



Sociality:

The tendency to associate in or form social groups.

## Social Engagement System – P. 29

Social Engagement System - we detect how safe we are through the facial expressions, gestures and tones of voice of those around us. We are reading cues from faces and voices and watching gestures to determine the level of threat. Our nervous system anticipates reciprocal interactions from others, if we don't get them, either through being ignored or through hostility a huge shift occurs immediately to support the two defense strategies, fight/flight or freeze.

## Popularity & Equality – P. 49

Prinstein tells us that we are 'hard-wired' to crave popularity, which has a long-lasting effect on the decisions we make, how we handle relationships, and our parenting skills. He says:

Popularity affects us throughout our lives, often in ways we don't realize. At some level, you may already perceive that to be true. Isn't it interesting that when we remember who was most or least popular back in high school, it brings up some of the same emotions today as it did back then? The mere mention of the word "popular" has the power to transport us back to our teenage years. We graduate high school, make new friends, find stable romantic relationships, and get settled in our careers, but somewhere deep inside, we know that some part of who we are today— our self-esteem, our insecurities, our career successes or failures, and perhaps even our happiness— is still linked to how popular we were back then. There's something about our popularity in youth that seems to remain a part of who we are, as if it's become deeply embedded in our souls forever.

## P. 52

### *Rejected Group:*

Naomi Eisenberger from UCLA writes about the neural bases of social pain and says exclusion and social rejection experiences activate the same areas in the brain as physical pain.

The rejection does not need to be overt; subtle social rejection or even imagining being rejected causes physiological changes in the structure of our DNA.

George Slavich and Steve Cole, from the University of California are experts in the field of human social genomics. They say our genes are exquisitely "sensitive to social rejection." They have found that very soon, under an hour, after a social rejection experience, our genes have decided which parts of our DNA to turn on or off. This process is called "epigenetics," changes which affect gene activity and expression. Those changes could be from external factors, like fear of being alone, cast out from the tribe, at which time our bodies still have the survival instincts from thousands of years ago.

Slavich and Cole have found that when we are rejected, there is a cellular-level effect - which alters our immune system and our inflammation response!

### **P. 53**

*Accepted Group:*

- Picks up on social cues.
- Are socially creative, can solve problems.
- Do not disrupt the group.
- Senses conflict or consensus.
- Are usually well adjusted.
- Are smart, but not too much.
- Are often in a good mood.
- Are good conversationalists.
- Usually defers to others, listening to their opinions.

(see also: Neglected and Controversial group).

## **Group Hierarchies & Play**

### **P. 97**

Professor Carnes writes:

Our predominant pedagogical system – rational, hierarchical, individualistic, and well-ordered – often ignores aspects of the self relation to emotion, mischievous subversion, social engagement and creative disorder. Role-immersion games, when configured as an intellectualized pedagogical system, provides access to these often untapped wellsprings of motivation and imagination.

### **P.99**

Huizinga tells us that “we are accustomed to think of play and seriousness as an absolute antithesis.” However in thinking about competitive play, he puts forward that the Greek word ‘agon’ refers to a contest or a struggle. A contest can take any form, chariot racing, athletics or debating. But the play element is the ‘agonizing’, striving and suffering for the valuable prize which is at stake.

Why the striving and suffering if it’s supposed to be play? Huizinga argues that within play the ‘antagonist instinct’ is man’s need to fight. And competitive play whether it be serious, fateful, bloody, scared or fatal, “raises the individual or the collective personality to a higher power.”

Huizinga points to man’s basic need to be praised and honored and validated, to be recognized for doing things well. But to be recognized means to set yourself apart, to do things better than someone else would do them, to strive for excellence, this is where the need for competition arises. He believed the culture of civilizations, war, politics, science, commerce was based on competitive play.

Professor of Neuroscience, Beau Lotto, says the primal need to be certain, to predict outcomes, was historically necessary for our safety and survival. This has led to our deep dislike of uncertainty, our inability to cope with unpredictable situations, which often causes us to feel unstable and can affect the quality of our mental health. Lotto says:

Every behaviour we do, we do to reduce uncertainty. The stress resulting from uncertainty is tremendous in our society. It increases brain cell death it decreases plasticity...we do almost everything to avoid uncertainty. Yet the irony is, that that’s the only place we can go if we’re ever going to see differently. And that’s why creativity, seeing differently, always begins in the same way, it begins with a question.

Lotto says that everything we do is grounded in assumptions from previous experience. And how nothing interesting happens from this place. Is there a way to safely move beyond our assumptions? Lotto tells us there is: Fortunately evolution gave us a solution, it's a way of being, it's actually a way of being that celebrates uncertainty, it's open to possibility, it's inherently collaborative...it is play.

(See "Play" in Resiliency Skills and/or P. 261)

## Positive Peer Interaction

### P.141

Dr. Astin is the Professor of Higher Education and Organizational Change, at the University of California, Los Angeles and the author of, *What Matters in College*. The book examines how a student's personality, self-concept, attitudes, values, beliefs and cognitive development are affected by their experience in college. Astin apologises for the density of his book and warns of the possibility of information overload, but states that "student development is a highly complex, multivariate process and universities are highly diverse and complex institutions."

Astin says: "The student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years."

So, not the quality of teachers, nor the structure of the curriculum, nor high-design environments. According to Astin the core principle, which will affect the growth and development of a young person the most, is who they hang out with. The attitudes, values and beliefs of their tribe, creates their self-concept.

### P. 147

Friendships begin with acquaintances, and as the prior report states, traditional classrooms do not foster an opportunity for strangers to become acquaintances, but keep students separated in small cliques, left to navigate the social scene at break and lunchtimes. You couldn't design a more restrictive social setting, not only leaving students to fend for themselves, but discouraging the forming of collaboration and connection with others during class time.

### P.148

In the book, *Brokerage and Closure: An introduction to Social Capital*, Ronald Burt explains social capital:

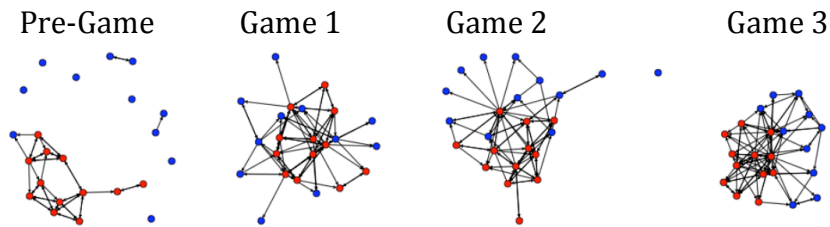
Social capital explains how people do better because they are somehow better connected with other people. Certain people are connected to certain others, trusting certain others, obligated to support certain others, dependent on exchange with certain others. One's position in the structure of these exchanges can be an asset in its own right. That asset is social capital.

Social capital can become quite political within a classroom. Especially if teachers do not interact with the students, if they come into the room, deliver a block of information and then leave, their knowledge of the social structure within the classroom is sparse. Once they leave the room, most teachers have no idea of who is feeling a sense of belonging, or who is feeling isolated. Students have no common theme to centre around, so they drift off either in homogenous like-minded groups or take out their phone to disappear into.

TPP's do away with that whole situation. Even if the current lesson is a traditional class and totally unrelated to a project, the students still have a common campfire theme to which they can all warm their hands to. It provides a similar social setting as you would find when people work together.

**P. 146****Friendship Network:**

The far left chart shows the network before the first game, then how the network progress over the next three games.

**Viewpoint Diversity****P. 219**

Heterodox Academy focusing on viewpoint diversity, which is described on the website as:

The state of a community or group in which members approach questions or problems from multiple perspectives. When a community is marked by intellectual humility, empathy, trust and curiosity, viewpoint diversity gives rise to engaged and civil debate, constructive disagreement and shared progress towards the truth.

**P. 220**

Mick Hume, lays out his views of the threats to free-thinking, free-speech and free-expression in his book, *Trigger Warning: Is the Fear of Being Offensive Killing Free Speech?*

In an interview Hume says:

...it's like when we used to have the old maps of a world that was slightly uncharted and in the unknown corners they put 'here be dragons do not sail off the edge of the known world, do not expose yourself to something dangerous beyond this point.' That's what trigger warnings do. It's saying there might be something in this book or this video that you find objectionable, offensive and harmful and therefore you might think about not exposing yourself to it - and that is a very dangerous starting point at a university more than anywhere else.

**Them Versus Us****P. 252**

Actors and observers have different experiences from each other, due to divergent perspectives. Actors, playing the part of a character, recognise the elements of the external situation which affect behaviour, whereas observers just look to the behavioural aspects to determine understanding.

The difference is in the use of the imagination!

The actors actually place themselves in the middle of the issues. Because of the emotional connection, they remember situational information alongside the perspective training.

The paper states:

An alternative strategy for social maneuvering involves the active consideration of alternative viewpoints, framings, hypotheses, and perspectives.

Perspective-taking is an effective reinforcement of contemporary admonitions to consider previously ignored or submerged perspectives as a routine part of social interchange and inquiry.

During the TPP's, the students were operating on peak-imagination and perspective taking. Any signs of Us/Them categorization in the classroom disappears. What replaces it is two distinct groups, team 1 and team 2. These teams have to come together and work in close quarters for around a 4-6 week period, spending many hours debating, discussing, and forging strong bonds.

At subsequent projects, teams rearrange and then contain students who you were just working against in the previous project. The 'them' becomes an 'us.'

## **Mental Maps**

### **P. 61**

The maps are created over years of experience and opinions, from family, friends or from popular culture. Who knows how our maps are put together? No map is true, they are like a static photo, a snapshot of a period in time when you felt a certain way, or saw things in a certain light. They can become outdated. How many people still live in another timeframe, when something bad happened? They can still retain a map of misery, an internal negative state, which they sadly experience every day. Or a person still has the same map from when they were eighteen and feel they can still act that way even though they are decades older. Actual reality is much more fluid and dynamic and is constantly changing.

### **P. 59**

Students focused on perspective taking and the presuppositions of NLP.

The principles and presuppositions of NLP:

The Principles:

1. You - Your emotional state and level of skill.
2. Rapport - The quality of your relationships.
3. Outcome - Knowing where you want to go.
4. Feedback - How will you know you are there?
5. Flexibility - If something is not working, do something else.
6. Presuppositions - Guiding philosophy of NLP.

The Presuppositions:

1. People respond to their experience, not to reality itself – we do not know what reality is. Our senses, beliefs and past experience give us a map of the world from which to operate, but a map can never be completely accurate, it is just a representation of reality.
2. People make the best choice they can at the time – given their map of the world. It may be self-defeating, bizarre, difficult for others to understand, but for them it is their map. The work lays in developing and improving our personal map, and remaining open to the maps of others.
3. All actions have a purpose, and every behaviour has a positive intention – to achieve something that we value and that benefits us. NLP separates the intention behind an action from the action itself. A person is not their behaviour. When a better choice of behaviour is available, they will take it.
4. The meaning of communication is not simply what you intend to convey, but also the response you get – this may be different from the one you wanted, but there are no failures in communication, only responses and feedback. Take responsibility for the communication. Practice 'Perspective Positions.'

**P. 62**

Korzybski claimed that this isn't the way the world works, that we can talk about how things work but we will only get close to the way things really are because our language is full of abstractions, which simplifies, condenses or symbolizes what is actually going on. He attributes most disagreements, fights and wars to a determination to stick to our own maps and a failure to take into account everyone else's maps. If we can suspend judgment, compare the details of the maps in the form of discussion, it is likely we will spot where we need to adjust the details. This could even lead to owning a new and updated map, a new perspective. This is the way to make conflict disappear.

**Vulnerability****P. 73**

Neufeld and Maté have this to say about the lure of cool:

No wonder, then that cool is the governing ethic in peer culture, the ultimate virtue. Although the word cool has many meanings, it predominately connotes an air of invulnerability. Where peer orientation is intense, there is no sign of vulnerability in the talk, in the walk, in the dress, or in the attitudes.

**P. 109**

The Portal Projects are especially beneficial for boys, opening them up to being able to show vulnerability and emotions through their characters, including insecurities, fear, guilt and shame.

Emotional suppression is a negative attribute in this game. This surprises the boys, almost all of them have previously tended towards not showing one ounce of emotion other than anger or frustration.

The character discussions are an incredibly effective way for boys to talk about feelings without fear of judgement. Boys talk to each other about how their characters would feel about the issues they are facing. These discussions seep into their internal world, they ponder about the challenges men face and how they respond to their own weakness, strengths or responsibilities. It is not a huge jump from a character focus: "I think he'd feel..." to a personal focus "I feel..." When they see that the sky doesn't come crashing down, it enriches their vocabulary and they start to feel comfortable talking about feelings and emotions, not seeing it as a weakness. It then starts to become part of the boy culture often replacing a culture of mockery and coolness. Once it is accepted by a few, it is then accepted by all. It is some of the most empowering work they can undertake.

**P. 243**

In her book, *Daring Greatly*, Brené Brown writes:

Shame breeds fear. It crushes our tolerance for vulnerability, thereby killing engagement, innovation, creativity, productivity and trust. Blaming, gossiping, favoritism, name-calling and harassment are all behaviour cues that shame has permeated a culture. I'm confident that shame exists in schools because 85 percent of the men and women we interviewed for the shame research could recall a school incident from their childhood that was so shaming, it changed how they thought of themselves as learners.

**P. 244**

A Ted talk by Brown is entitled "The Power Of Vulnerability," which has received almost forty million views. In the presentation, she talks about being struck by her findings about vulnerability. She tries to come to terms with the fact that vulnerability is the core of shame and fear, and worthiness, however it is also "the birthplace of joy, of creativity, of belonging, of love."

**P. 244**

In Daniel Coyle's book, *The Culture Code – The Secrets Of Highly Successful Groups*, he writes about the importance of the vulnerability loop. It is a “shared exchange of openness...the most basic building block of cooperation and trust.” The steps are as follows:

1. Person A sends a signal of vulnerability.
2. Person B detects this signal
3. Person B responds by signaling their own vulnerability.
4. Person A detects this signal.
5. A norm is established; closeness and trust increase.

Coyle tells us it seems intuitive that we first build trust and then take a chance on being vulnerable. However, according to science, the opposite is true, vulnerability comes *before* trust.

**Trust & Safety****P. 30**

In his book *The Thin Book of Trust: An Essential Primer for Building Trust at Work*, Author Charles Feltmantells tells us:

Trust is fundamental to our sense of safety, autonomy and dignity as human beings. It is also an integral part of every relationship we have. When we trust someone we feel safe to share what is important to us including our thoughts, ideas, efforts, hopes, and concerns. Distrust is essentially the opposite of trust in that it is a choice not to make yourself vulnerable to another person's actions. It is a general assessment that; what is important to me is not safe with this person in this situation (or any situation).

**P. 28**

If you don't feel safe, there is plenty of scientific research to show the psychologically damaging effects this can have on a person, especially on a young person who is going through the process of building their identity. And the damage is not only psychological, damage also occurs physically.

In his book, *The Pocket Guide to the Polyvagal Theory: The Transformative Power of Feeling Safe*, Dr. Stephen Porges tells us: “The important role of “safety” in our life is so intuitive and so relevant that it is surprising that our institutions neglect it.”

Porges also says that “to connect and co-regulate with others is our biological imperative,” and “a quest for safety is the basis for living a successful life.”

So how does this all work biologically? How do we assess for our safety?

It all starts with the vagus nerve and the polyvagal nerves which branch off from it.

**Empathy****P. 251**

The authors of the paper tell us that there are differences in perspective-taking, the first involves imagining how another person feels in a certain situation, and the second is putting yourself in the situation and imagining how that would affect you personally. Both views create empathy, but only taking on those feelings as your own produces internal emotions like distress. This is the view that will create the most empathy, even though it is based on an egoistic psychology, rather than an altruistic one.

**P. 462**

D. Elliott:

Another thing which was really interesting to me is the area of empathy - inculcating empathy in young people. How are we able to do that? What do we have to do to have children have empathy for each other? Right now, they are mostly in a competitive environment where they are pitted against each other and empathy is missing. It's difficult to be in a class where you have to compete and are in a race to prove yourself. One of the things we try to do in our school, through the Portal Projects, is to explore empathy through the characters. However the projects are also highly competitive.

It is interesting how you say that empathy is a right hemisphere attribute, can you say anything about that?

I. McGilchrist:

Well, I've got a number of thoughts about it. One, to pick up on what you said, I would question whether a healthily competitive environment needs to be low on empathy. I don't think so. I think that organisms and all societies thrive on the right balance between cooperation and competition and we've been sold a story that nature is simply about competition. But absolutely not, nature is mostly about cooperation. However, there is an important element of competition and we shouldn't think it's bad and get rid of it, any more than we should think that the cooperation saps the energy of the competition: things work together.

I think the answer may be deeper than an educational answer can fully address. So, I would say that it's not to do with the school system, but to do with the society in which we live. Certain measures of empathy, one might think, were higher than they used to be, now everybody virtually agrees that one ought to be tolerant of, and kind to, people who are different from yourself, less well off, or whatever it might be. But, I'm afraid the evidence seems to be that generation by generation, young people are less empathic than they used to be.

**P. 33**

Dr. Perry believes that many of our educational environments are "relationally impoverished" due to the high ratio of children to adults. He thinks that teachers can't possibly attend to the developmental needs of so many children. This can lead to a large number of children who lack empathy and are unable to regulate their emotions, decision making and are struggling with social interactions.

He tells us: "we are not creating developmental experiences and environments to fully express (students) potential to be empathic."

He claims relationships are the agents of change:

If you don't understand these relational things, you're never going to figure out healthcare problems. You're never going to figure out mental health problems, you're never going to figure out social health problems. You're never going to figure out the educational system. It's all about relationships. If you don't understand about relational neurobiology, you're screwed. You will tinker around the edges of solving these problems, but you will never get to the core.

Dr. Perry believes that you cannot 'therapise' away the effects of trauma if you don't have healthy relationships around you in your family, community, schools and workplaces. He states that "current therapy models are far too relationally impoverished" and weekly sessions just scratch the surface. He says the only way to address this meaningfully is through a supportive relational social environment.

Dr. Perry's insights into relational poverty and relational health backs up every encounter I've had with a student who is struggling with low levels of trauma or who have had a major incident happen in their lives which has shaken them to the core. The relationships formed with myself, the teachers and those on the periphery of school life have helped to recognise and nurture empathy. However, those relationships need to be able to exist within a framework. It is almost impossible to create close and trusting relationships between students and teachers if there is a psychological separation.



In both the primary and secondary schools, connection was created through specific educational models. In the primary stage the model was based on Project Based Learning. In the secondary school, The Portal Projects were the key to the emotional development and maturity of the students.