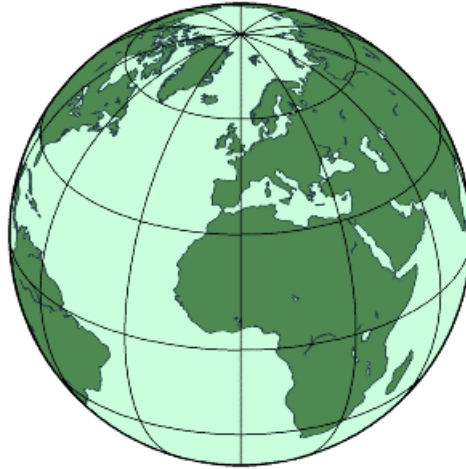


Clusters, Families and Partners



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Introduction

- No person is completely independent:
 - We all interact with others
 - Sometimes the interactions are good
 - Other times they are neutral or negative
- Occasionally, interactions are so good that people speak of *synergy*:
 - Synergy means the whole is greater than the sum of its parts
 - Increasing the synergy in your life can help you to change the world
- Sometimes synergy occurs through group interaction:
 - This chapter discusses different forms of group interaction that might result in synergy

1. Clusters

Clusters

- Often, people doing similar types of work cluster together:
 - In this way, they can inspire each other
 - Many people whose work is solitary (such as writers or painters) like to socialize with people who do similar work
- The Inklings was an informal group of literary enthusiasts in Oxford, England during the 1930s and 1940s
 - The group included:
 - J. R. R. Tolkien (author of *The Lord of the Rings* series)
 - C. S. Lewis (author of *The Chronicles of Narnia* series)
 - Members critiqued each others' draft work
 - They also had fun, such as competitions to read bad poetry without laughing
- Throughout history, there have been other clusters of famous writers and artists

Other examples of clusters

- Individual musicians join together to form a band:
 - Partly so the musicians can inspire each other
- A support group can act as a cluster:
 - An Internet search for “support group” shows many groups for medical conditions, handicaps, victims of crime, bereavement, ...
- A community centre or conference can act as a cluster:
 - Especially for people who share a particular interest or trait
 - Example traits: sexuality, ethnic origin, religion
- Midge Ure is a musician (most famously in Ultravox):
 - He co-wrote *Do They Know It's Christmas* (the Band Aid song)
 - His autobiography is called *If I was...*
 - Chapter 6 (“Life in the Blitz”) talks about a London music club that acted as a cluster for many soon-to-be-famous English singers and bands

Other examples of clusters (cont')

- Regular attendees at the Blitz included:
 - Midge Ure and Steve Strange from Visage, David Essex, Boy George, Spandau Ballet, Depeche Mode
 - Also soon-to-be famous make-up artists, stylists, photographers, video directors, fashion designers and hat makers
- Midge Ure states:
 - “It was the inspiration, the place that spawned London’s next ten year’s worth of creativity, maybe its next twenty.”
 - “Derek May, a DJ at the Warehouse in Chicago, picked up on the electronic sounds that were invented at the Blitz, developed them and turned it into his own form of dance grooves, which later became known as house music.”
- This example shows how much influence a single cluster can have

Importance of clusters

- Entire industries tend to cluster:
 - A lot of movie making is clustered in Hollywood
 - Many Formula-1 cars are made in the south of England
 - Musical theatre has clusters in London's West End and New York's Broadway
 - The US computer industry has clusters in Silicon Valley and Boston
 - There are clusters for fashion design, architecture and art
- The point of this section is this:
 - Clusters play an important role in society
 - Joining an existing cluster may help you change the world
 - If there isn't already a cluster relevant to your work then perhaps you should create one

2. Families and partners

Can your family be a cluster?

- The previous section mentioned clusters of different sizes:
 - Very large clusters, that involve entire industries
 - Smaller clusters, such as community centres and support groups
 - Very small clusters, such as a music band
- Can your family be a supportive cluster for you?
 - Hopefully, yes. However, your family members may not share your passionate beliefs:
 - Example: you want to promote vegetarianism and campaign for animal rights, but your parents or siblings eat meat
 - Even if they share your beliefs, they may criticize you:
 - Example: “When are you going to stop that and find a real job?”
 - Jesus said “A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own relatives, and in his own house.” — Mark 6:4
 - *The Lifelong Activist* by Hillary Rettig has a good discussion of this topic

Your chosen family

- There is an old saying:
 - “You can choose your friends but you cannot choose your family”
- Some people have the following experience:
 - Their family is not supportive or is even highly critical
 - They find other people who become close friends and provide support
 - They refer to these other people as their “chosen family”
- An important member of your chosen family is your partner:
 - Choose a partner who is supportive of your desire to change the world
 - If your partner is not supportive then conflicts might tear your relationship apart

Nelson Mandela

- Nelson Mandela's first marriage failed because his wife did not share his activism ideals:
 - From Chapter 24 of his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*
 - “Evelyn and I had irreconcilable differences. I could not give up my life in the struggle, and she could not live with my devotion to something other than herself and the family. [...] In the end we could not make our marriage work.”
- He took care when dating Winnie (his second wife) to make sure she shared his activism ideals:
 - From Chapter 26 of *Long Walk to Freedom*
 - “She came to meetings and political discussions; I was both courting her and politicizing her. [...] I told her it was more than likely that we would have to live on her small salary as a social worker. Winnie understood, and said she was prepared to take the risk and throw in her lot with me.”

Gandhi

- Most biographies of Gandhi downplayed the role of his wife:
 - However, the following book shows she played a vital role:
The Untold Story Kasturba: Wife of Mahatma Gandhi by Arun and Sundana Gandhi with Carol Lynn Yellin
 - Examples:
 - Gandhi first learned the effectiveness of peaceful non-cooperation from his wife when he was treating her unreasonably
 - Often Kasturba could communicate her husband's ideas to women better than he could
- Gandhi married Kasturba before either one became activists:
 - Gandhi's activism bloomed before Kasturba's did
 - This created some conflicts in their relationship
 - Luckily, Kasturba slowly came to share her husband's idealism
 - Over time, she became a well-known activist leader in her own right

Other people with supportive partners

■ Martin Luther King Jr.:

- Learned of his future wife's activism on their first date
- She encouraged him to continue fighting racism, despite frequent death threats and assassination attempts

■ Malcolm X and his future wife were both in the Nation of Islam:

- This religion encouraged black people to oppose racism
- Malcolm X was a public (and controversial) figure in the Nation of Islam
- His future wife knew of the risks that Malcolm X faced

3. Summary

Summary

- Having the right kind of support for your work increases your chance of success
- Look for groups or organizations that can provide such support
 - If none exist then perhaps you could start one
- Your biological family may or may not be supportive
 - If not then develop a chosen family
- When looking for a long-term partner, choose someone who is supportive