

Seeing the World Through a Relational Lens

Rethinking what it truly means to belong, to lead, and to flourish together.

Dr Robert Loe

June 2025



The Scots College
Sydney Australia



Can you define it?

When was the last time you felt it and how did you know?



The Scots College
Sydney Australia

Cambridge Schools Conference, June 2025
Future-ready: preparing learners to thrive





Happiness headlines

Curated content from the
World Happiness Report

March 2025



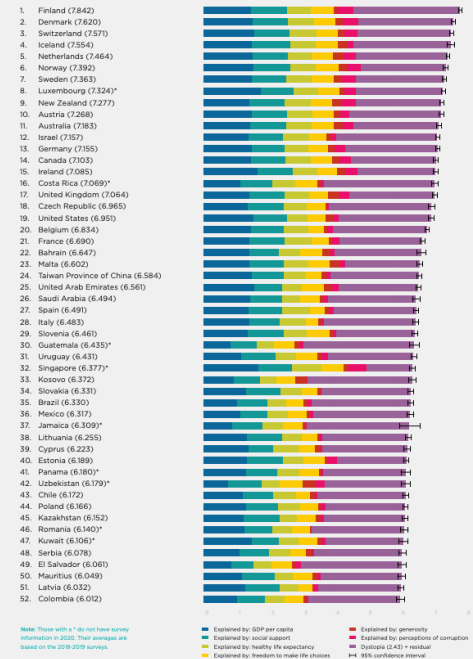
World Happiness Report

Six categories of happiness...

- GDP per capita
- Social support
- Life expectancy
- Agency or the freedom to make choices
- Generosity
- Perceptions of corruption levels



Figure 2.1: Ranking of happiness 2018-2020 (Part 1)



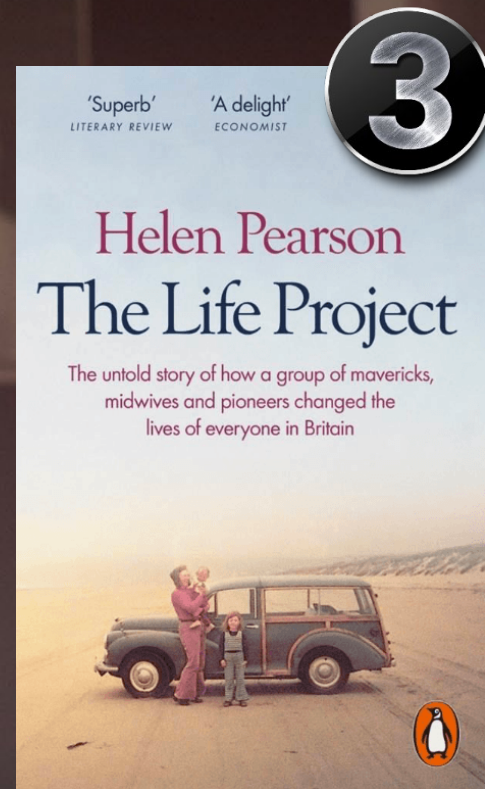
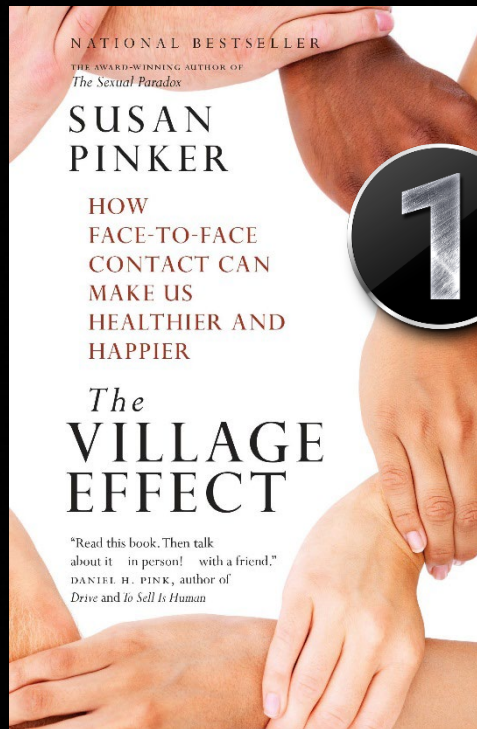
“...insofar as well-being concerns all aspects of a person’s life being good, as they pertain to that individual, whereas flourishing pertains to all aspects of a person’s life being good, including the contexts in which that person lives”.



Prof. Tyler J. VanderWeele





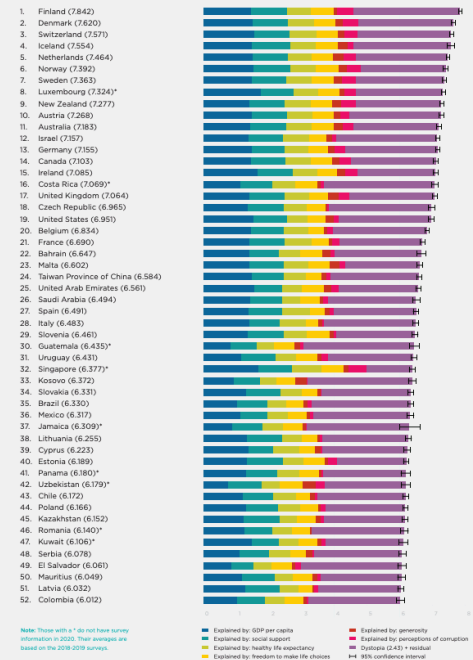


Six categories of happiness...

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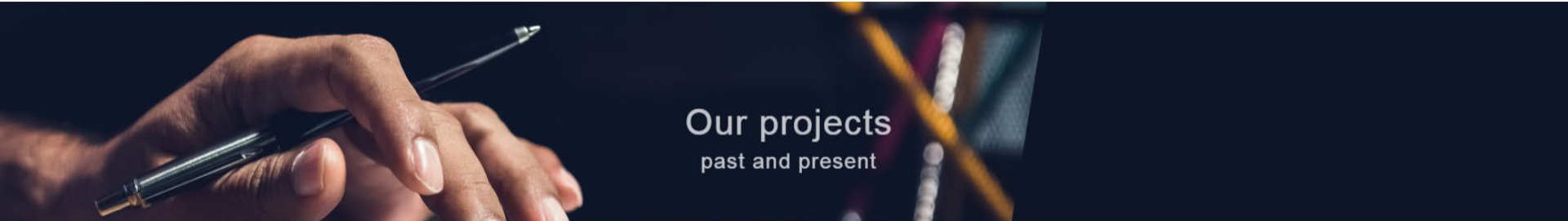
Figure 2.1: Ranking of happiness 2018-2020 (Part 1)





Cambridge Schools Conference, June 2025
Future-ready: preparing learners to thrive





Our projects

past and present

Our Projects

We're committed to seeing change happen. We also believe that the best way to learn about relationships is through practical initiatives working with others. Sometimes we start our own projects which are time limited or which spin-off on their own. And sometimes we come across people with a passion for relationships who have what it takes to make a difference. We may simply advise and support them but occasionally we incubate their ideas and projects until they're ready to spin-off. Collectively these projects illustrate the importance of relationships in different areas of life, and the potential to tackle the big issues through focussing on relationships.

All

Sort Projects : [All](#) [Current projects](#) [Past projects](#)



(1994) Relational Justice

Repairing the Breach

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past and present

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Strengthening inter-professional relationships

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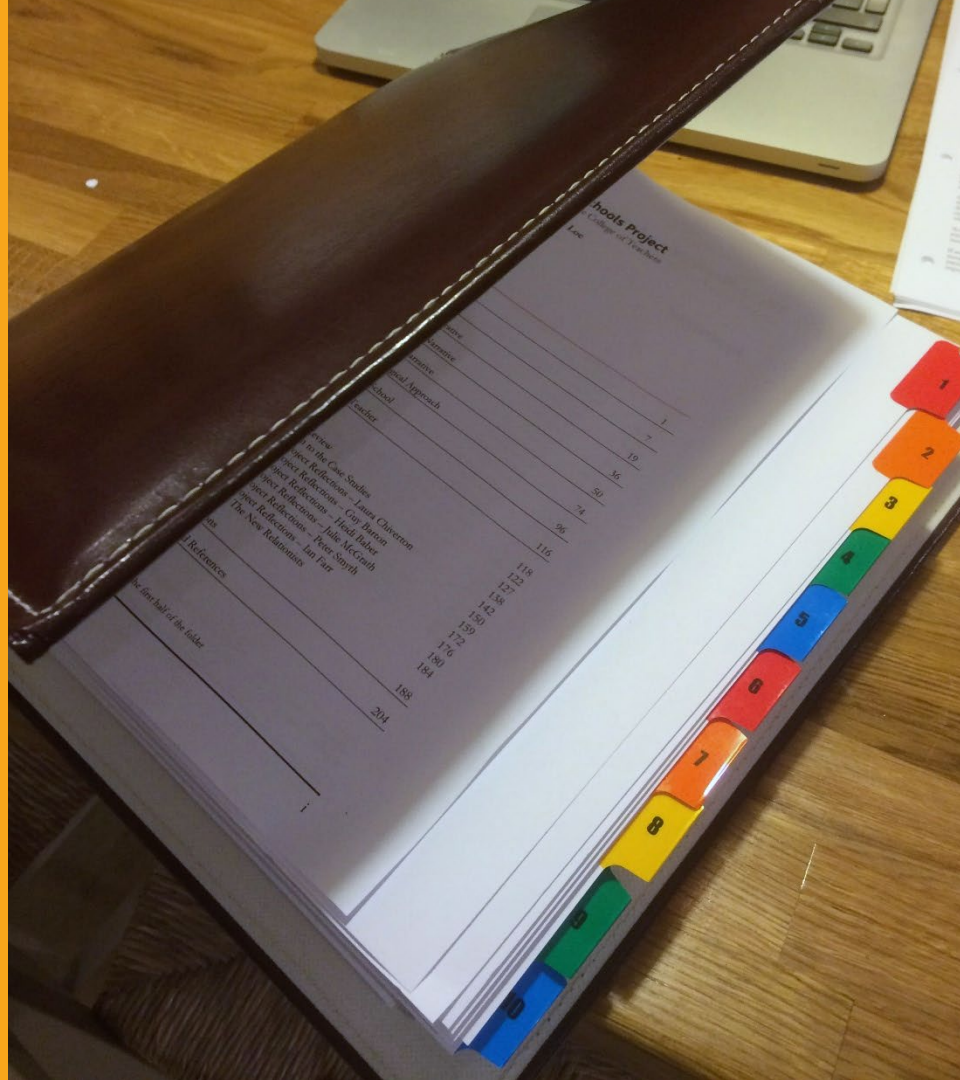
(1999) Relational Healthcare
Strengthening inter-professional relationships



Relational Peacebuilding
Strengthening inter-professional relationships



Relational Schools Project
So children can build a society



Schools Project	
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RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Relational matters: A review of the impact of school experience on mental health in early adolescence

Colleen McLaughlin & Barbie Clarke

The review of this area posited the notion of 'the supportive school' as important and one key element, the notion of school connectedness. Within that the role of relationships is identified as significant. This paper explores the part played by relationships in schools. The paper draws on a review of 133 papers published mainly in the last 15 years. Relationships between teachers and pupils' peer relationships are identified as the key ones. The main ways in which school-based relationships impact upon mental health are explored. First, in terms of the relationship to academic outcomes; second, the relationship between social support, feelings of emotional well-being or distress, and teacher-pupil relationships; and finally the relationship between school connectedness and mental health outcomes. The authors argue for greater attention to be paid to the interconnections between the relationships with young people and teachers of these findings and academic well-being. The paper concludes with the implications for schools and teachers of these findings and an argument for an acknowledgement of the importance of the social goals of education.

Schooling does matter greatly. Moreover, the benefits can be surprisingly long lasting... Schools are about social experiences as well as scholastic (Clarke, 1991)

satisfying personal relationships; develop a sense of right and wrong; and resolve problems as well as learning from them (Mental Health Foundation, 1999). The period that the review focuses upon is early adolescence, i.e. between 10 and 14. This is an interesting time period since it encompasses the transition from childhood to teenage years. It is a

Prof. McLaughlin

WHAT IS A RELATIONSHIP?

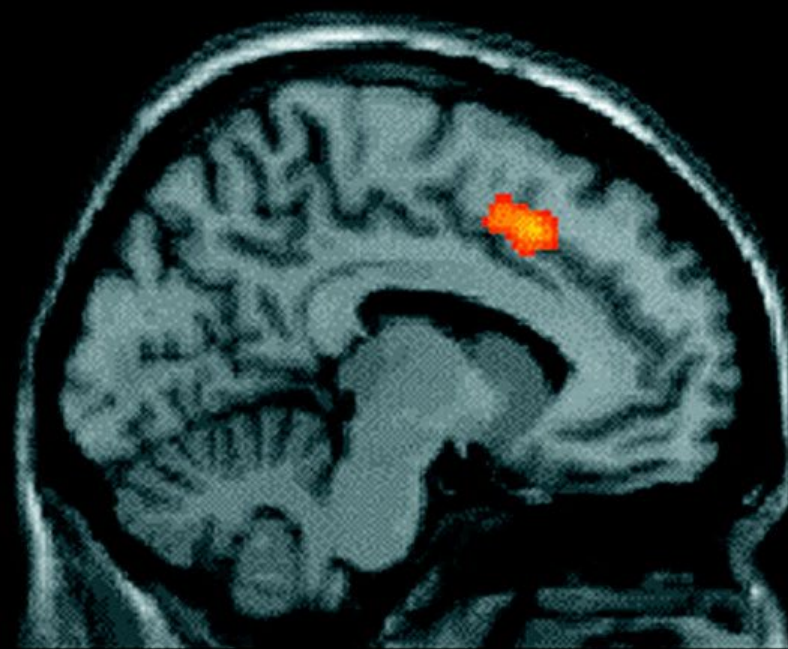
“Relationships involve a series of interactions between two individuals who know each other such that each interaction can be influenced by past interactions and by expectations of interactions in the future.”





NETFLIX

A



Anterior Cingulate
 $x = -8$

B



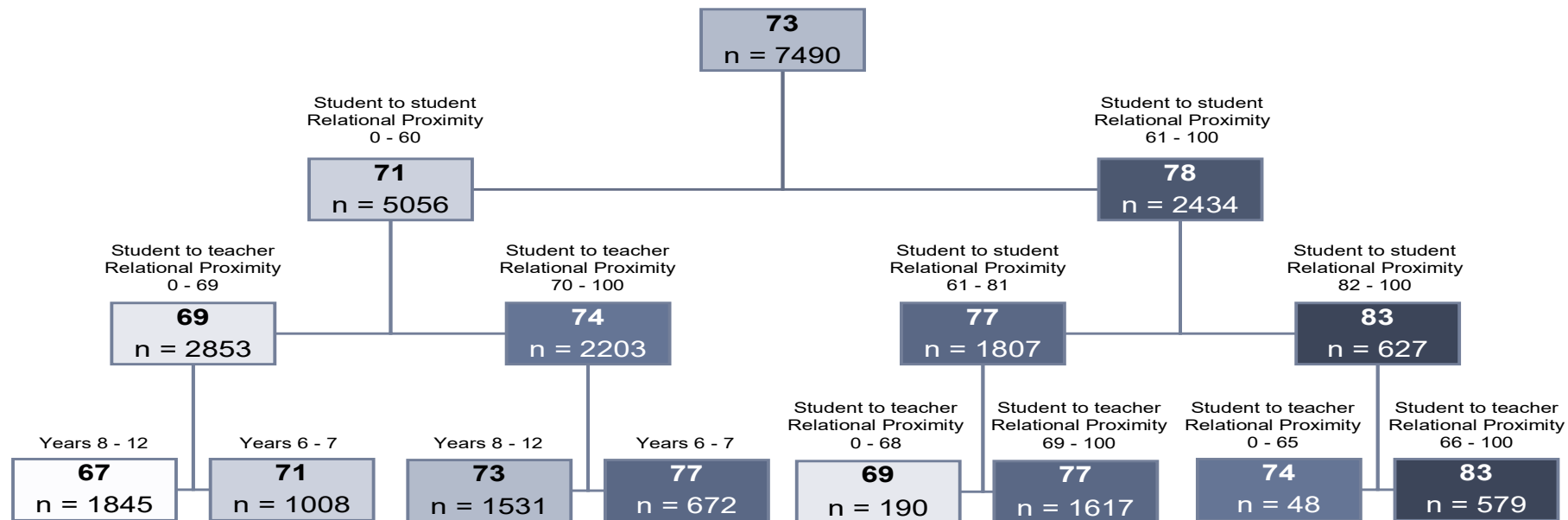
Right Ventral Prefrontal
 $y = 28$



RELATIONSHIPS PROTECT

AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS DATASET

Overall student wellbeing





A Here ends this Journal, which also
in the Original short-hand MS., is
contained in 6 Volumes, comprising
3102 pages, for the most part
very closely written. This Trans-
cript in long-hand is contained
in 54 parts similar to this
part, and contains 9325
(Besides all the notes & remarks)
pages of MS., the whole of
which has been deciphered, from
the Original MS., and transcribed
in long-hand, by me,

April 6. 1822.

John Smith, B.A.
St. John's College,

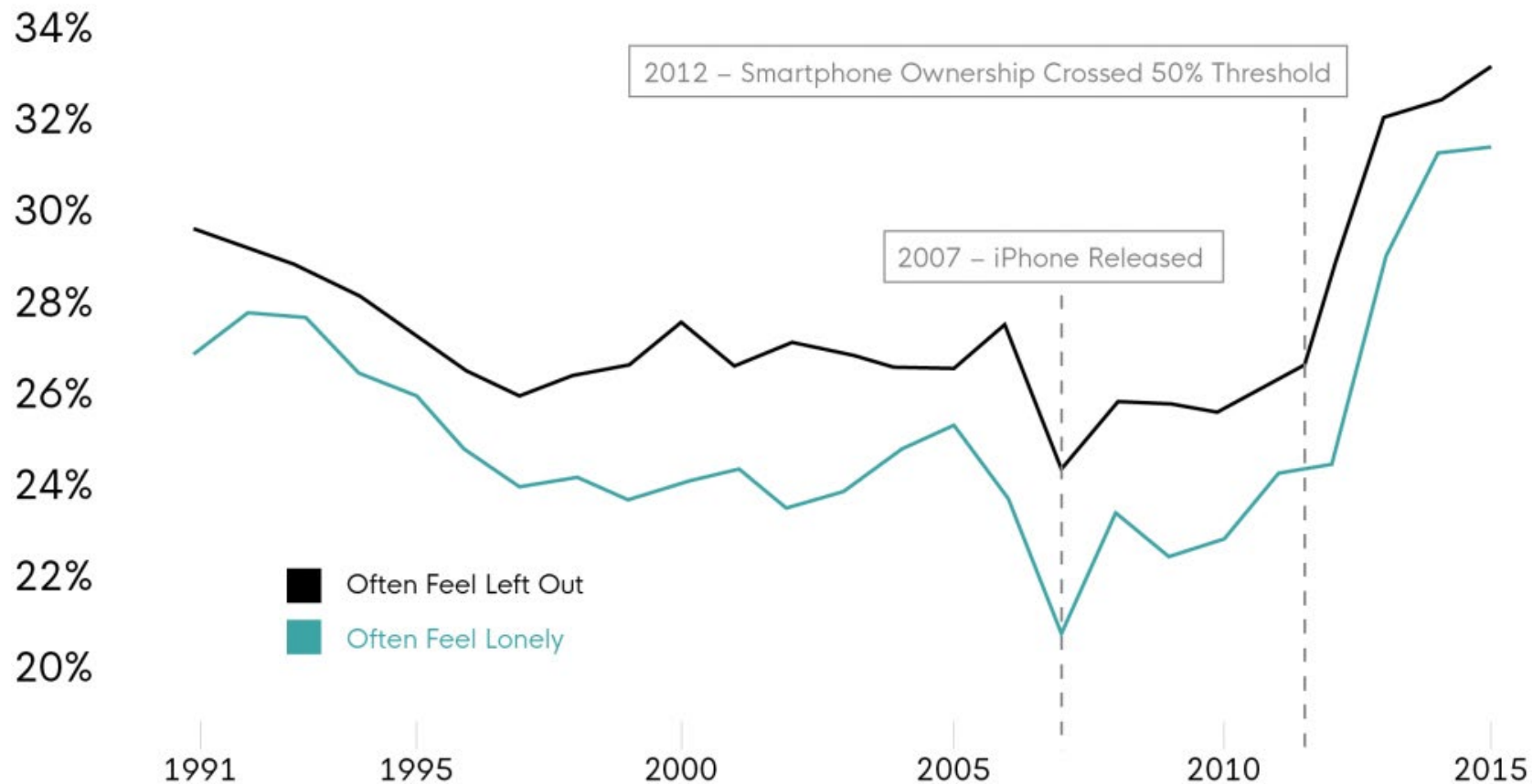
and Deputy Esquire-Bedell to
the University of Cambridge.

48
I therefore resolve from this time for-
ward to have it kept by my
people in long-hand, and must
therefore be contented to set down
no more than is fit for them and
all the world to know, or if
there be anything which cannot
be much now my amours to B.B.
are past, and my eyes hindering
me in almost all other pleasures.)
I must endeavour to keep a margin
in my book open to add here
and there a note in short-hand
with my own hand. And so I betake
myself to that course, which is
almost as much as to see myself
go into my grave. For which, and
all the discomforts that will accompany
my being blind, the Good God prepare me!



A NEW PANDEMIC

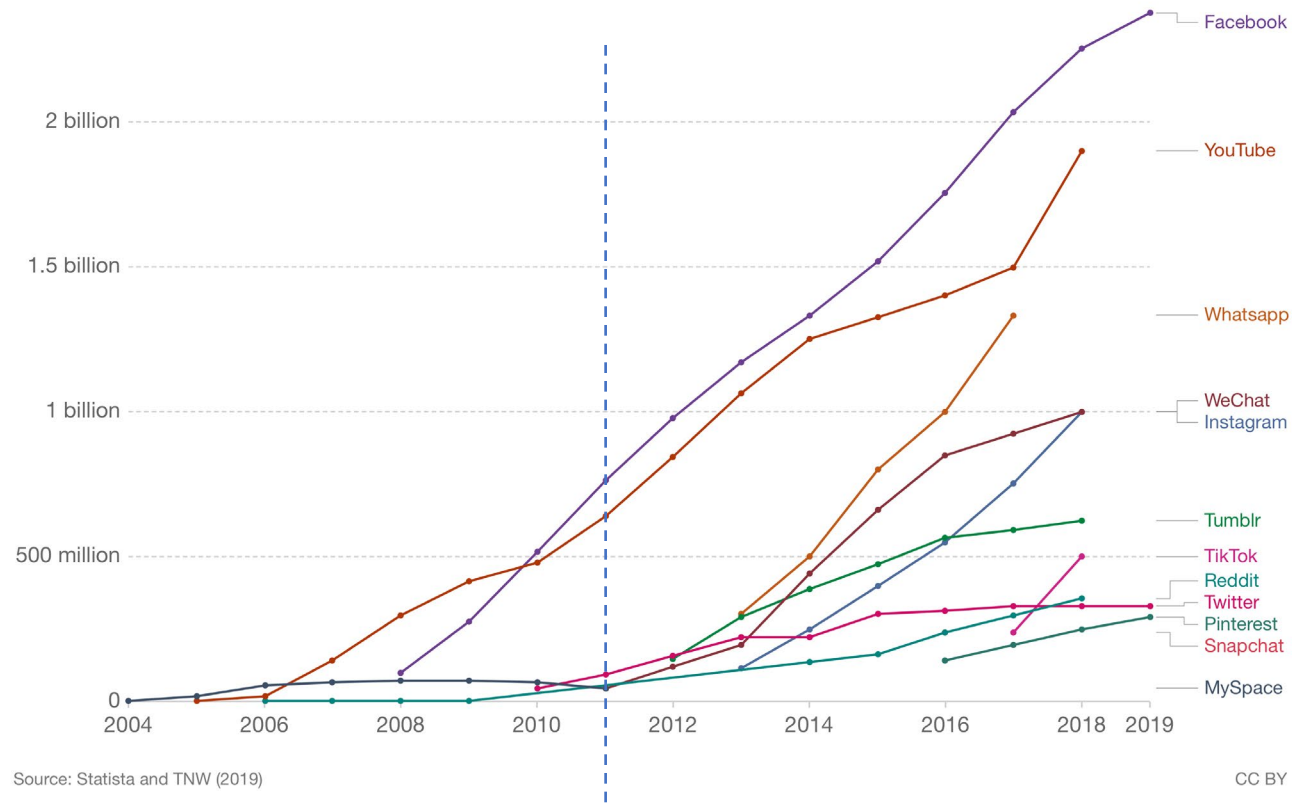




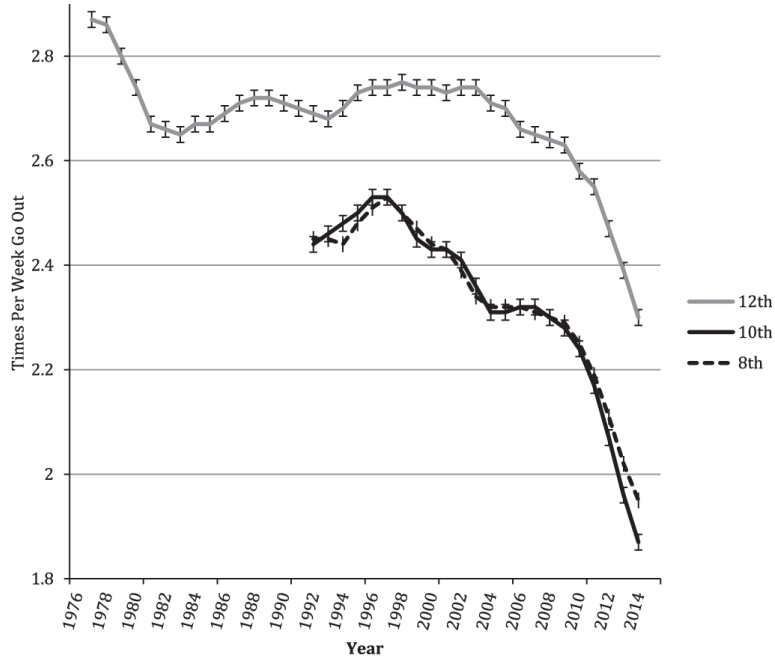
Number of people using social media platforms, 2004 to 2019

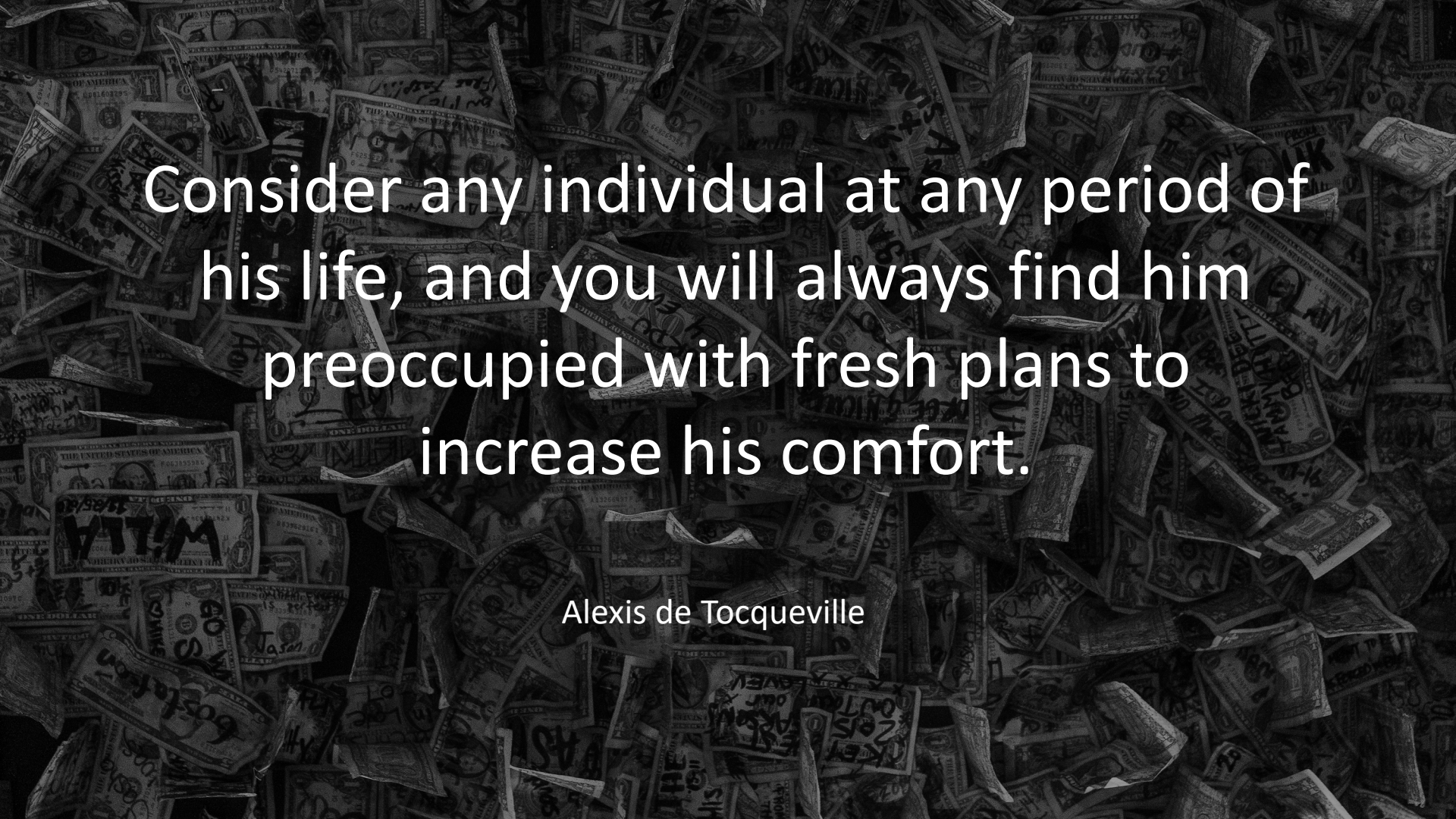
Our World
in Data

Estimates correspond to monthly active users (MAUs). Facebook, for example, measures MAUs as users that have logged in during the past 30 days. See source for more details.



FRIENDSHIP AND FLOURISHING





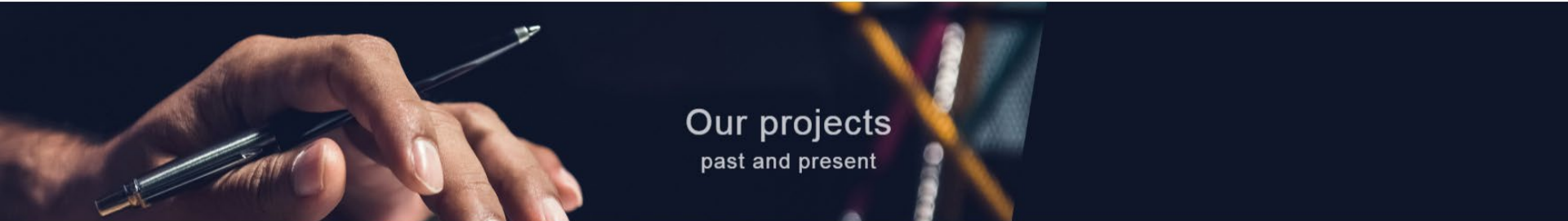
Consider any individual at any period of
his life, and you will always find him
preoccupied with fresh plans to
increase his comfort.

Alexis de Tocqueville

4

1832

December 4th This day I have
unwell done but little been at
home all day regulated some of
things this Evening feel better in
my mind than I have for a few
days back O Lord deliver
thy servant out of temptations
and fill his heart with wisdom



Our projects

past and present

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4 Measuring progress in relationships

Key points:

- A six-step tool to assess how relationships progress and improve called the *measured pathway* is identified and presented.
- The *measured pathway* comprises: (1) meeting to assess potential commonality; (2) identifying the pre-requisites for joint action; (3) achieving those pre-requisites; (4) implementing the joint action, thereby establishing a precedent for collaboration; (5) repeating or diversifying joint action; (6) collaborative action becomes routine. The pathway hinges on step four, where a substantive precedent for collaboration is established.
- Relationships may not progress through all these steps, but the pathway is useful for describing both relationships that follow this pattern and those that diverge from it.
- The use of the *measured pathway* is demonstrated in case studies in the three types of relationships A, B, and C. The case studies examine governance and peacebuilding contexts with a focus on conflict related work in Darfur.

The *measured pathway* presented in this chapter is used to assess progress in relationships that improve over time. It was developed to gauge the results of governance and peacebuilding work and is based on a number of case studies.¹⁷ When these relationships were analysed using the relational metrics outlined in chapter three, a strong pattern emerged consistent with the way that many successful relationships form and grow. The method of analysis was formalized and became the *measured pathway* to assess progress in the formation of relationships. It can also be used as a basis for assessing relationships that diverge from the pattern. More details on how this pattern was identified are provided in Annex 1.

This analysis assumes either a new relationship or a significant process of renewal in an existing but perhaps lapsed relationship. In the case of renewal the previous history may be key to understanding the opening dynamics. An additional factor is the role of third parties in brokering new relationships.

4.1 The *measured pathway* of developing relationships

At the outset of a new relationship between communities or institutions, the parties meet and assess whether a new process of building a relationship is desirable. Step 1, **meeting and scoping**, establishes a degree of directness. It explores whether there is potential commonality and whether both parties agree that a new joint initiative would be mutually beneficial. If joint work is not desired, the relationship moves on further. The progression to step two occurs when both parties agree that a renewed relationship, enabling substantive collaboration, is worth exploring.

Step 2, **assessment**, identifies prerequisites for joint action, notably determining potential commonality and parity. Will the outcomes be fair? How are costs and risks shared? During this period, multiplexity grows as each side gets to know the other. This is a period of negotiation. The step concludes when agreement is reached on how the benefits and risks are shared and what would be needed prior to activities beginning. If the collaboration requires a legal agreement, then core terms of the agreement are established at this stage. The decision to implement on those terms may still be outstanding.



Negotiation of a trade deal for cattle in Jebel Mara. Setting the terms for collaboration is step 2 of the *measured pathway*

Step 3 is **preparation** for joint action, as each party follows through on accomplishing agreed pre-requisites. Confidence grows as each party sees the other making their own preparations for action. This stage concludes when the preparations are substantially complete and a firm commitment to implement the joint action exists.

When the prerequisites have been met, the joint action takes place, Step 4. This is a key **precedent-setting** move, as it introduces a degree of continuity to the relationship that did not exist previously. A shared story now exists. If the outcome was successful, a change in the level of trust has been achieved because the relationship has seen words supported by action.

Thereafter the relationship can grow in two ways: by repeating the joint activity, in which case the relationship extends continuity, or by broadening the interaction to other fields, amounting to a growth in multiplexity as well as continuity.

Where the relationship grows beyond the precedent-setting joint action, Step 5, an **established and growing** relationship, is achieved. Over time, the relationship's development will plateau. The extent

of the commonality between the partners has been reached. Ongoing interaction on a range of issues occurs, and common gains can be achieved at a cost acceptable to both parties. At this stage, the growth of the relationship will be cyclical.¹⁸

When the relationship has reached this steady state it may be described as **mature**, which is Step 6. A regular pattern of interaction is maintained. Changes may occur from time to time, but these can be managed through the trust that has been built on a foundation of mutual understanding (multiplexity) and a shared story (continuity). Periodic negotiation and joint action become cyclical elements and ensure commonality and parity are actively renewed. Directness is also maintained.

This is not to say that problems do not occur in well-established relationships. However, this model describes a norm that can be used to describe the progression of relationships and points of divergence.

This process is shown in Table 4.1; generic examples of its use in relationships of Type A, B and C are shown in Annex 2; and an example of its application in CBNRM is shown in Annex 3.

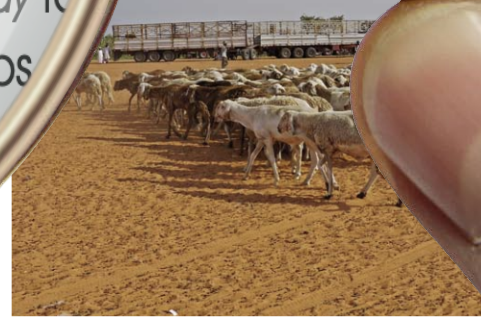


Sheep being herded for loading to trucks at the market in Al Khewi. Preparation for the delivery represents step 3 in the *measured pathway*

assess progress in relationships that in time. It was developed to gauge the results of performance and peacebuilding work and is based on a number of case studies.¹⁷ When these relationships were analysed using the relational metrics defined in chapter three, a strong pattern emerged consistent with the way that many successful relationships form and grow. The method of analysis was realized and became the *measured pathway* to assess progress in the formation of relationships. It can also be used as a basis for assessing relationships that emerge from the pattern. More details of the identified are provided in the appendix.

Step 3 is **preparation** for joint action, as each party moves through on accomplishing agreed prerequisites. Confidence grows as each party sees the other making their own preparations for action. This stage concludes when the preparations are complete and a firm commitment to joint action exists. Once the prerequisites have been met, the joint action can begin. This is a key **precedent-setting** moment. There is a degree of continuity to the relationship that exists previously. A shared story of success was successful, a change in the relationship has been achieved because the prerequisites supported by action. The relationship can grow in two ways: by increasing the activity, in which case the relationship becomes more complex, or by broadening the scope of the relationship, amounting to a growth in continuity.

of the commonality between the partners has been reached. Ongoing interaction on a range of issues occurs, and common gains can be achieved at a cost acceptable to both parties. At this stage, the growth of the relationship will be cyclical.¹⁸ When the relationship has reached this steady state it may be described as **mature**, which is Step 6. A regular pattern of interaction is maintained. Changes may occur from time to time, but the relationship can be managed through the transition. The relationship is built on a foundation of mutual trust and respect (multiplexity) and a shared understanding of the periodic negotiation and joint action. The relationship elements and ensure the relationship is actively renewed.

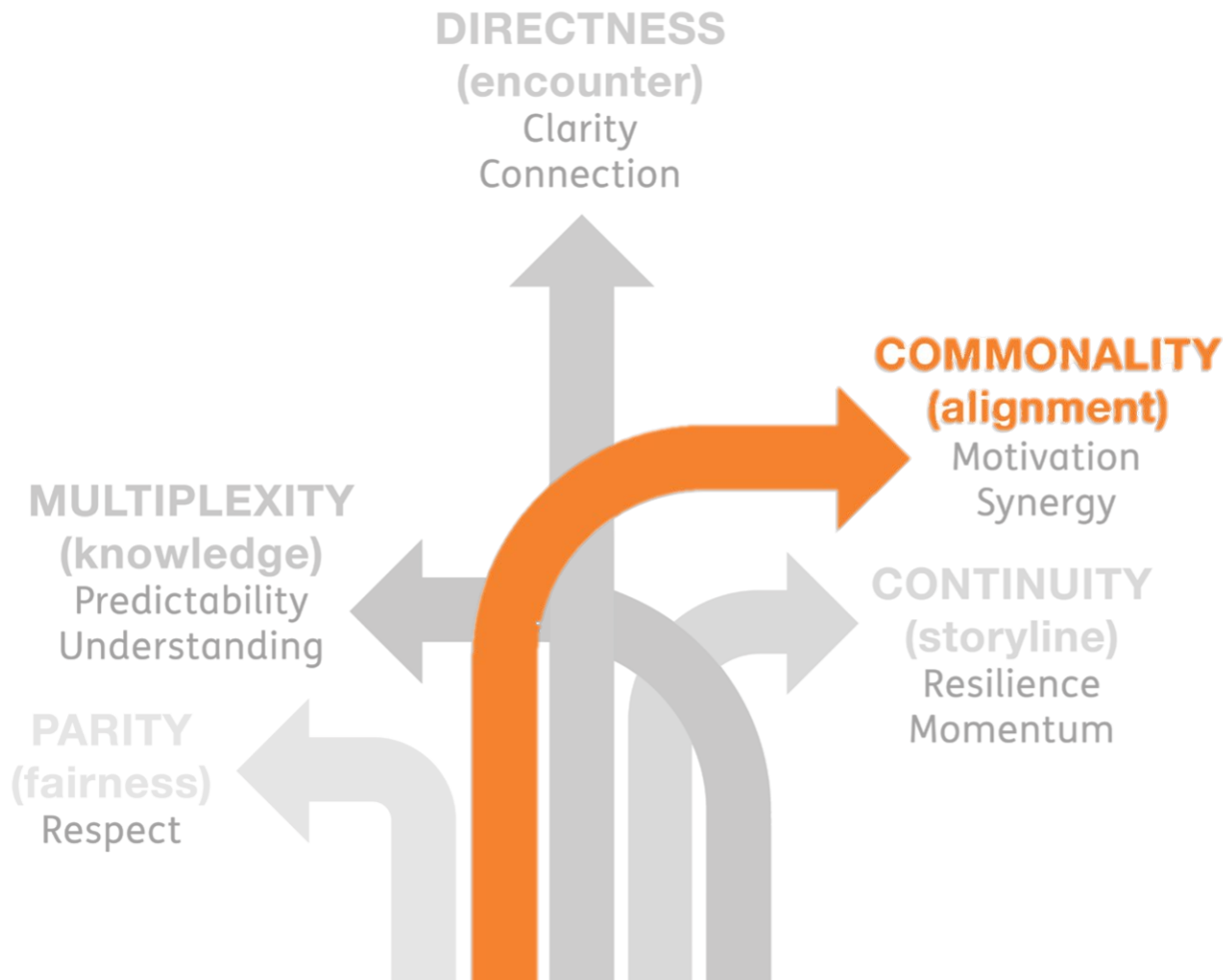


Sheep being herded for loading to trucks at the market in Al Khewel. Preparation for the deal represents step 3 in the *measured pathway*

COMMONALITY

The sharing of purpose and values
to create alignment and a sense of synergy
and unity in the relationship

RELATIONAL PROXIMITY





Friendship must be about something even if only an enthusiasm for dominoes or white mice. Those who have nothing can share nothing; those who are going nowhere can have no fellow travellers.

C.S. LEWIS (THE FOUR LOVES, 1960)

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(1999) Relational Healthcare
Strengthening inter-professional relationships



Relational Peacebuilding
Strengthening inter-professional relationships

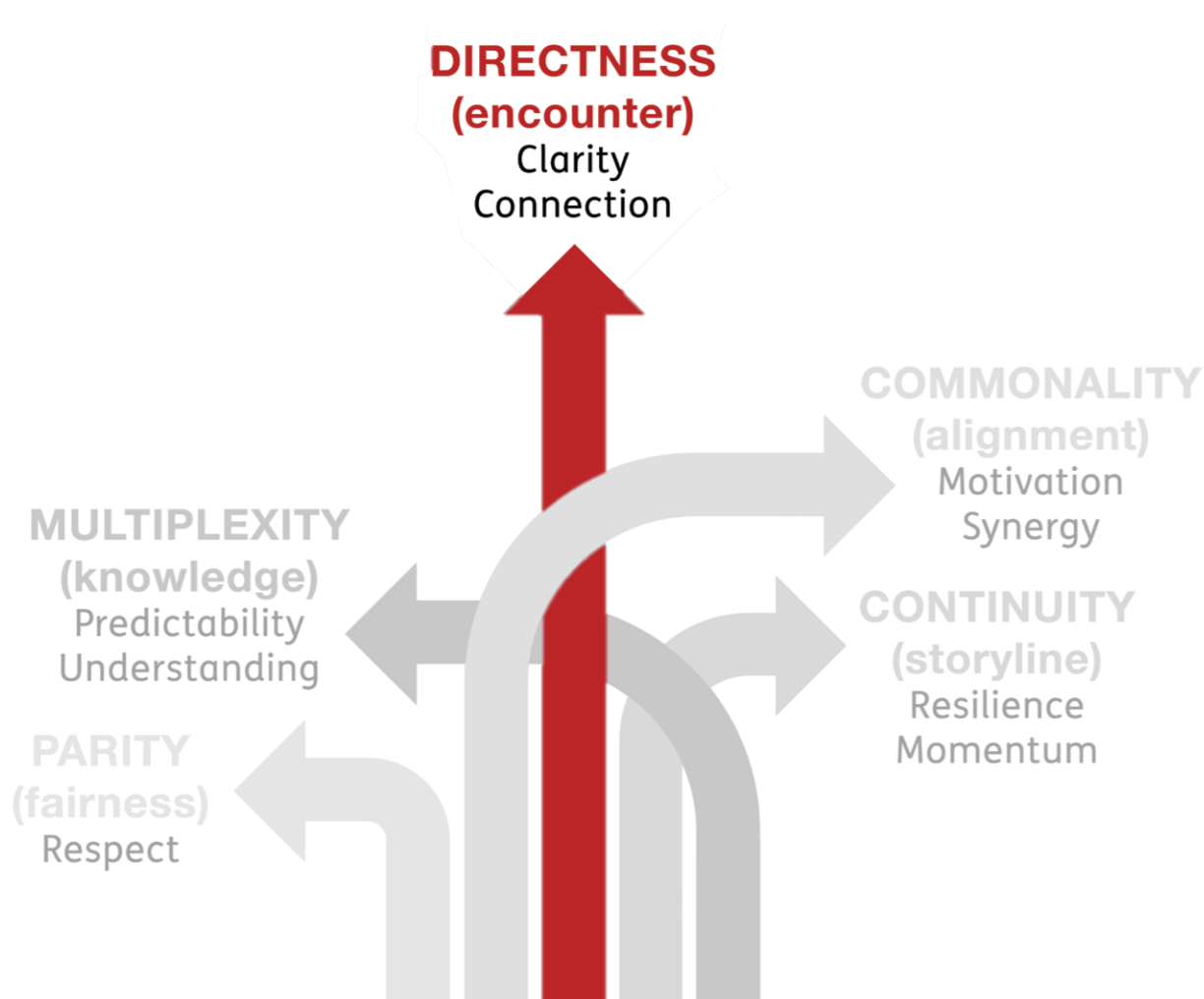


Relational Schools Project
So children can build a society

COMMUNICATION

The use of contact to create an encounter
and enable clear effective communication
in the relationship

RELATIONAL PROXIMITY





CONTEXT

Gaining breadth of knowledge
to aid the management
of the relationship



“

“I can't say I miss you, as I never really knew you. But that is the part I find myself thinking about all the time...why didn't I get to know you?”

ANNOYMOUS

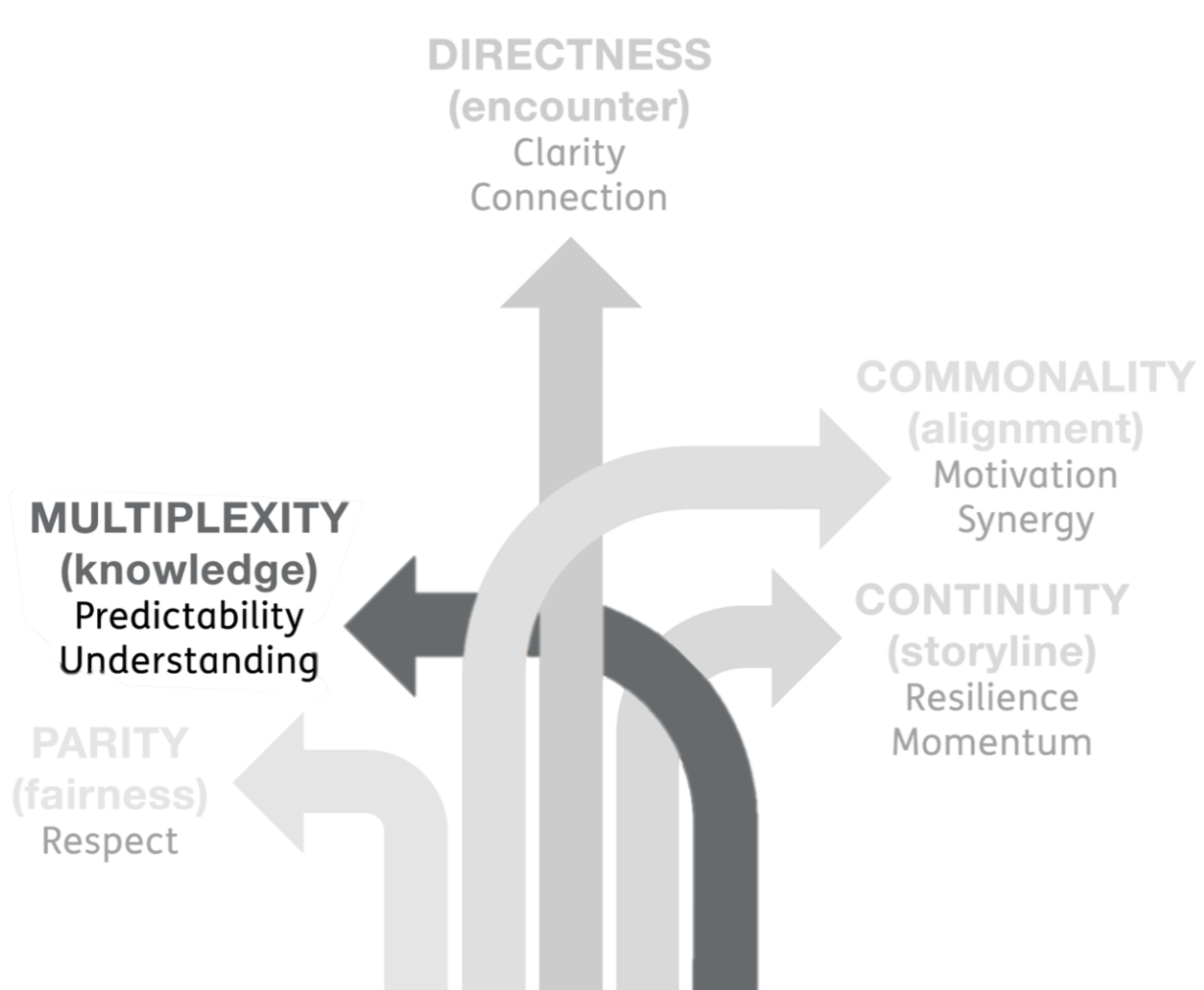
DIRECTNESS
(encounter)
Clarity
Connection

COMMONALITY
(alignment)
Motivation
Synergy

CONTINUITY
(storyline)
Resilience
Momentum

PARITY
(fairness)
Respect

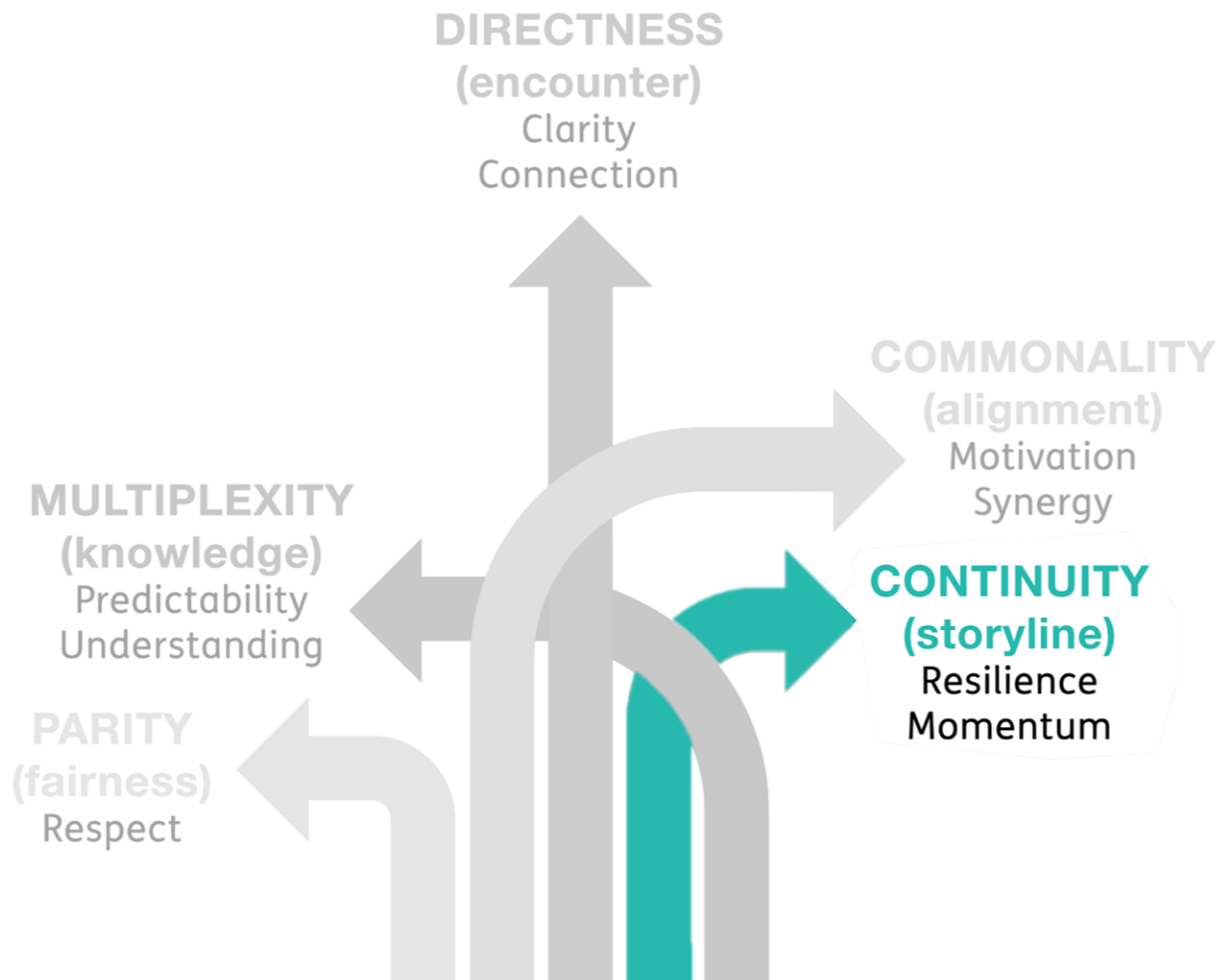
MULTIPLEXITY
(knowledge)
Predictability
Understanding



CONTINUITY

The use of time to create a
storyline and sense of momentum
and resilience in the relationship

RELATIONAL PROXIMITY



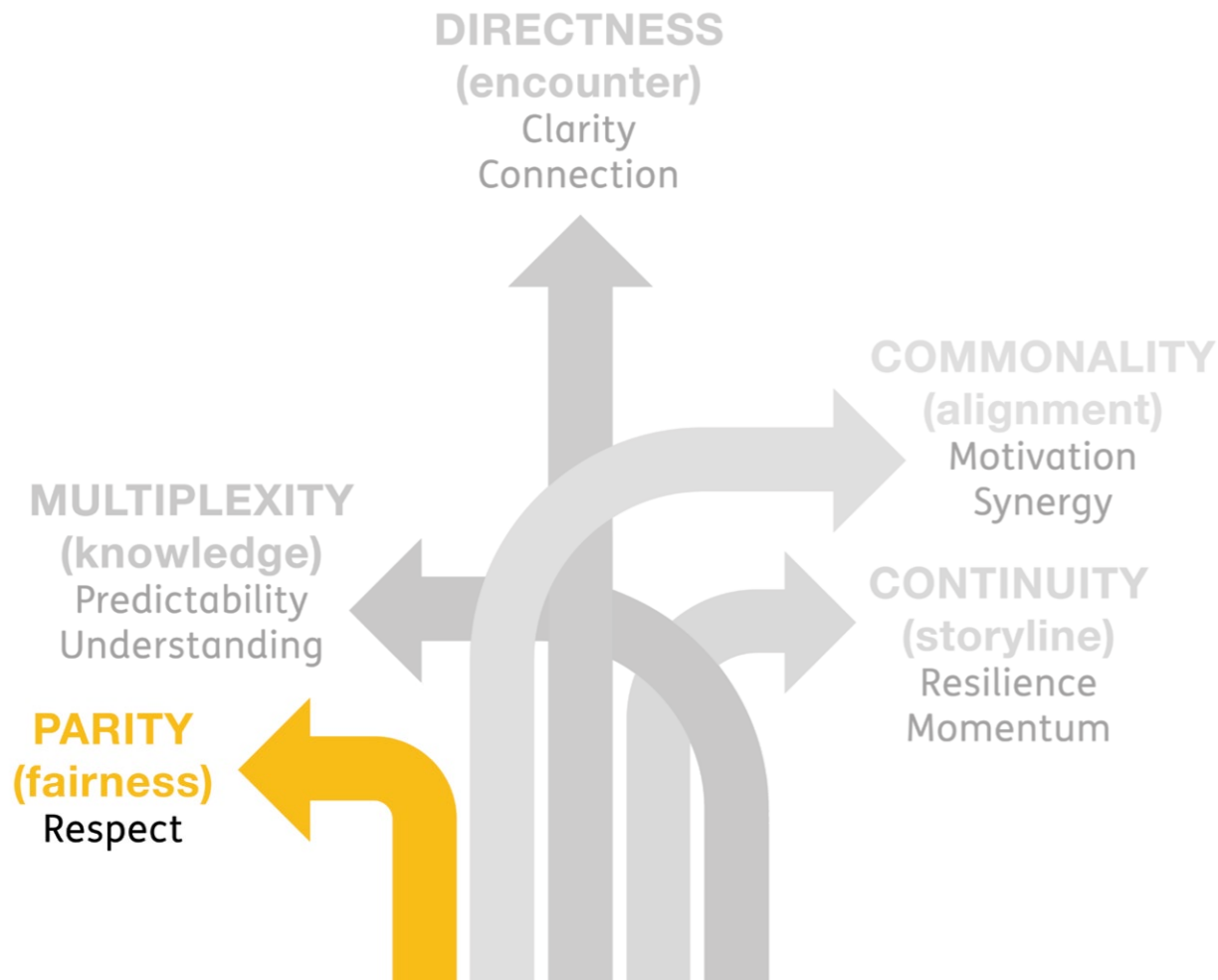
CONTRIBUTION

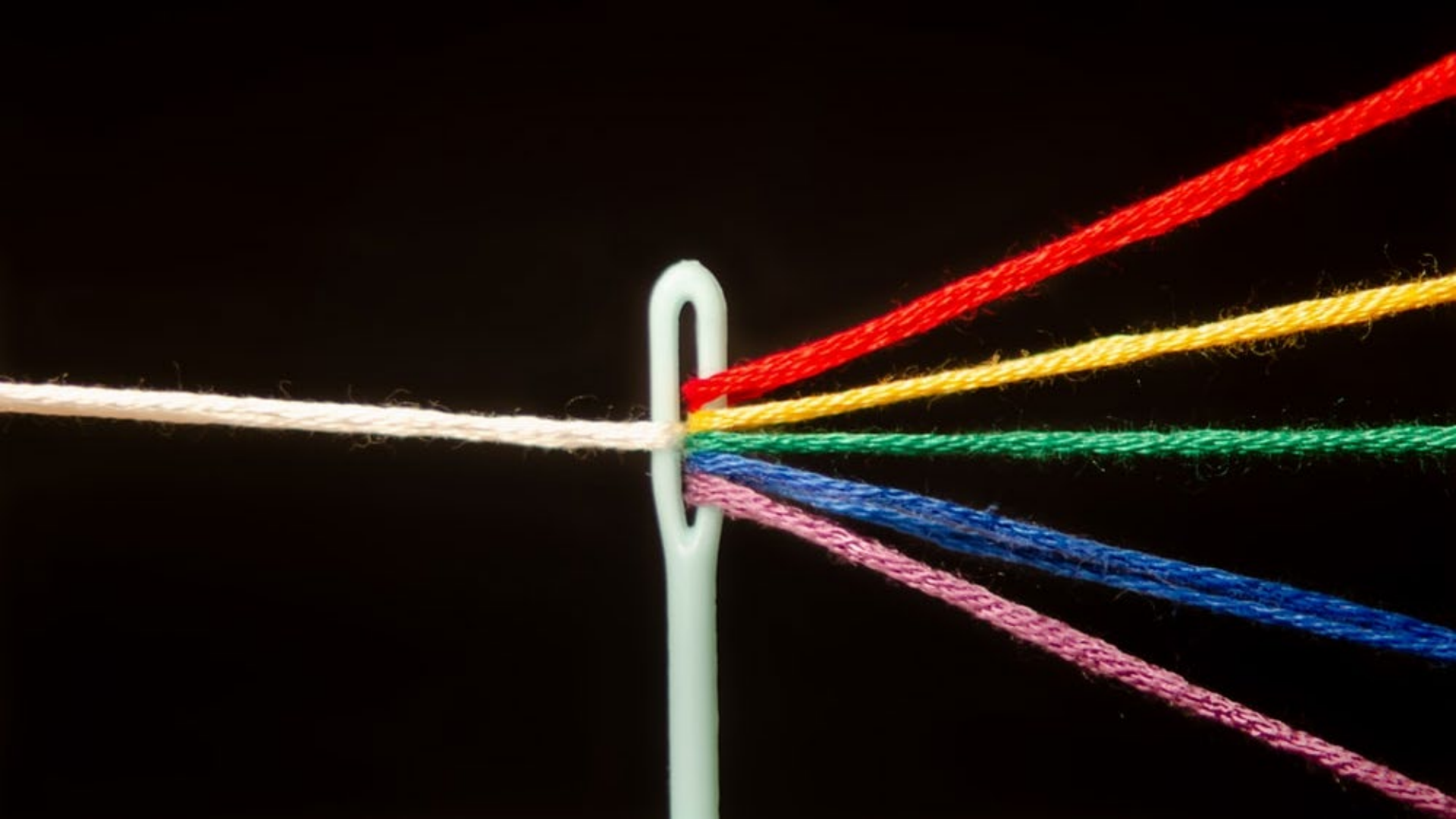
The use of power to promote fairness
and enable participation in relationships





RELATIONAL PROXIMITY





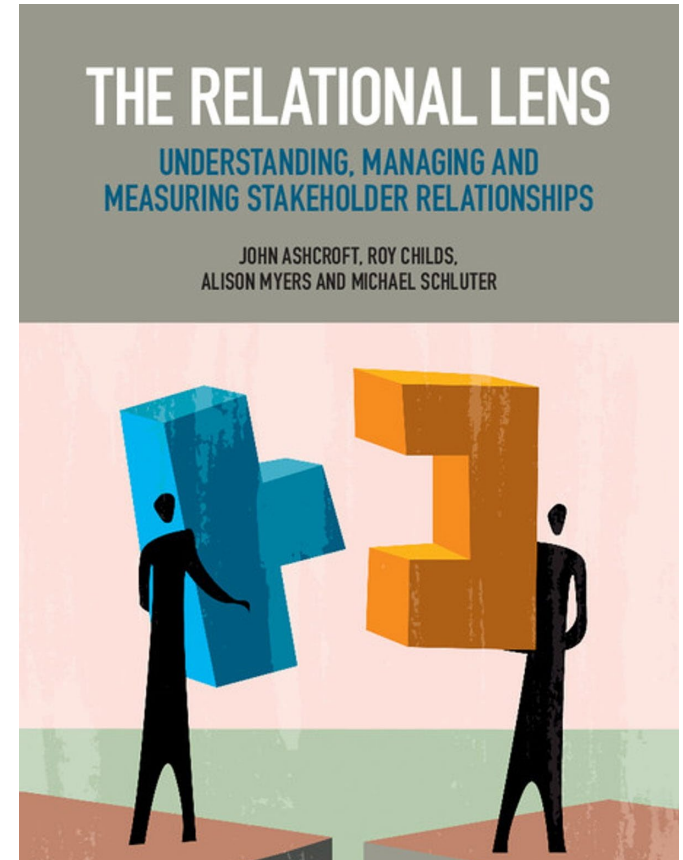
The Relational Lens

Understanding, Managing and
Measuring Relationships

Ashcroft, J.B., Childs, R., Myers, A., & Schluter, M.
(2016). The Relational Lens: Understanding,
Managing and Measuring Stakeholder
Relationships.



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Relational Schools Project
So children can build a society

THERMAL SCAN

LOCAL: 11:28:28

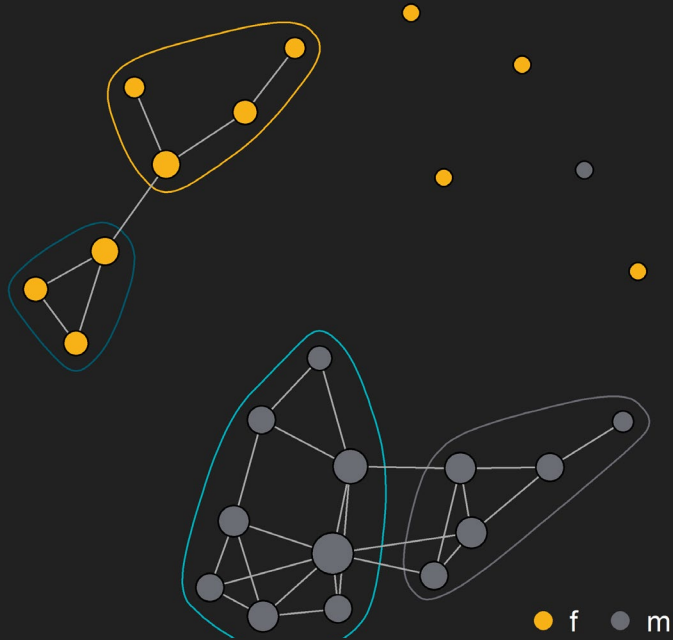


SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

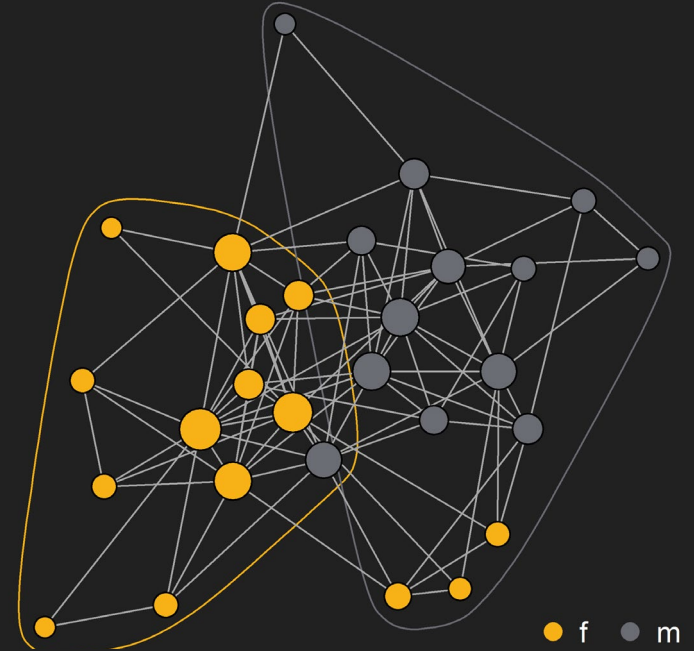
AUG TEMP
37.86

Two classrooms...

Distant Relationships

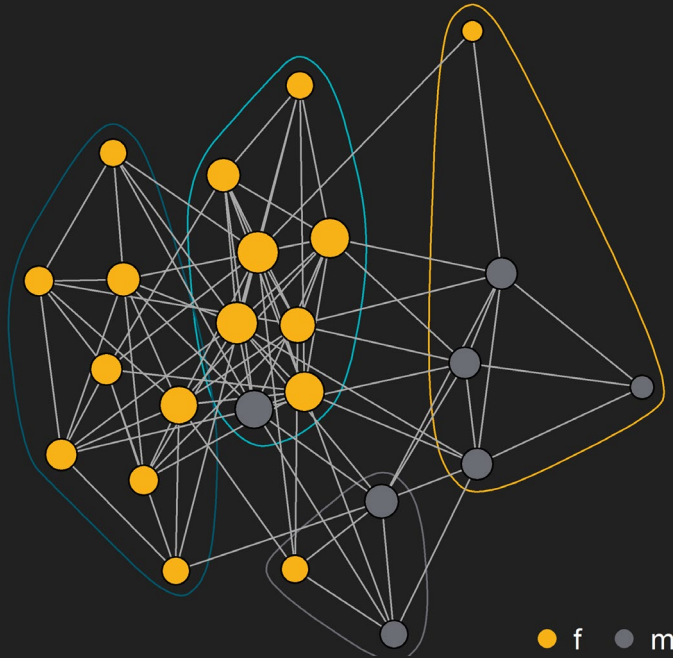


Close Relationships

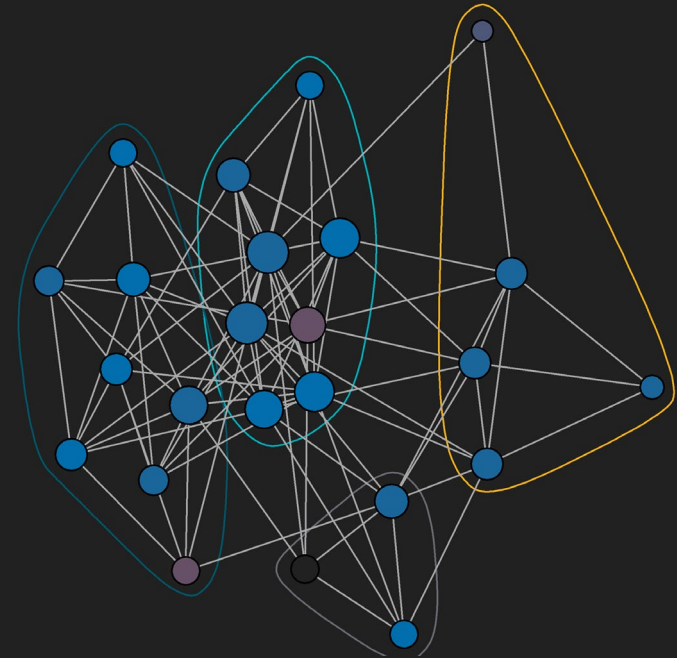


A third classroom – high wellbeing

Sex

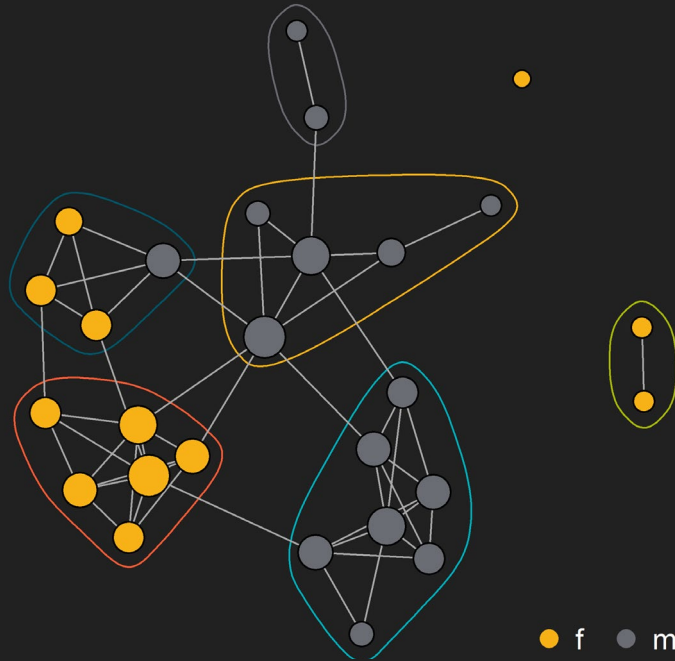


Wellbeing

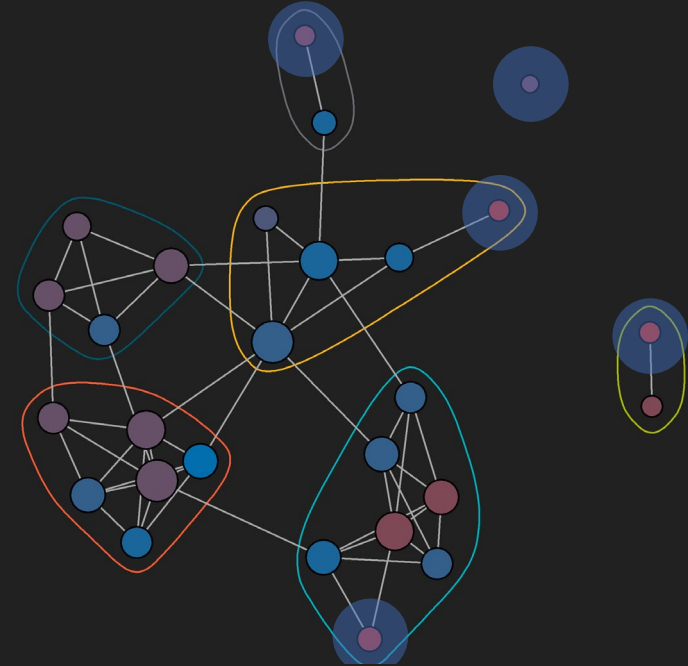


But could we begin to predict loneliness?

Sex



Wellbeing





Happiness headlines

Curated content from the
World Happiness Report

March 2025



World Happiness Report

THE BRIGHT SIDE

The Finnish Secret to Happiness? Knowing When You Have Enough.

The Nordic nation has been ranked the happiest country on earth for six consecutive years. But when you talk to individual Finns, the reality is a bit more complicated.





Why not get in touch...
r.loe@scots.college



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Sydney Australia