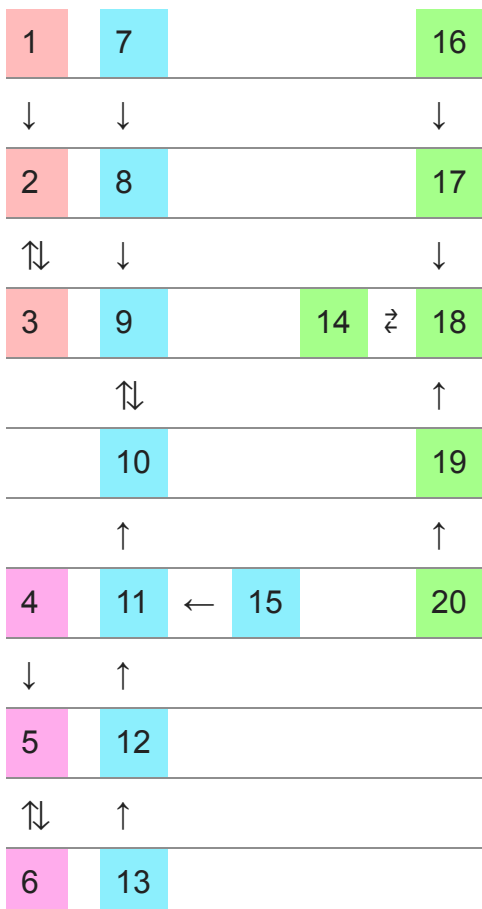


The social interactions in two preschool classes, in graphic form

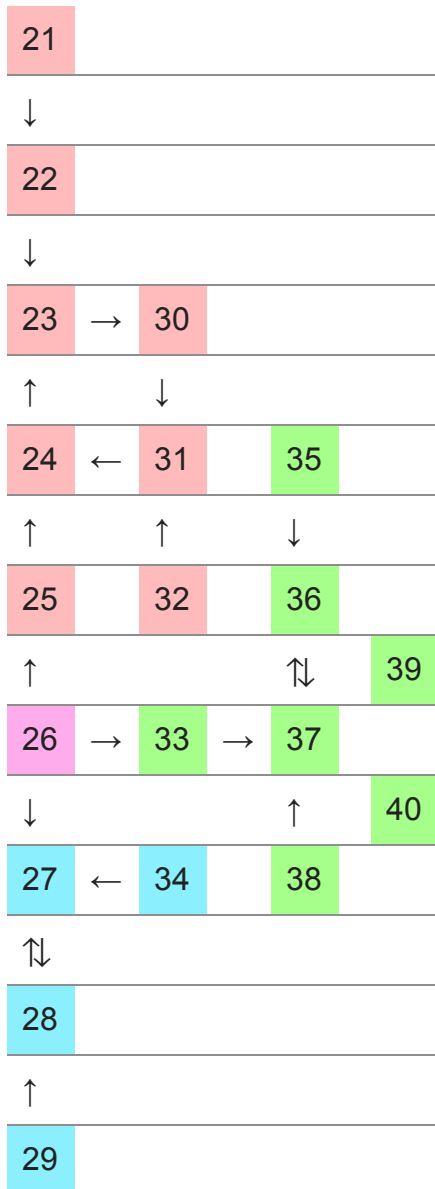


Raymond Chen

Each preschooler at my daughter's school was asked a few simple questions, and the answers were printed in the yearbook. Among other things, the preschoolers were asked to complete the sentence, "I like to play with (person)." This is the type of question that leads to tears and hurt feelings. Whatever. Their parents are going to be stuck with the therapy bills. (My daughter is not a preschooler at the school, so I avoided a therapy bill. At least not over this.) From this data, I created a graph. Each arrow points from a student to the person they said they like to play with.



This class breaks up into four cliques. Two of the cliques consists of a pair of playmates, and one hanger-on. The large clique consists of two focal points (students 9 and 10) who play with each other. The medium-sized clique has a single focal point (student 18) who plays with a best friend (14). I think that student 14 is in the best spot. He (or she) is not himself popular, but the popular kid plays with him (or her). The second preschool class has a more complex structure.



The upper left group consists of a core of four students (23, 30, 31, 24) who play with each other, plus some hangers-on. The lower left group consists of a pair of friends (27 and 28) and their hangers-on. The right-hand group consists of one very popular student (37) who plays with a best friend (36), and their hangers-on. The most interesting student is number 26. All of the other students gave only one name in response to the prompt. But student 26 gave three names. As a result, that student links together the three cliques in the class.

Student 26 is bringing people together. I admire that.

Raymond Chen

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