

Growing as a Community: Why Healthy Humans Need Belonging

DATE

February 14, 2024

PRESENTER

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Othering & Belonging
Institute

AUTHORIAL SUPPORT

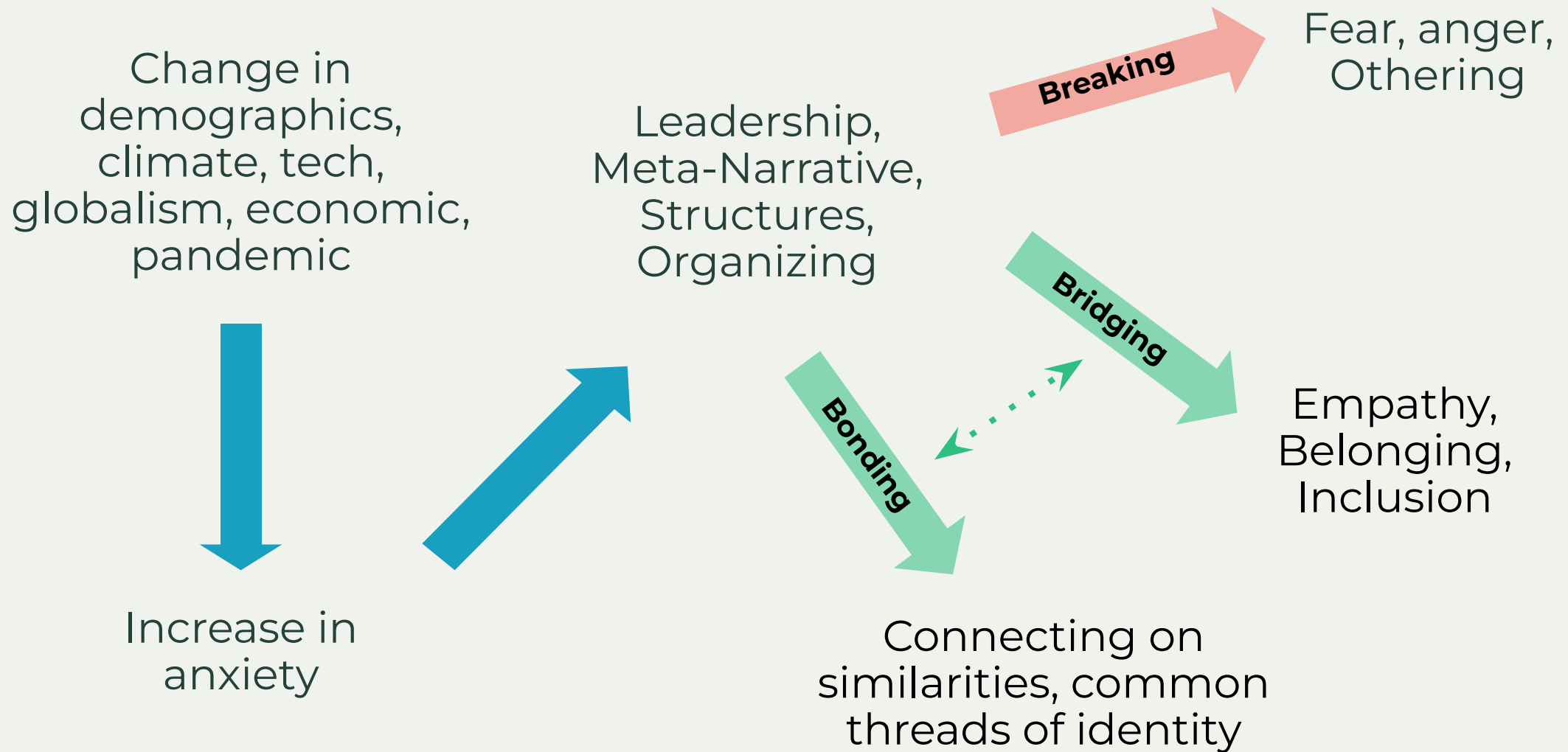
Clarisa Coronado

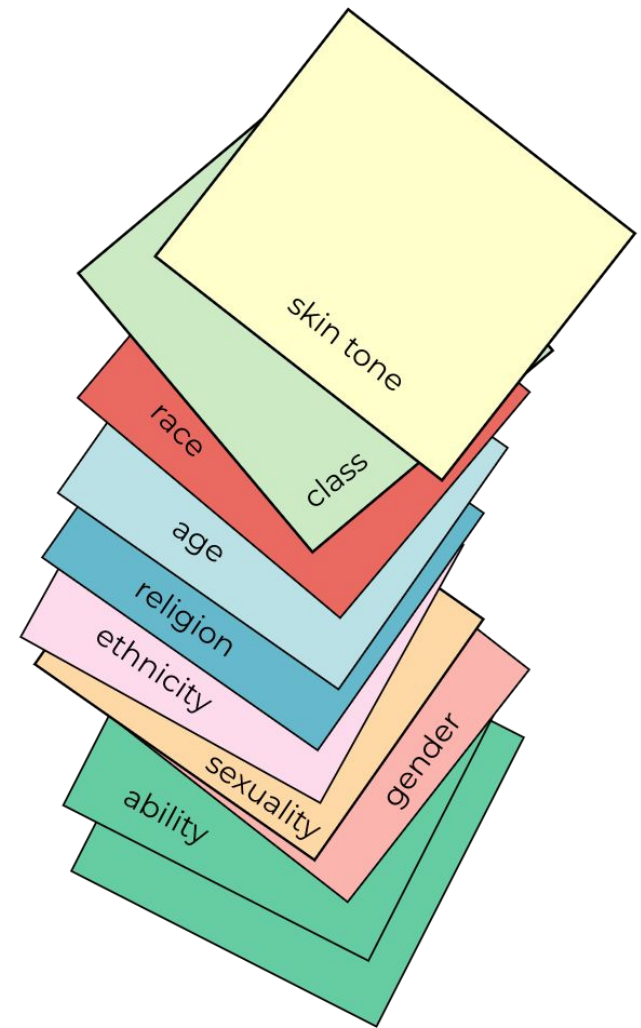
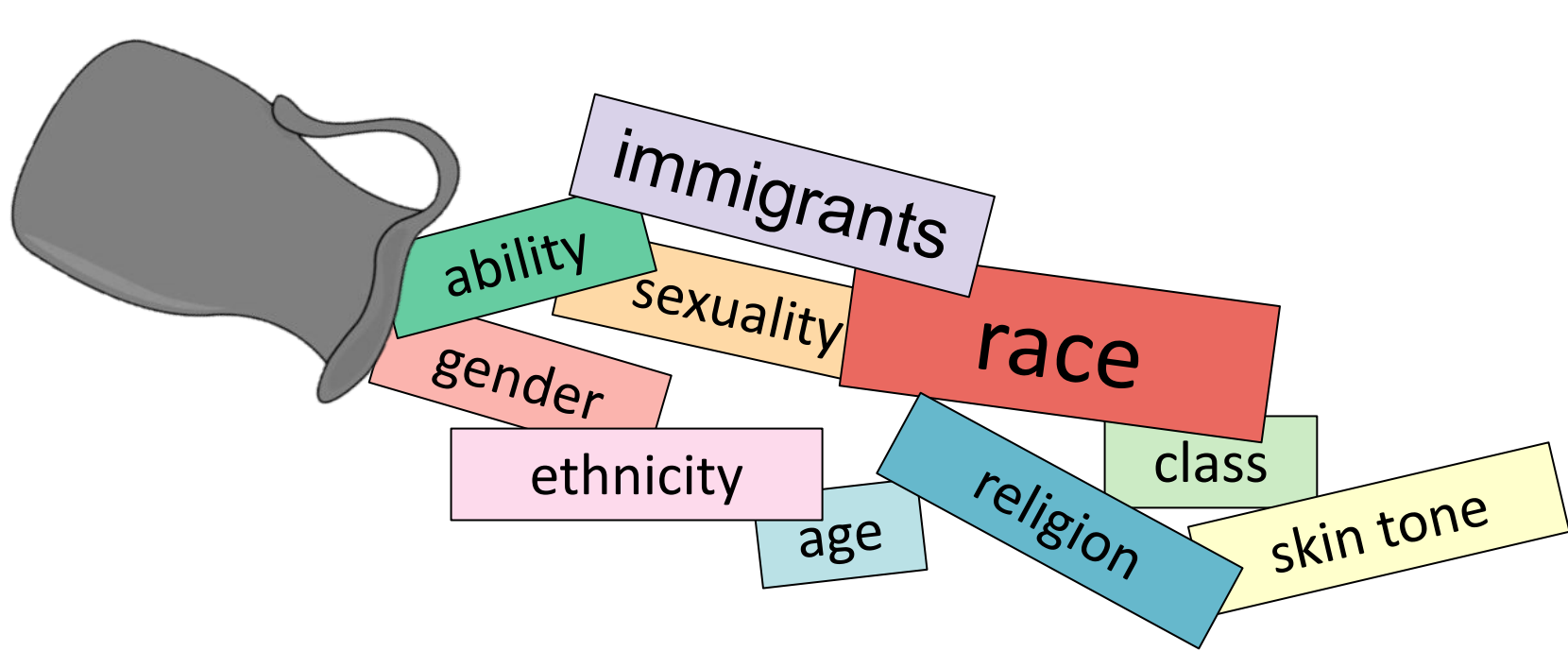
The problem of “othering” is the problem of the 21st century.



The opposite of othering is
not saming, but
belonging.

Rapid Change Produces Collective Anxiety





Othering is a generalized set of common processes that engender marginality and group-based inequality across any of the full range of human differences.

The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.

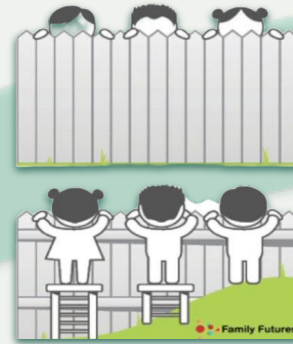
—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution.” Speech given at the National Cathedral, March 31, 1968.



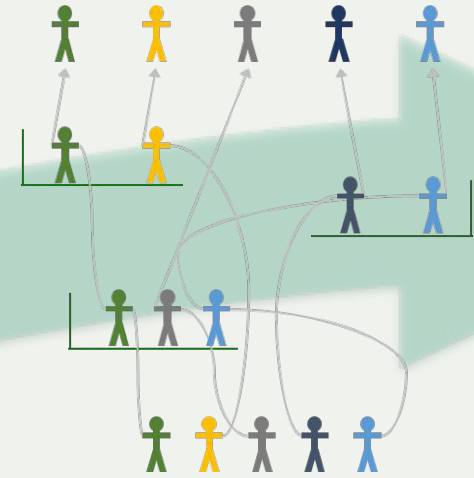
Extreme Inequality



Equality



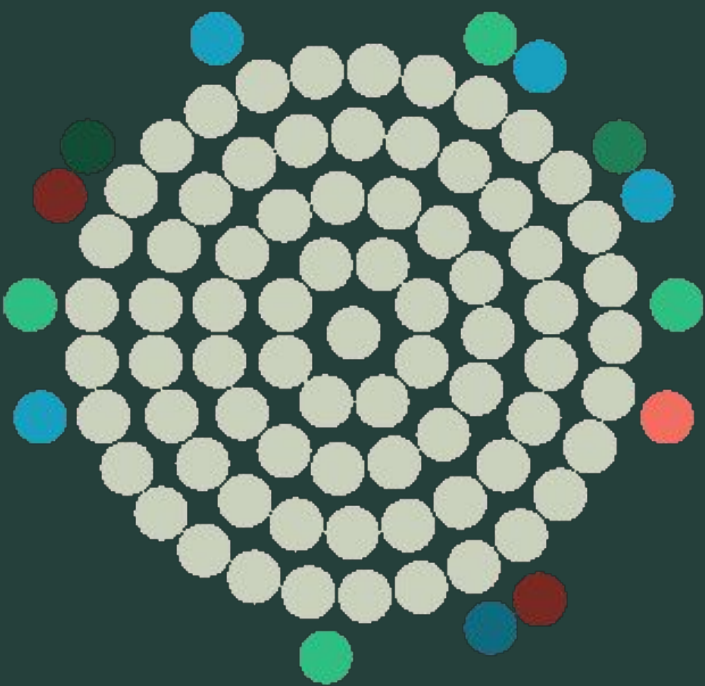
Equity



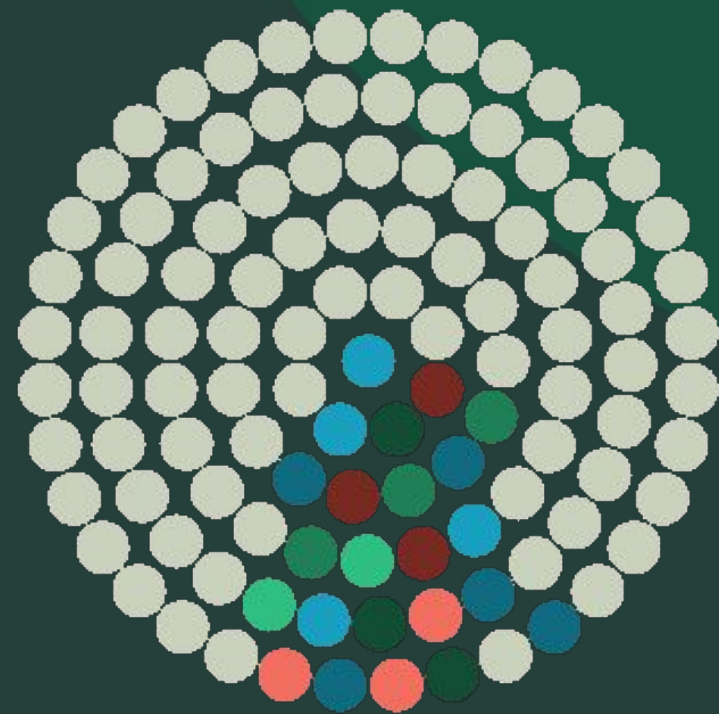
Targeted
Universalism &
Belonging (Equity
2.0)

Belonging is about
co-creating and
co-owning structures
to belong.

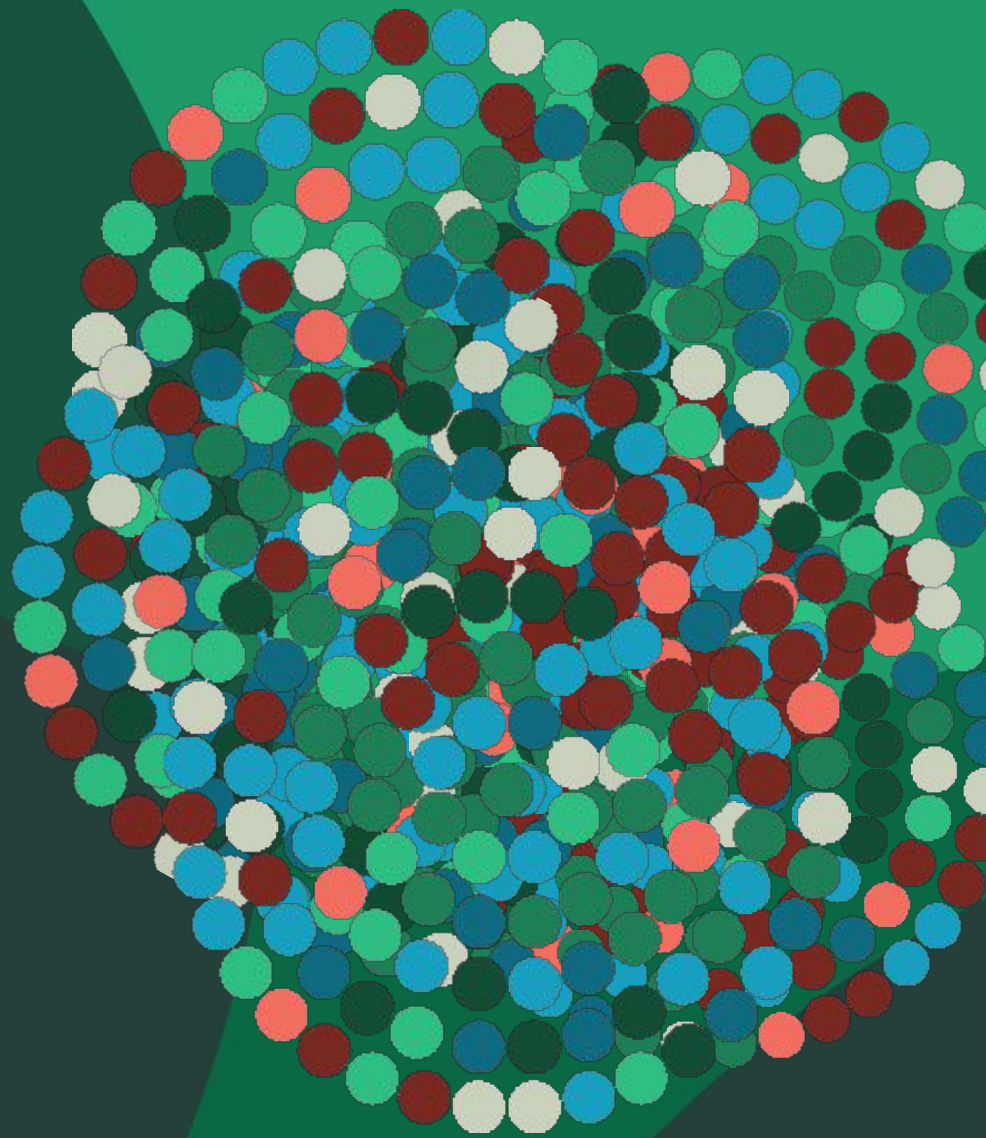




Exclusion



Inclusion



Belonging

ubuntu

I am because you are



Empathy

```
graph TD; Empathy --> Compassion; Empathy --> EmpatheticDistress;
```

Compassion

- Other-related emotion
- Positive feelings
- Good health
- Approach & prosocial motivation

Empathetic distress

- Self-related emotion
- Negative feelings
- Poor health, burnout
- Withdrawal & non-social behavior

In contrast to empathy, compassion does not mean sharing the suffering of the other: rather, it is characterized by feelings of warmth, concern and care for the other, as well as a strong motivation to improve the other's wellbeing.

Compassion is feeling for and not feeling with the other.

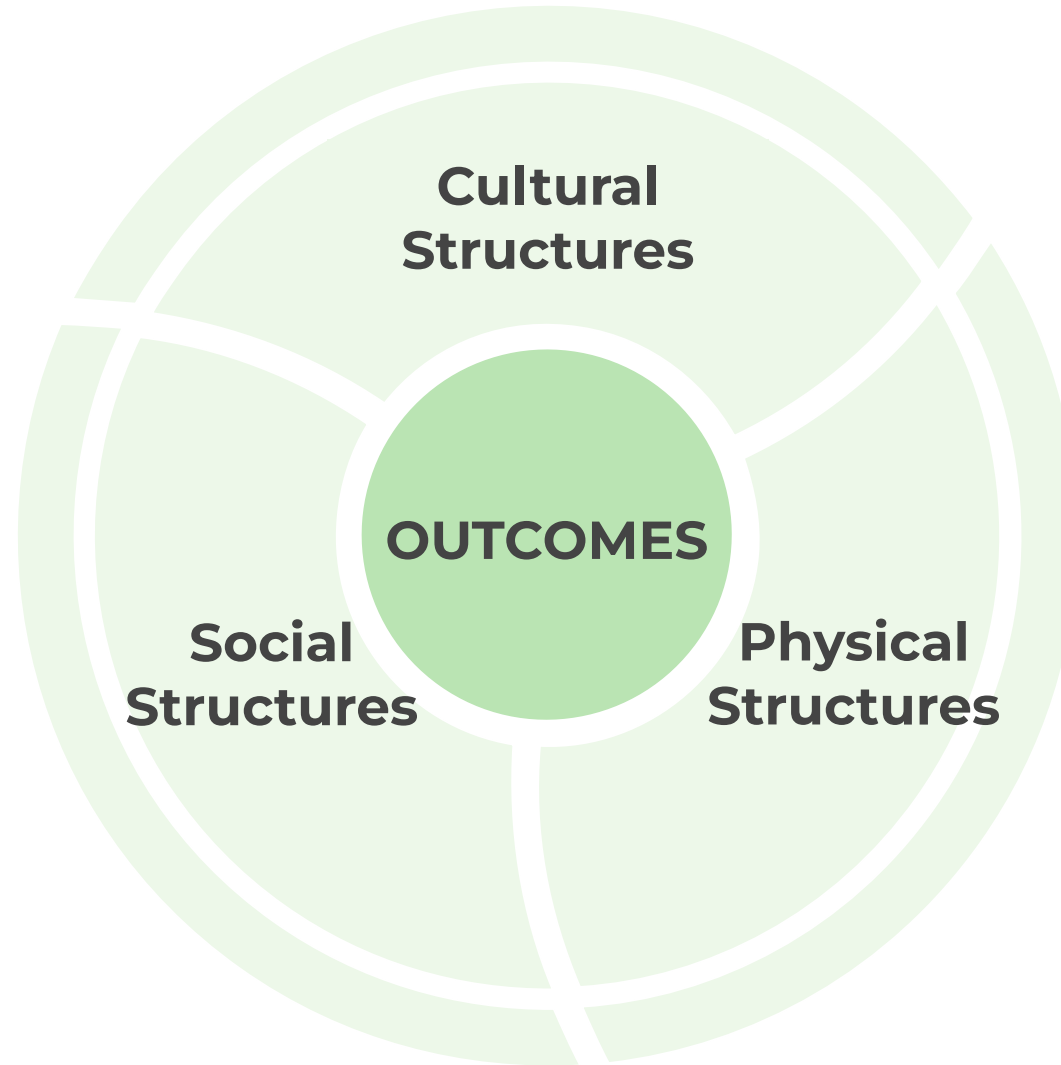
Reflection

Think of a time where you experienced belonging.
What did it feel like?
Where was it?



Othering & Belonging within Structures

We are all situated within structures, but not evenly.



Structures unevenly distribute benefits and burdens to various groups.

These structures are not neutral and interact in ways that produce differential outcomes.

Power gives us greater positive access to structures and more ability to shape structures.

Structures do work: power and position matter

Not only are people situated differently with regard to institutions, people are situated differently with regard to infrastructure.



People are impacted by the relationships between institutions and systems

...but people also impact these relationships and can change the structure of the system.

Structures are not neutral.

Think about the design of airplanes.

How might they be biased?

- While most flight attendants and many passengers are female, the luggage bins are designed for tall people with plenty of upper body strength.
- Airline seating is designed for smaller sized passenger bodies and bodies of average height.



Multidimensional Understanding of Opportunity: Structural Inequality

Example — **bird in a cage**

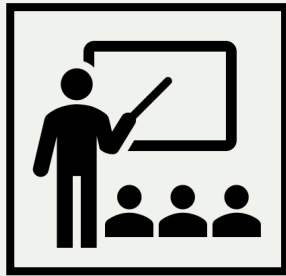
Examining one bar cannot explain why a bird cannot fly.

But multiple bars, arranged in specific ways, reinforce each other and trap the bird.

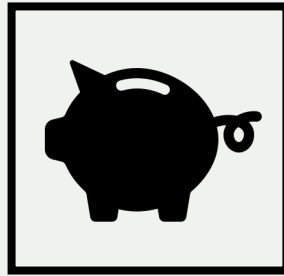


Structures limit and enhance opportunity

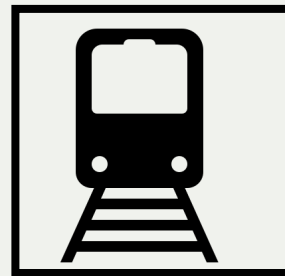
We can define opportunity through **access** to:



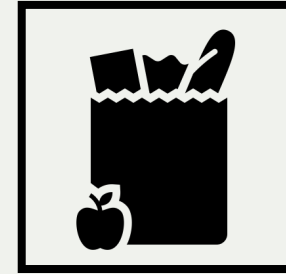
EDUCATION



ECONOMY



TRANSPORTATION



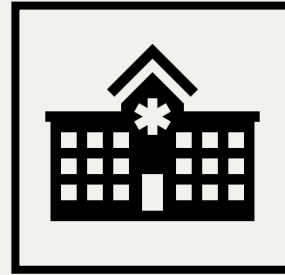
FOOD



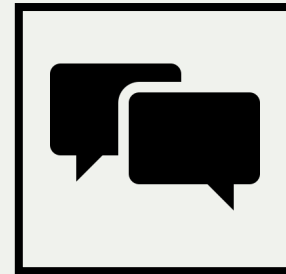
HOUSING



JUSTICE



HEALTHCARE



COMMUNICATION
S

This is an issue of **membership** and **belonging**.

Opportunity Structures



- Opportunity structures are the webs of influence beyond our individual control that enhance and constrain our ability to succeed and excel.
- Life changes are shaped by opportunity structures, and those structures are just as important, if not more so, than the choices that individuals make.

Narratives of Othering and Belonging



Breaking: When a group turns inwards and explicitly pushes away from other groups who are seen as dangerous or a threat.



Bonding: Connecting to people like you in some important way



Bridging: Ties to people who are unlike you in some important way; stories, structure contact. Willing to listen.

Bridging is a precondition for belonging. Without bridging, it is not possible to build a society in which everyone belongs.

There are **short bridges** and **long bridges**.

Some bridges require more effort to build and maintain.

Others are a short distance.



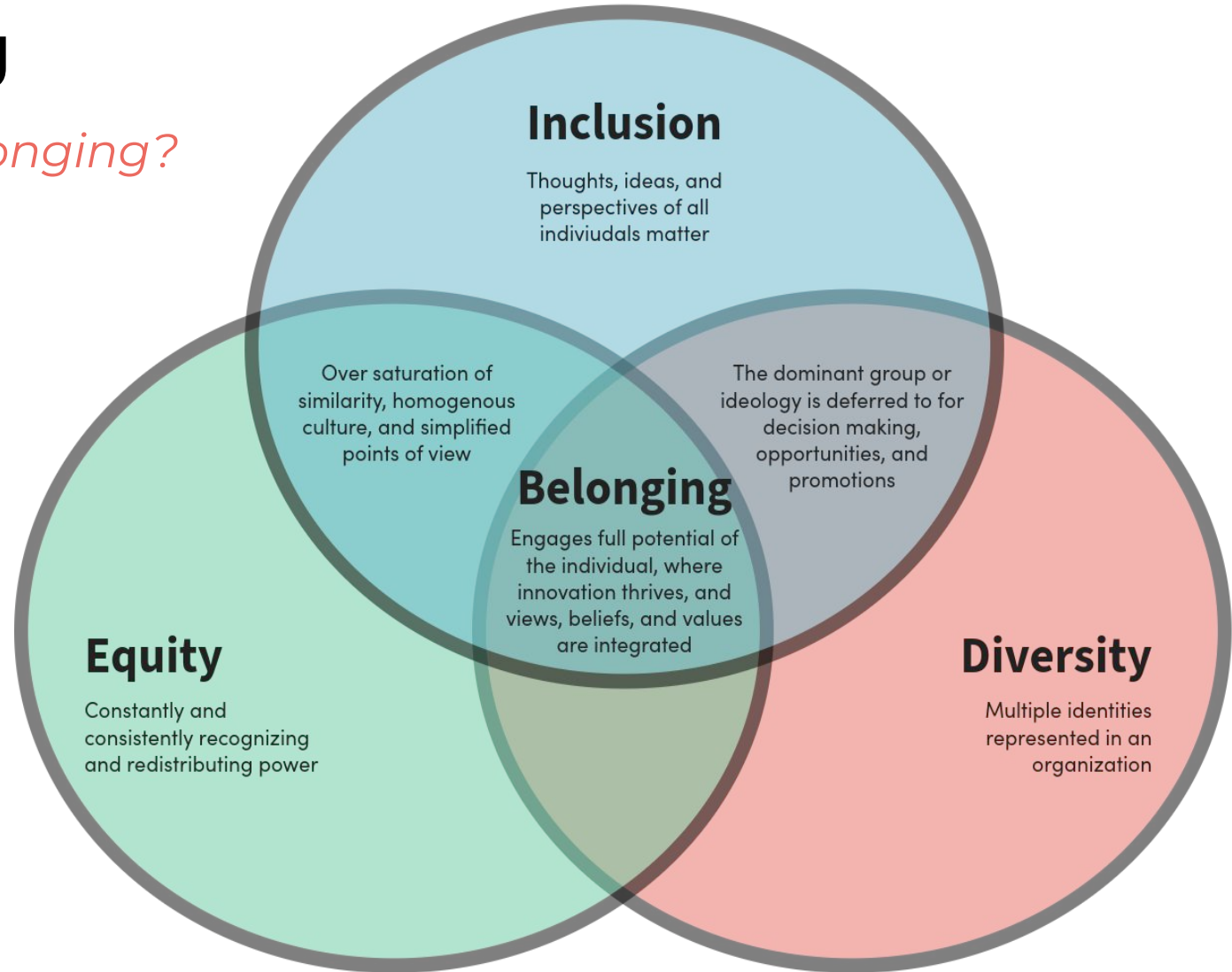
“Bridges are made to be walked on.”

- bell hooks

From Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to Bridging and Belonging

Why move from DEI to Bridging and Belonging?

- We don't want to just welcome people into existing structures
- We want people to **co-create structures and institutions together**
- We want to build systems that are welcoming to all and that everyone has a stake in, where everyone is represented and the **work of bridging happens through co-creation**



Bridging happens not only between individuals, but between groups and institutions as well



- Bridging expands the circle of human concern to build a more inclusive “we”
- Bridging is not same-ing
- Bridging engages power
- It contains multitudes
 - Short vs long
 - Weak vs strong
 - Transactional vs transformational
 - Across elevations

Cracked containers

When there's a crack in the container—when the context in which we live is broken—everyone feels othered and our solutions need to be more radical.



Create new containers where people are valued and connect

- An opportunity to move beyond polarization and toward co-creation.
- Structural belonging requires mutual power, access, and opportunity among all groups and individuals within a shared container (such as a society, organization, club, etc).
- Shared value and/or experience.



Transactional vs Transformational Bridging

Transactional

Coalitions of interest that unite to accomplish a shared goal.

Once the objective is accomplished, the group may dissipate.

Transformational

Relationship across chasms.

Requires healing, deep understanding, a change of mind and heart, and an appreciation for one another's shared humanity.

Power Matters

- Bridging may look different where there is a power differential. Power is positional, structural, and hierarchal.
- People can gain power through *linking* social networks and creating social capital.
 - Individuals can build relationships with institutions and individuals who have relative power to access resources.
- Power also shifts.

Addressing power

- Who has the most power in the room?
- Who has the most space?
- Who has the most authentic voice?
- How is power being used?
- What are each parties' sacred symbols?
- Whose perspectives shape both the “problem” and the “solution”?
- How can leaders reinforce marginalized voices and ideas?
- How can we bridge and link despite power differentials?



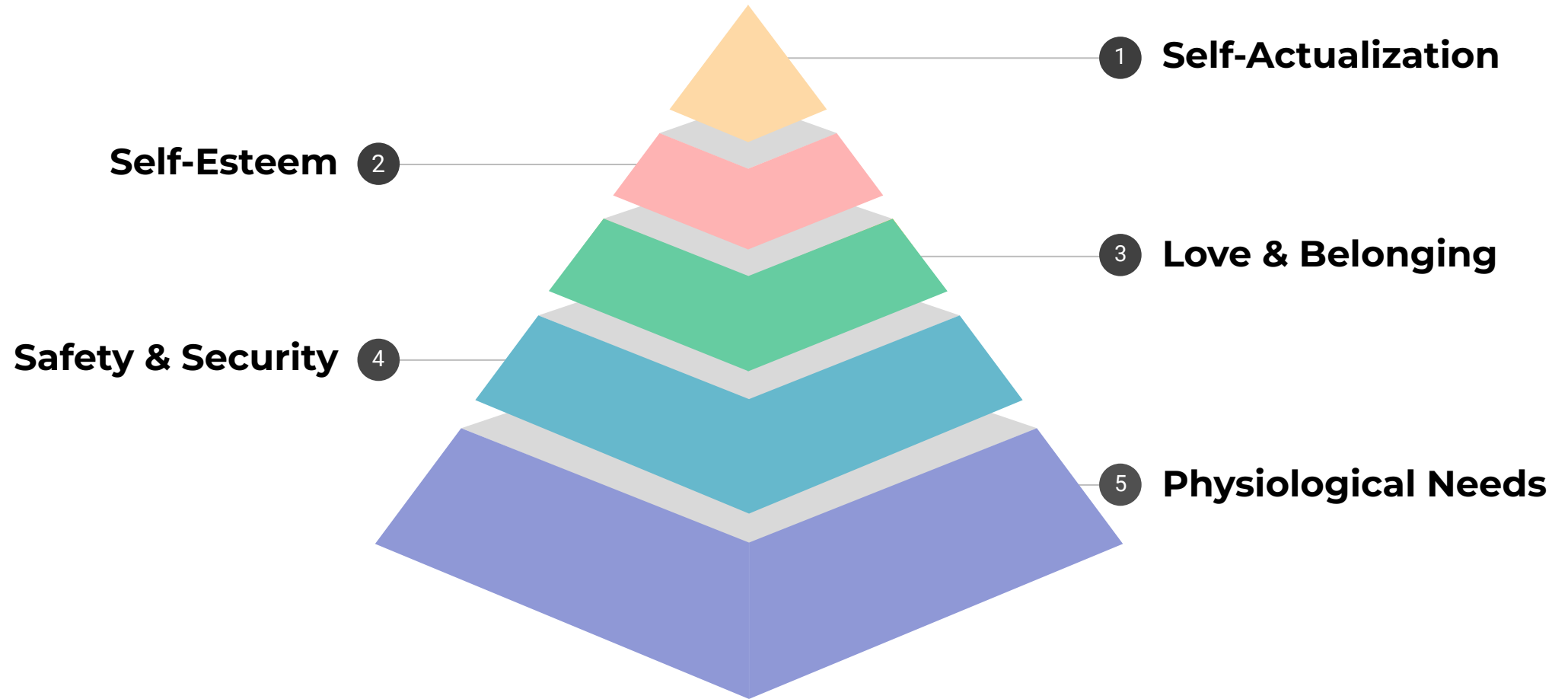
Belonging in academia: Leader's role

Leader attends to the container and the story/value, by establishing

1. **Mission**
2. **Vision**
3. **Values**
4. **Boundaries**
5. **Clear roles**



Maslow's Hierarchy Of Needs

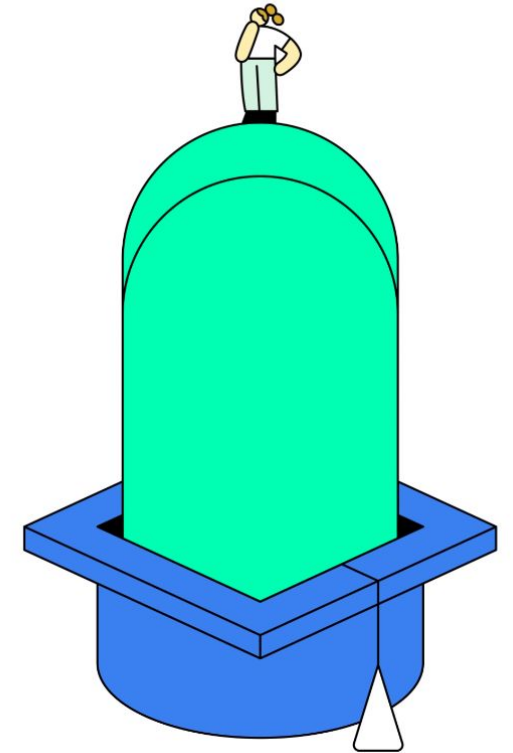


Creating a sense of belonging requires three mutually reinforcing attributes,

1. **Comfort:** *“I am valued for who I am, my background and beliefs. I can bring my authentic self to work.”*
2. **Connection:** *“I am part of something larger than myself. I provide support and am supported by my workplace community.*
3. **Contribution:** *“I add value by bringing unique skills and strengths to meaningfully contribute to shared purpose and goals”*

The importance of belonging: how belonging affects performance

Many studies show that belonging and group identity impacts performance. *There is a direct correlation between students belonging and doubts about their ability to perform well in academic settings.* This doubt creates an incentive to drop out of school, thus continually perpetuating the cycle of “othering” in the nation’s collegiate system.

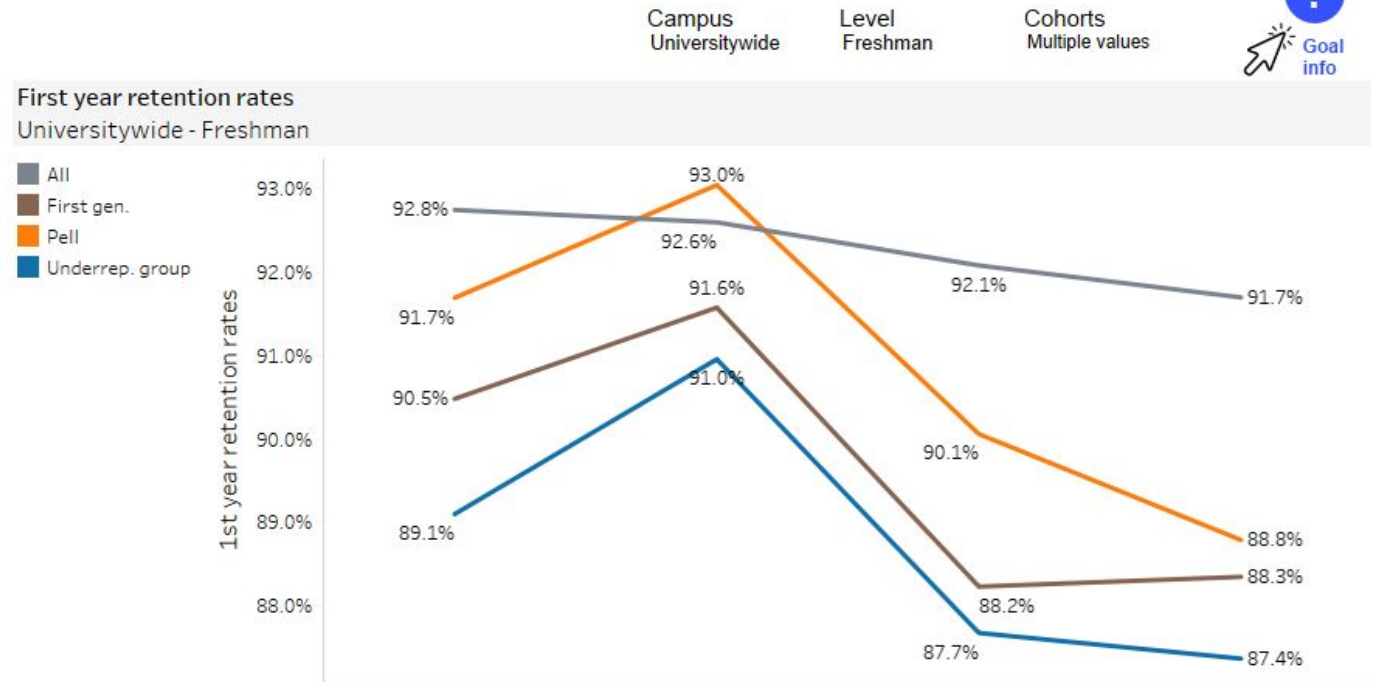


Who Gets to Graduate?

- More than 40 percent of American students who start at four-year colleges haven't earned a degree after six years.
- If you want to help low-income students succeed, it's not enough to deal with their academic and financial obstacles. You also need to address their doubts and misconceptions and fears.

Goal #2 - Increase graduation rates and close equity gaps: Retention rates as an early indicator

In assessing student outcomes, graduation rates are a lagging indicator. First-year retention rates can represent a ceiling of a cohort's eventual graduation rate due to difficulties in getting stopped-out students to return to campus, thereby potentially providing an early signal of future graduation rate trends.



[UC 2030 dashboard | University of California](#)

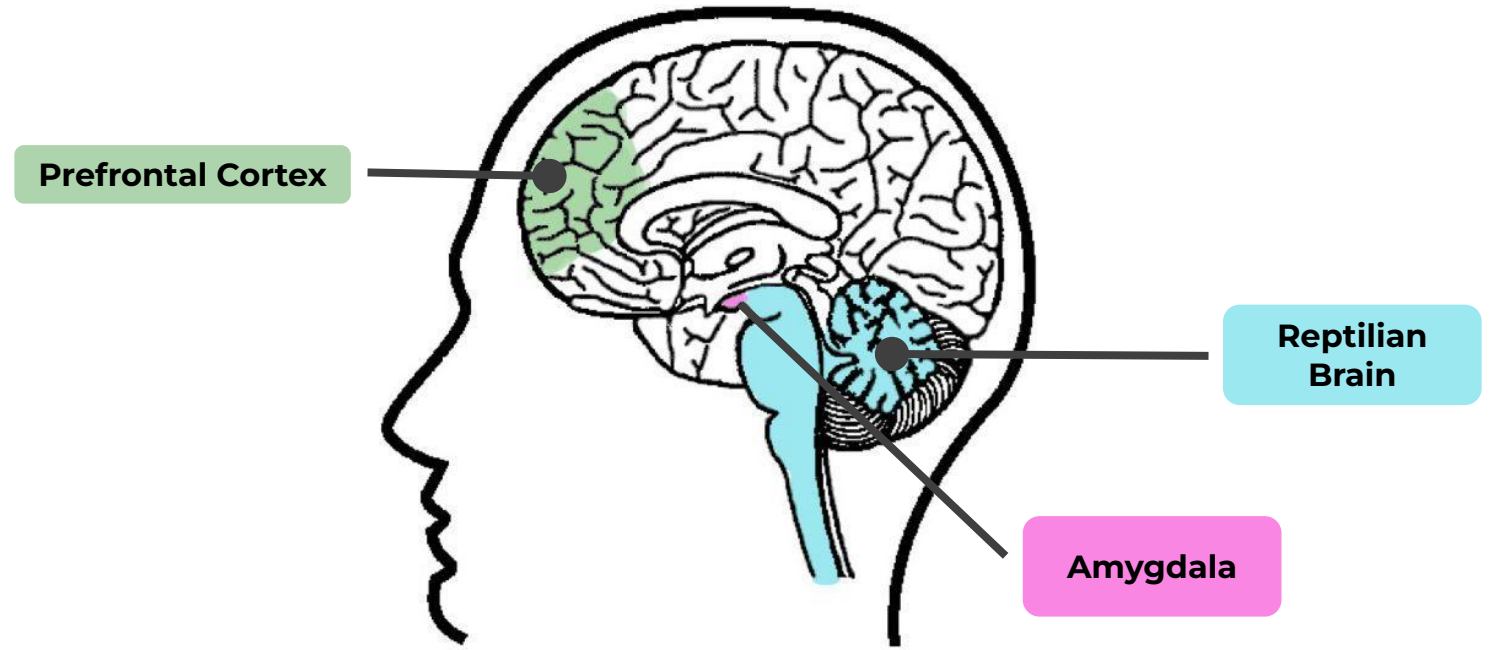
Stories and Narratives

Who's in the stories? Who is left out? Who is telling story? Who is the protagonist/villain? Who is the audience?



How do we expand our circles to include everyone in our stories and narratives?

Who are we talking to?





Can we imagine (build) new structures that honor our multiple fluid identities & belonging?

Who decides? Who benefits? Who pays?

A world where we all belong and no one is othered.

Conclusion



Upcoming Book April 2024

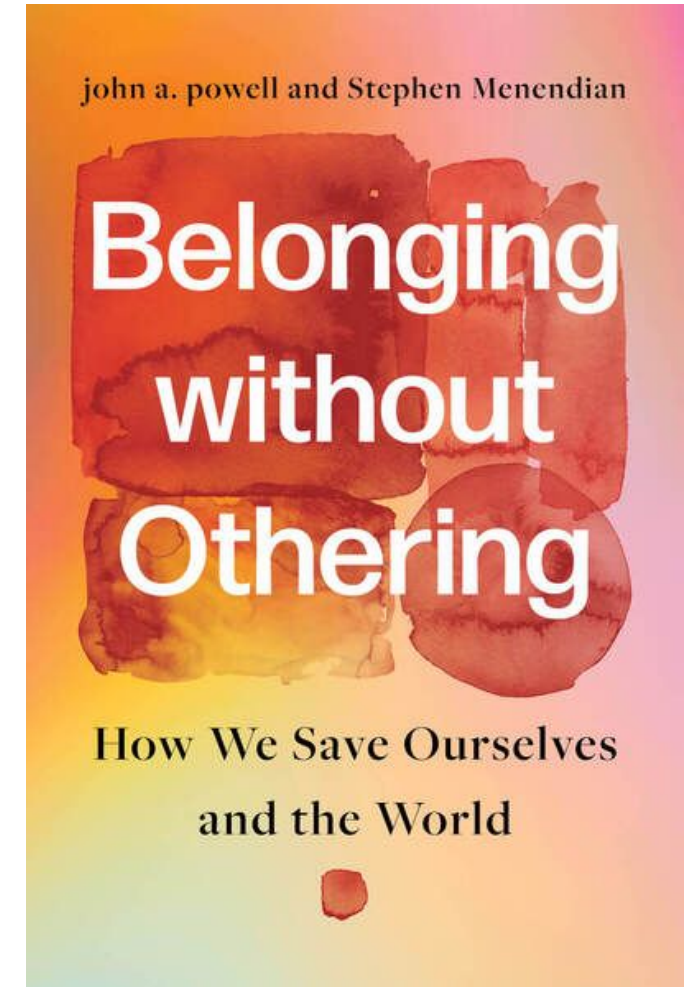
Belonging Without Othering

by john a. powell and Stephen Menendian



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How to tell a new story about national security

More than two years ago we began a project with a handful of partner organizations to rethink the traditional national security narrative which tells us