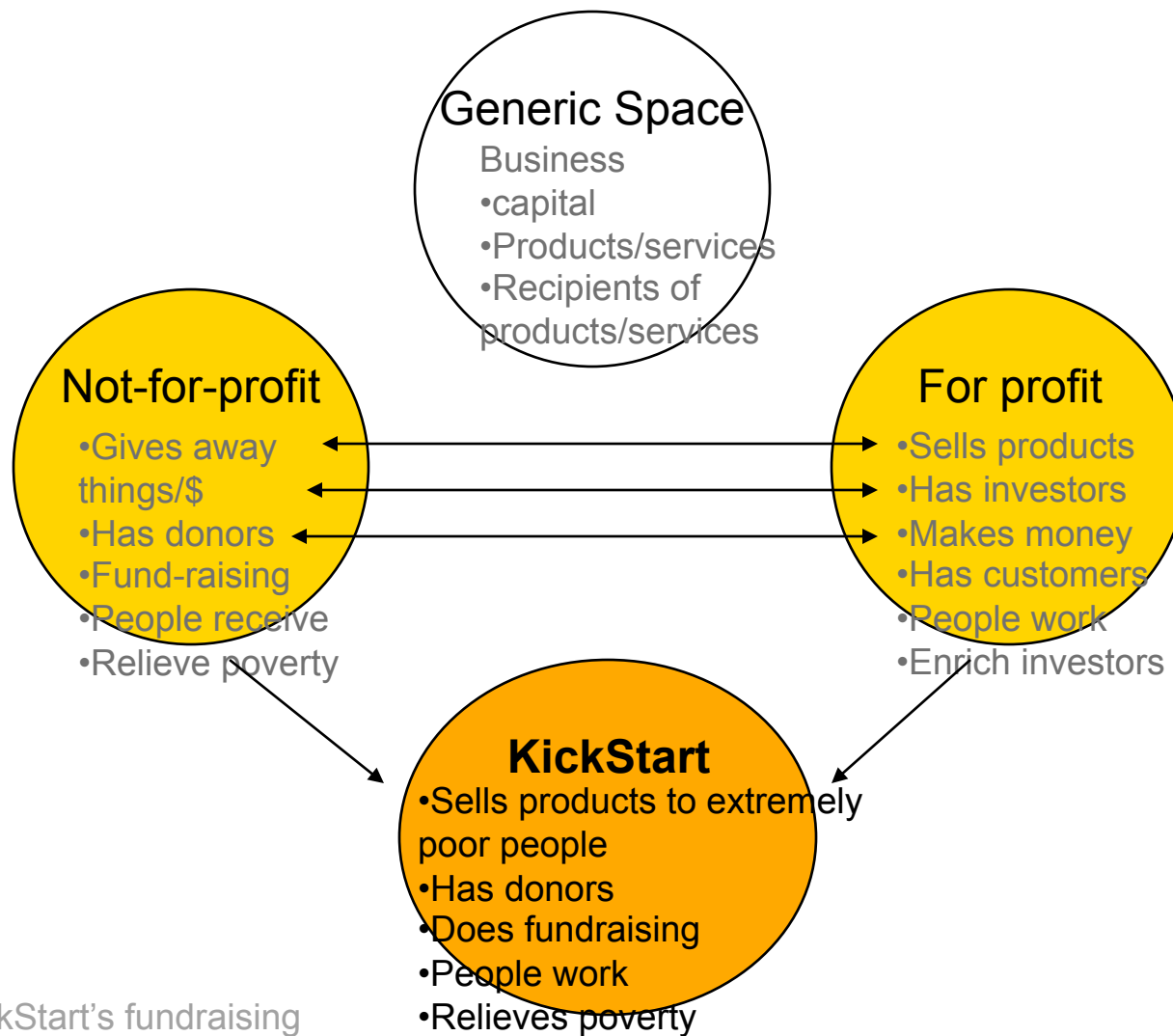
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- Methodology:
  - Discovery
    - Collected language from web site, case brief, and interview with Ken Weimar
    - Collected information about NGOs, for-profit businesses (sources: Google, Wikipedia, one-on-one interviews)
  - Analysis
    - Performed analysis on terms and key concepts
    - Identified primary frames/metaphors currently being employed
  - Solutions
    - Brainstormed new/different frames to be explored



# KickStart: The Blend



Blend targets KickStart's fundraising audience  
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# KickStart

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“KickStart was founded to challenge how the world fights poverty. We design, market and sell simple tools poor but entrepreneurial people can use to earn a decent income. Since 1991, KickStart’s unique approach has helped over 200,000 people find a permanent escape from poverty. We argue that the cause of poverty is very basic – the lack of money and the lack of opportunities to earn a decent income. This is the only true cause of poverty.... The logic follows that if we want to end poverty, we must address the cause and not the symptoms.”

# Blending: Home Theater PC

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- Multiple blends
  - TV: broadcast TV, VCR, Tivo
  - Movies: cinema, movie rentals, movies on demand
  - Stereo: radio, LP/CD, component stereo system
  - PC: component,



# Methodology

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Blending as a tool:

- Discovery
  - Identify problem/situation (new product, customers don't understand your business/mission)
  - Familiarize yourself with the domain (NGO, business context, market, audience, etc.)
  - Collect language from: web sites, interviews, blogs, etc.
- Analysis
  - Performed analysis on terms and key concepts
  - Identified primary frames/metaphors currently being employed
  - Articulate components of the frame (compare popular language with language collected in discovery)
  - “Run the blend”
- Solutions
  - Suggest new language for existing frames
  - Brainstorm new/different frames to be explored



# Blending: The Tool

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- Analyze existing communication
  - Fix something that is broken
  - Find out why something works
- Create functional communication
  - Frame complex products for target audience



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THANK YOU

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