Overview

Belonging?

Benefits of belonging

Traditional discourses and practices

Eleven ways of experiencing belonging at university

Belonging in SCU College English language programs

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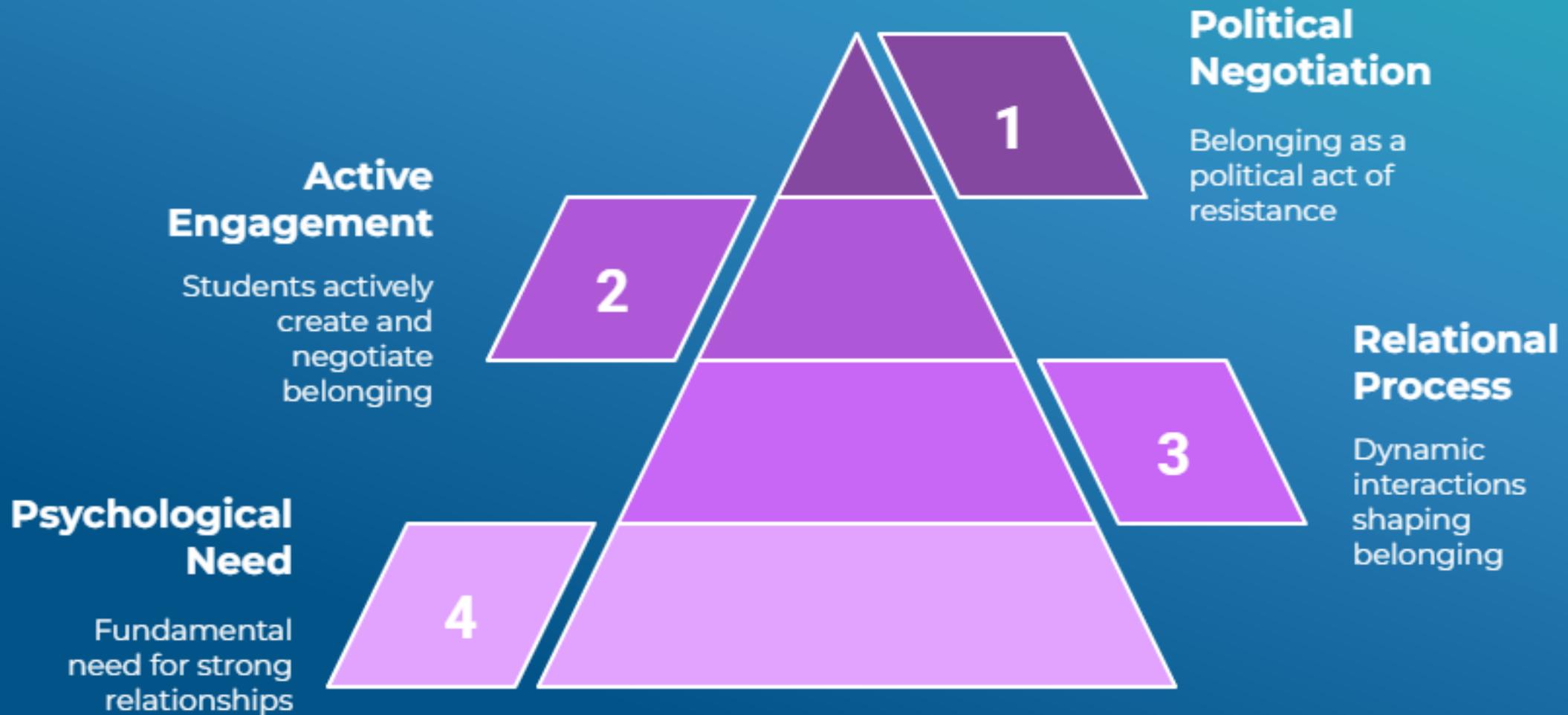
Belonging

Benefits of Belonging at University

Mental Health

Reduces loneliness and isolation

Academic Success

Boosts motivation and focus in studies

Professional Development

Opens doors to career opportunities
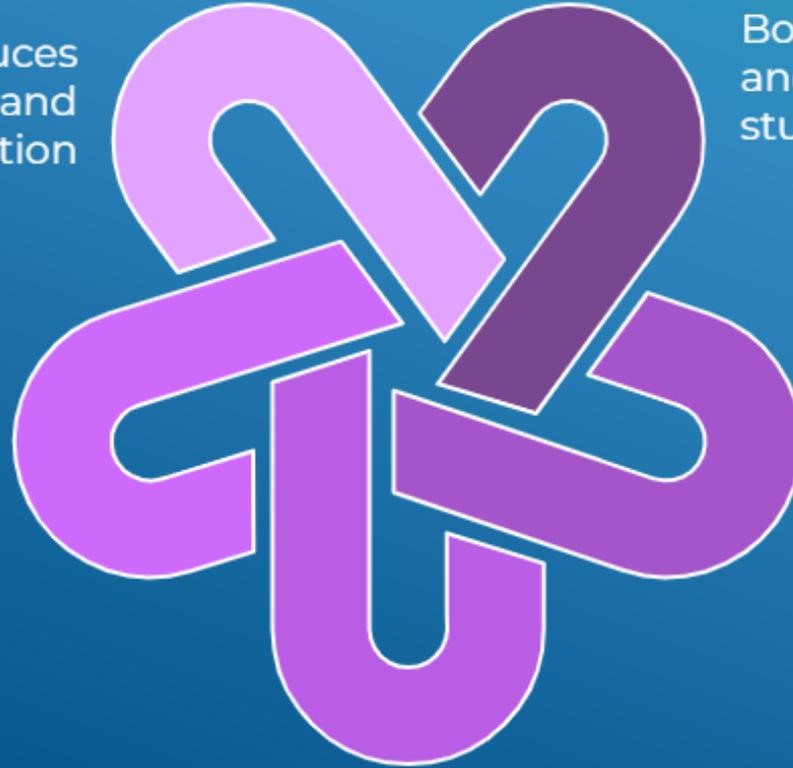
Emotional Well-Being

Reduces stress and provides security

Social Well-Being

Fosters empathy and friendships

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Strategies for Fostering Student Belonging

Support for Vulnerable Groups — Tailored support for specific student populations

Classroom and Academic Interactions — Enhances learning and respect

Social Connection Opportunities — Facilitates interactions and friendships

Positive Campus Environment — Creates a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere

Student Belonging — The ultimate goal of university strategies

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Traditional discourses of belonging

- adopt traditional perspectives of belonging as psychological and individual

- belonging is an internal feeling / fundamental human need (Baumeister and Leary 1995)

- positions achieving belonging as a positive endeavour to be fostered in students, who are typically seen as passive recipients – what can institutions 'do to' students

- linked to students' positive self-perceptions of social acceptance and academic success within the institution (Thomas 2012)

However……..

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Alternate discourse of belonging
(Ajjawi, Gravett and O'Shea 2025)

- fixing and fostering a single, abiding 'sense of belonging' is unhelpful

- traditional discourses of belonging
    - ignore the politics of belonging
    - perpetuate neoliberal cultures
    - place onus of "achieving" belonging on the students
    - risk burdening students – especially international students
        - may lead to students internalising unbelonging as a personal deficit

- It is important to acknowledge
    - the complexity, political dimensions, and multiple ways of experiencing and curating belonging
    - Not-belonging may be a purposeful act

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Eleven ways of experiencing belonging at university
(Source: www. www.belongingtouniversity.co.uk)

I. BELONGING AS CURATORSHIP

II. BELONGING AS SAFETY

III. BELONGING AS PURPOSEFUL, ABOUT CONTRIBUTING

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Eleven ways of experiencing belonging at university
(Source: www. www.belongingtouniversity.co.uk)

IV. NON BELONGING
AS AN ACTIVE CHOICE

V. BELONGING
AS FLICKERING AND MULTIPLE

VI. BELONGING
AS A FEELING OF
BEING PART OF SOMETHING LARGER

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Eleven ways of experiencing belonging at university
(Source: www. www.belongingtouniversity.co.uk)

VII. BELONGING

AS AN EXCITEMENT;
AN ENERGY ABOUT LEARNING

VIII. BELONGING

AS MICRO-MOMENTS

IX. BELONGING

AS FLEXIBILITY

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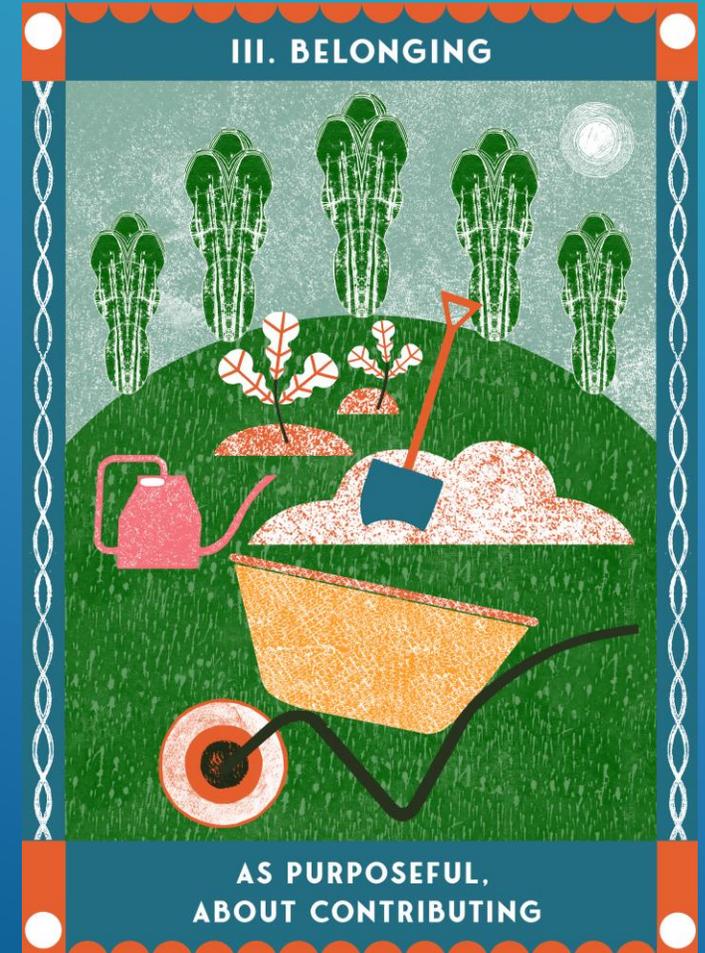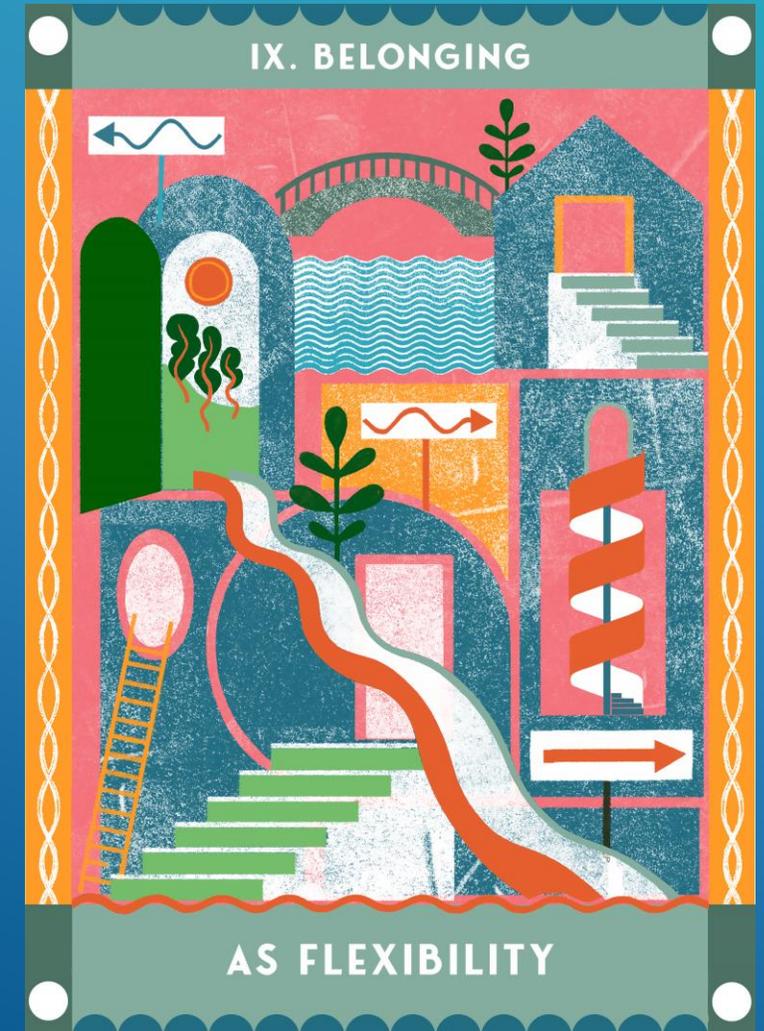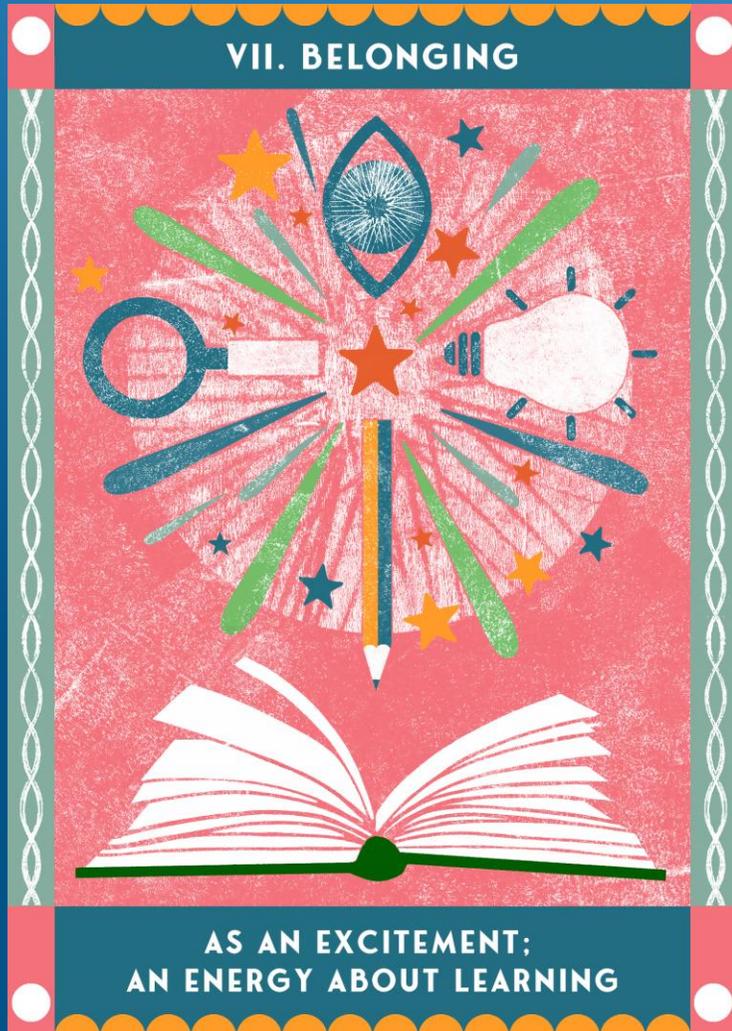
Eleven ways of experiencing belonging at university
(Source: www. www.belongingtouniversity.co.uk)

Belonging in our university English language centre

- Encourage students to create study spaces and habits in preparation for their principle course of study (Belonging as Curatorship)
- Facilitate learning activities across the wider university campus – Library, other teaching spaces, student plaza (Belonging as Safety)
- Actively promote volunteering opportunities within and beyond the university (Belonging as purposeful, about contributing)
- Encourage student agency in making choices about belonging (Belonging as an active choice: as flexibility)
- Embed content around growth mindset, personal growth and being a member of the academic community (Belonging as part of something larger)
- Active teaching and learning strategies designed to engage learners (Belonging as an excitement)
- Facilitate early connections with future subject disciplines - networking opportunities, faculty talks and orientations (Belonging as academic discipline)

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Belonging is…

complex
fluid
experienced and curated
political

not-belonging may be a purposeful act

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