Potential PS Topic: sense of belonging

**General:**

One thing I consider very heavily is a sense of belonging. Whether belonging to home or school. But I haven’t found a way to render this feeling to produce it in a PS. It can combine mountain climbing and running. Both are trying to establish a sense of belonging for myself and others.

**Sense of belonging**

What does it mean to belong?

* To feel comfortable at the place
* You can do anything you want
* That group of people are strongly connected as a whole
* Most importantly, to share. Sharing requires an active role.
* This reminds me of another thing: Informatics. This is a very close group that shares things in common. I know Mike Luo through Informatics even though he is 4 years older. My teacher plays a major role in connecting the old and new students. She actually seldom teaches, but she connects all of us. Tells us about successes and sad stories.

Why is it important for us to have a sense of belonging?

* Personally, for me, it is really really important.
* Only do you have this sense of belonging can you contribute to a college’s community. Only if you feel like you are part of a community can you make yourself valuable to others.

Progression

1. Social and familial sense of belonging through climbing with family
2. Social and intellectual sense of belonging through Informatics   
   🡪
3. Transitions into TAing for Informatics, forming C2 studio, forming running group, starting cornupians.org

**Climbing**

* This really lasted a long time. Since 7 years old. In fact this weekend,
* At first, I pretty much hated it because it took up a lot of my time to play computer games. At first, I played some tricks. “my feet hurt” or I’m sick. My father had actually planned this for a long time and wanted to establish this relationship. I was literally dragged up the mountains.
* Since I studied in junior and left Leshan and went far from my family, all my world values changed. In junior school, I accepted this as a weekly or monthly ritual. I started to enjoy the climbing itself. To be with my family and to do something bodily away from school work.
* From MAL D2: As a ritual, my parents and I went mountain climbing once a month since I was 6, for the purpose of keeping health, enjoying sightseeing, and mostly, family reunion. Before, I was sick of climbing, and was often carried by father all the way to the mountain top. Now I was the lead, carrying backpack and pushing them through.

**Informatics**

Instructor and instruction

* A woman in her 50s.
* She actually seldom teaches. She has been teaching the Informatics team at No. 7 for about twenty years. She used to teach about ten years ago, but she doesn’t know a lot of the recent things that have happened in the field more recently.
* At first, students wanted to help, so she let them. Then it
* This means that students rely on the students older than them. If there is a weak older class in terms of teaching you, then there will be a gap. There was for me when I was in Senior 1 because the Senior 2 students were not as good. That means I relied on the Senior 3 students a lot, so I grew close to them. Before that, I tried to self-study.
* “It is a way of heritage, and we learn more from students than from teachers...But I did enjoy helping those brilliant though sometime stupid students, who were like phantoms of myself years ago. And when they made some accomplishments and sit around, chatting about what they did right, how they solved the problem in a creative way, I was satisfied.”

How do you belong to Informatics?

* Mike was educated by peers. Later on educated peers himself. So there is that exchange in contributions.

But having a sense of belonging is more than just sharing information, right? How did Informatics go beyond just sharing data on data?

* One important factor is we were traveling a lot together. In fact, I have already traveled over ten times with this bunch of students.
* I think this chance makes us more of a sharing group. It’s more like staying together in a totally different place. We have to overcome Informatics-related and unrelated challenges together.
* Have annual reunions that strengthen this sense of belonging.

Was there any change in your sense of belonging?

* Yes, there has to be a change. When I was in school studying Informatics, there is the responsibility of gaining honor for the teacher, school, and for me.
* But now, the responsibility has altered greatly. When I was teaching the lower grade students, it was like what I described in the MAL. I see them as my previous self.

Do all the Informatics students have a sense of belonging? Why do some do and others not?

* Some do it for fun. Some do it for major. So time is a big factor in forming a sense of belonging.
* Not just a group that studies together, but that “lives” and supports together. Example of student who didn’t get any offers from Olympiad informatics competitions. So we gave him all these ideas and used connection that we had.
* Before talking about this today, I didn’t think this much about the meaning of the Informatics community. ☺!!!

**Running**

Why didn’t you like running before?

* It’s just so heavy.
* I couldn’t catch my breath and almost passed out.
* But now I find that running is very good for programmers, who sit for the whole day. They need to flex their lower body.
* From MAL: Running was never my hobby. On the contrary, I was always afraid of 1000m running test in junior school. On the first night when I entered high school, however, seeing the beautiful empty running track lit by fragmentary light, I wanted for a change, like every person wants to do something when starting a new beginning. I asked for another roommate of me for company, and we started running. I can still remember clearly that on the first day, our voyage was 3 laps, a total of 900m. At that time, when a student saw two guys running after class at night, he or she must think of them as a ephemeral passion or just want to show off. It was weird at first, even to myself. But I was not alone, and I just kept running. In the first week, we found 3 laps were too easy, so our target was set to 5 laps, and didn't change from then. In two weeks, 4 of my roommates were motivated and joined us. In fact, all my roommates were from different regions of Sichuan, but our relationships were quickly built and strengthened in this way. Sometimes we may discuss a certain math problem, or to listen to one's misfortune, or simply to enjoy immersing in the moonlight shadow. We may have different speed, different number of laps, but these problems never became concerns. It was we ran that mattered.   
  As time proceeded, I almost forgot the reason for running every night. Possibly for trying to be fit, or to have a relax after a day's work. It's like a ritual. And I saw more and more students, in my class or in my grade, or neither, went on track to jog or sprint. Occasionally when I was running, I would hear a encouragement from one I didn't recognize clearly beside the track, and a warm feeling would emerge in my heart. And in return, sometimes I would do the same. It felt good to be lost in darkness under stars, sprinting and sweating, with strangers and friends by side.

Why did you ask for company? Why not run alone?

* This was the first night in high school, so I wanted to get to know my roommate. So I just asked him if he wanted to go with me.
* I really miss those old roommates. Most of them went to Tsinghua.

**C2 studio:**

I think a big part of why you feel a sense of belonging with C2 is how you were welcomed and brought in. How about now?

* It’s hard to tell because I haven’t gained myself in the production that much yet, although I give input.
* This isn’t like the relationship in Informatics group yet.
* From MAL: After giving up the internship at Microsoft and Alibaba, I encountered Mike Luo, who had just graduated from Tsinghua and planned to start a game studio from scratch. Luo studied in the same high school as me, and has also participated in Olympiad in Informatics training, so I got to know him pretty early. And most importantly, he shares the great passion for game producing as me. So I kicked in, and we formed the studio C2 consisting of only 4 students, with 2 artists and 2 programmers. Despite the age gap between me and the other 3, who are all graduated students from college, there is not a single obstacle blocked in our way of communication. Passion and connections gathered us together.  
  So that day when I tugged my heavy suitcase back from Beijing in Chengdu, Luo welcomed me warmly. We walked across blocks and bridges, passing through lanes and alleys, and finally entered the rented 50 m2 apartment hidden in a dark corner. This one-bedroom, one-living-room apartment is our lovely studio. Though small in area, the studio is warm and friendly, and there is everything that we need: four PCs, one printer, one blackboard, and a bookshelf full of precious books varying from technological bibliography to traditional culture. Since I am the only one not living in Chengdu, I luckily earned the sole sofa for bedding in living room.   
  I might be proud of my programming skills among peers, but compared with Luo, I drop back to a beginner again. I knew game making was difficult, but it turns out to be much harder than I perceived. Various fields of knowledge are required: a good perception in art, profound understanding in calculus, linear algebra and spacial geometry, physics, history and culture, and of course, programming. Perhaps I might be scared before, but not this time, for this has been what I long for, and I have admirable and humble friends providing instructions around me. It feels just cool.  
  The first game that we plan to make uses shadow play as the main technique for story telling. One reason for this is that using shadow play in game is rather innovative. There are only three pivots in most shadow play figures, so it's easy to create interesting and smooth movements just by controlling these three pivots. Another reason for using shadow play is trying to save the endangered traditional Chinese art. The origin of shadow play is two thousand years from now, yet the effects are stunning. However, only a few number of old people are still mastering this ancient skill, because the younger generations are more obsessed with computers, phones, and have no interest in artifacts like shadow play. It is somewhat like a mission for us to record down the near-extinct Chinese art, by combining the old rendering style with the new 3D computer graphics techniques.

**Cornucopians.org**

What’s cornucopians.org’s mission?

* The main mission is to gather people who suffer from solitude as a result of physical disease or family condition and to share life stories together. Also share some news about medical production to give them hope. And also, fun.
* I think of of my interest in this project is also this sense of belonging that I have treated so importantly in my life. I want to transfer this sense of belonging to other people.

**Experience 6: Longing for home as sense of belonging**

“Home is perpetually the softest part of our inside world. I think why Maximus impresses me so hard is not his bravery, not his proficiency of fighting, nor the romantic story line, but the sense of belonging that lingers in his mind and reiterates throughout the movie. He is just a normal man longing for home...  
But really did I enjoy the weekend so happily as I presumed? Sometimes yes, but the other times no. Because the time I could spend with my family was limited, and once I arrived, I had to worry about departure. 'Vastness of weeds' may best exist in our imagination. Expecting is more sweeting and endurable than actual experiencing. Like for Maximus, the happiest time was in the last moment of life, when he raised his hand to push open the invisible door, smiling like a child.”