Belonging

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Belonging

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A feeling that one belongs socially; that one is accepted and valued by others.

It involves NOT feeling rejected or fearful of rejection and NOT feeling lonely.

Baumeister, R. F. & Leary, M.R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin, 117*, 497-529.

As of today this paper has received 26,481 citations
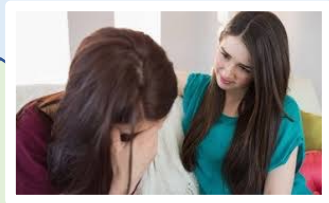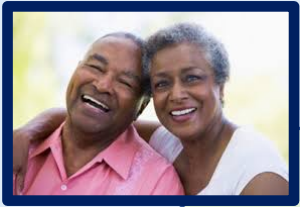
What did they say?

FAMILY

BELONGING I

Establishing Mutually Caring, Communal, Highly Interdependent Relationships

ROMANTI PARTNERS

FRIENDS

COMMUNAL RELATIONSHIPS

FELT BELONGING/ACCEPTANCE
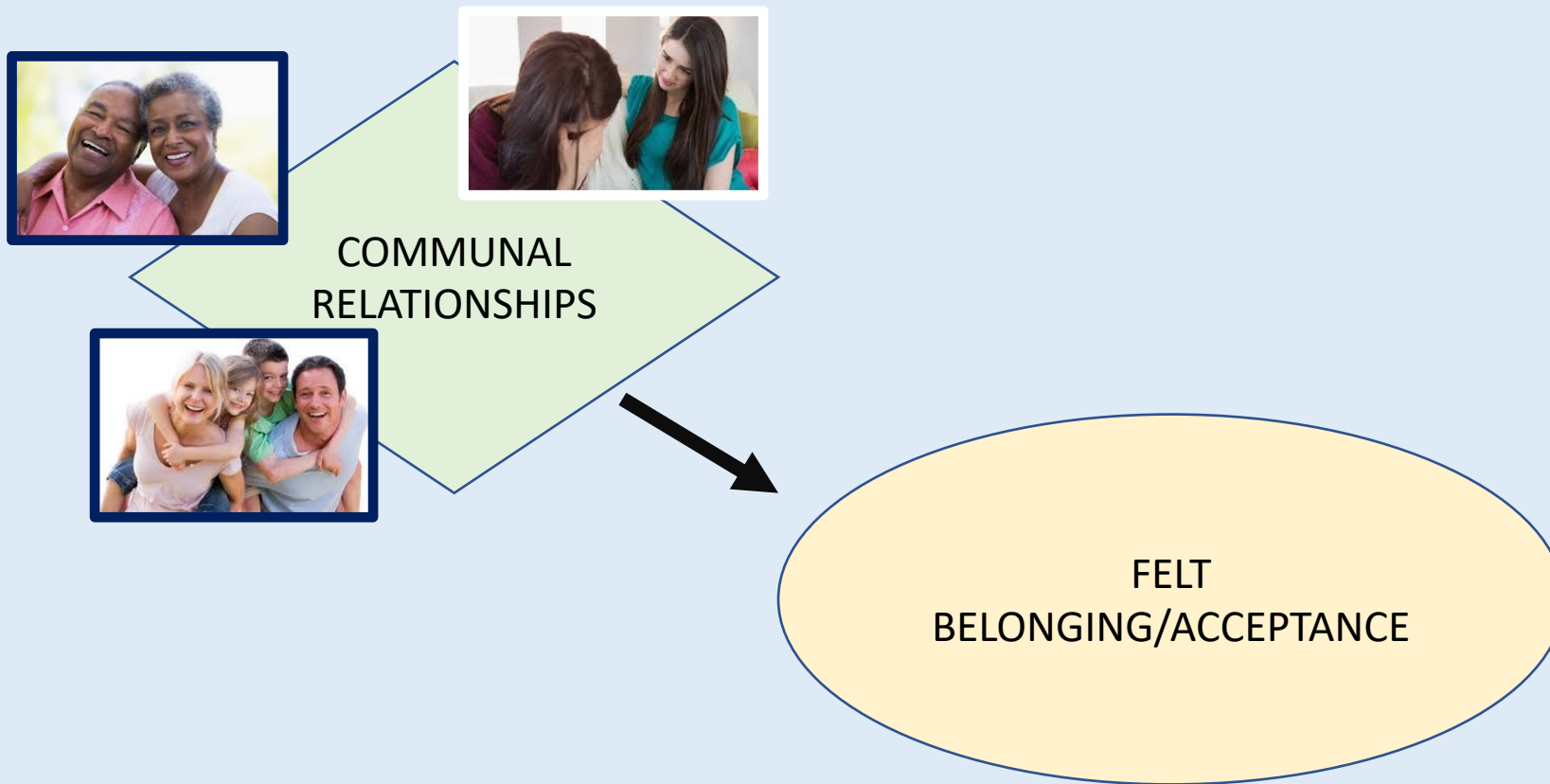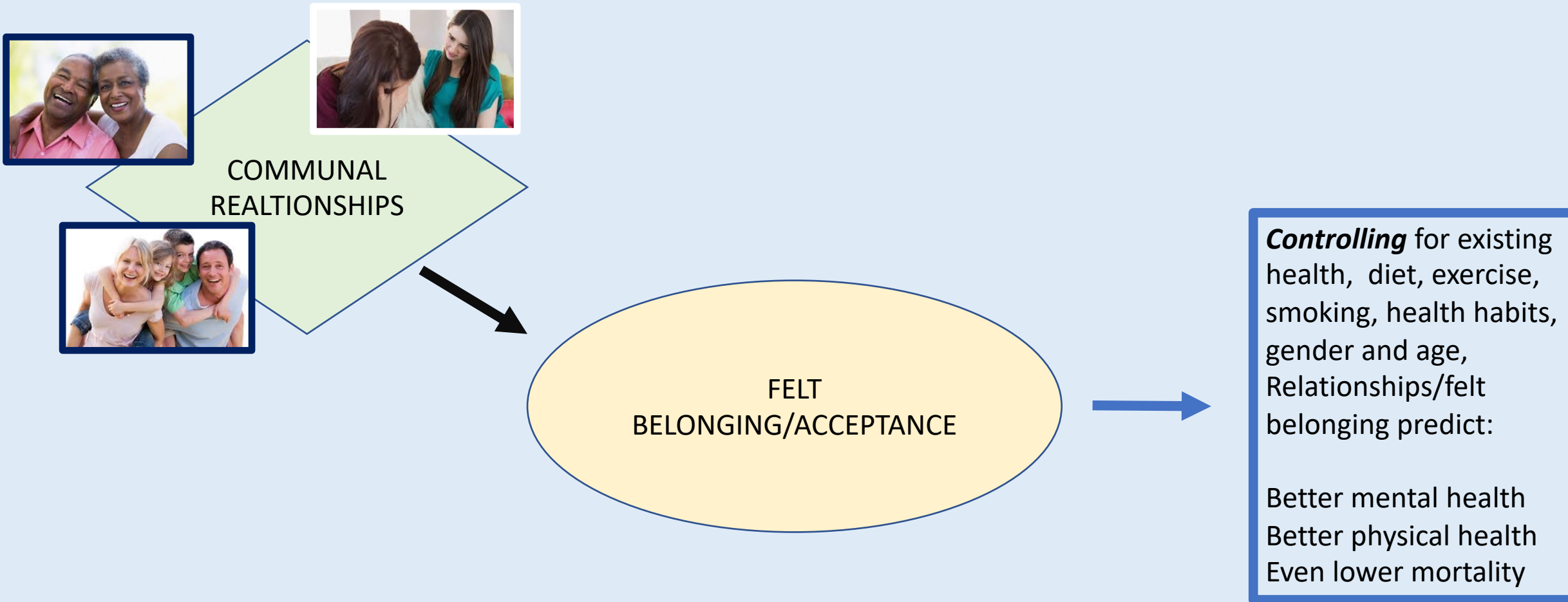
COMMUNAL
RELATIONSHIPS

FELT
BELONGING/ACCEPTANCE

COMMUNAL RELATIONSHIPS: Cooperative relationships in which people assume responsibility for one another's welfare and support and encourage one another *non-contingently*. They are often (but not always!) exemplified by friendships, romantic relationships, and family relationships.

COMMUNAL REALTIONSHIPS

FELT BELONGING/ACCEPTANCE

Controlling for existing health, diet, exercise, smoking, health habits, gender and age, Relationships/felt belonging predict:

Better mental health
Better physical health
Even lower mortality

COMMUNAL RELATIONSHIPS: Cooperative relationships in which people assume responsibility for one another's welfare and support and encourage one another *non-contingently*.

Jennifer Hirsch

Hirsch, J. & Clark, M.S. (2019). Four paths to belonging that we should study together. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 14(2), 238-255.*
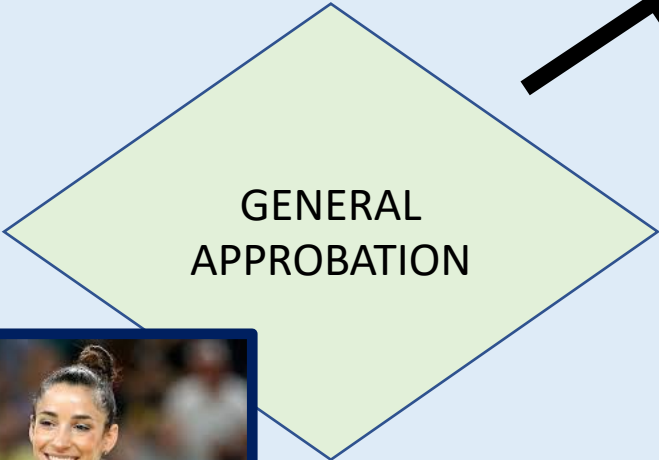
BELONGING II: Presenting oneself to the (wider) social world in such a way as to gain general approbation.
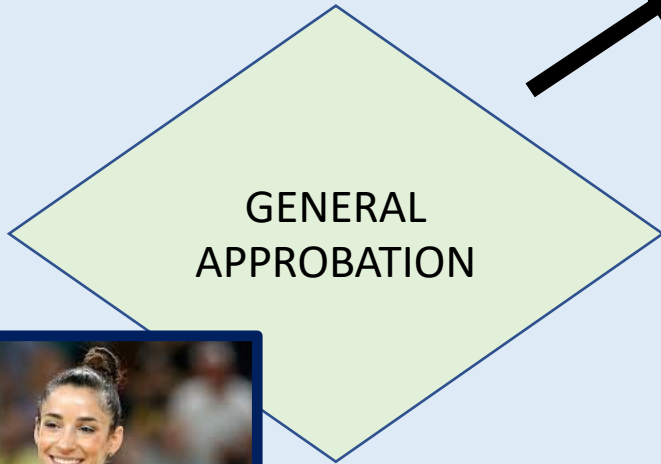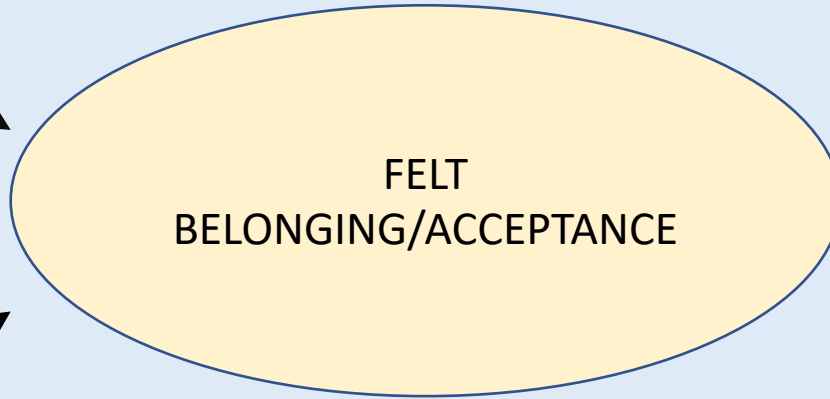
COMMUNAL RELATIONSHIPS

GENERAL APPROBATION

FELT BELONGING/ACCEPTANCE

Getting all A's

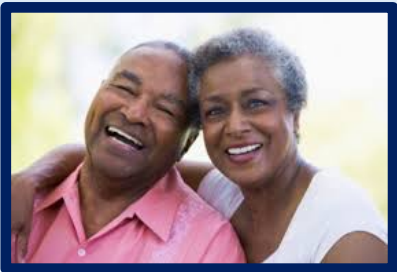Winning athletic competitions

Being seem with the "right" people.

Having the right (admired) possessions.

Physical beauty

BELONGING III: BEING A MEMBER OF GROUPS

COMMUNAL RELATIONSHIPS

GROUP MEMBERSHIP

FELT BELONGING/ACCEPTANCE

GENERAL APPROBATION
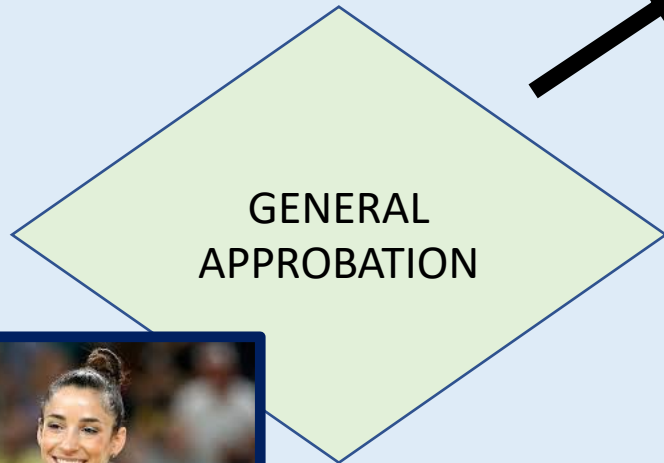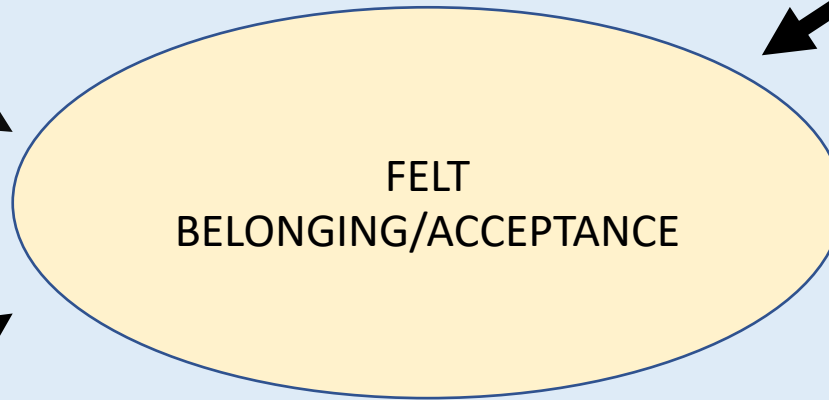
Being a member of a club

Being a member of an athletic team

Feeling one is a member of a group by being in the majority (in terms of race, socioeconomic status or whatever)

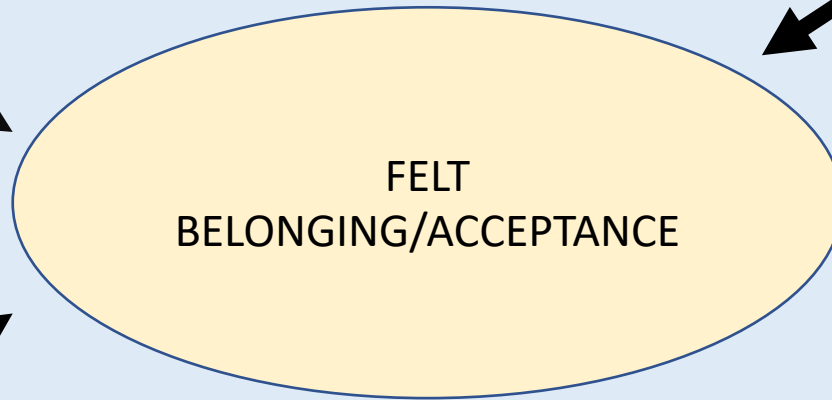# BELONGING IV: MINOR SOCIAL (PLEASANT) DAILY INTERACTIONs

COMMUNAL REALTIONSHIPS

GROUP MEMBERSHIP

FELT BELONGING/ACCEPTANCE
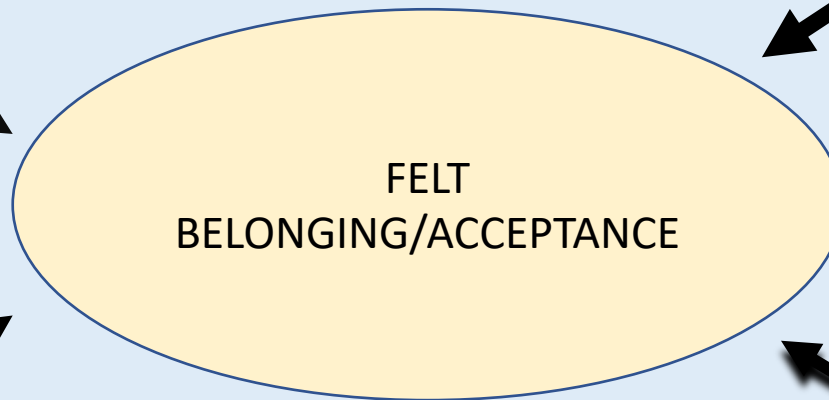
GENERAL APPROBATION

MINOR SOCIAL INTERACTIONS
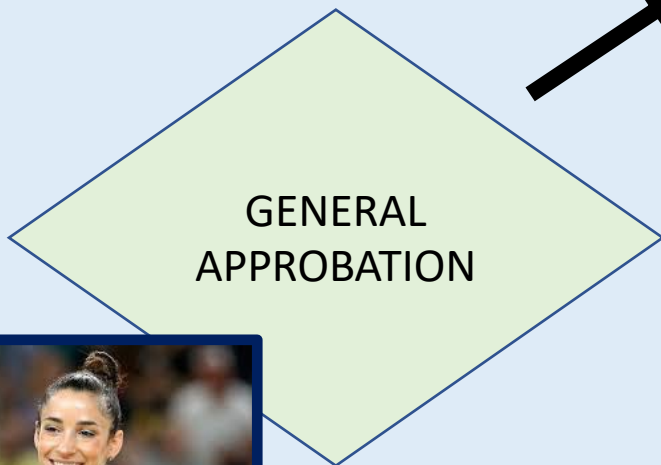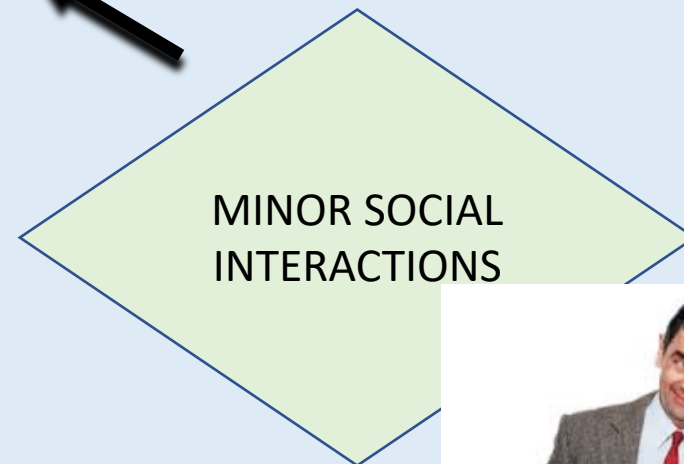
Shira Gabriel, SUNY: Buffalo

BELONGING V: ENGAGING IN FICTIONAL WORLDS
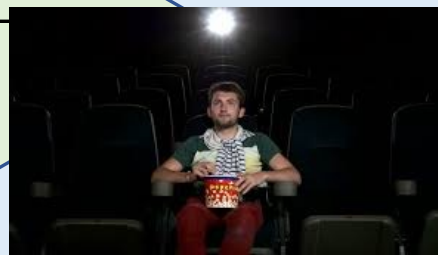
They <u>all</u>:

- Seem to be driven by a felt need to belong.
- They all appear to work (that is to increase a sense of belonging) at least in the moment.

Some now think of belonging using a gas tank analogy

BUT IS IT REALLY THIS SIMPLE?

Friends, Family

Achievement

Groups

Pleasant Interactions

Watching TV; Reading

E

F
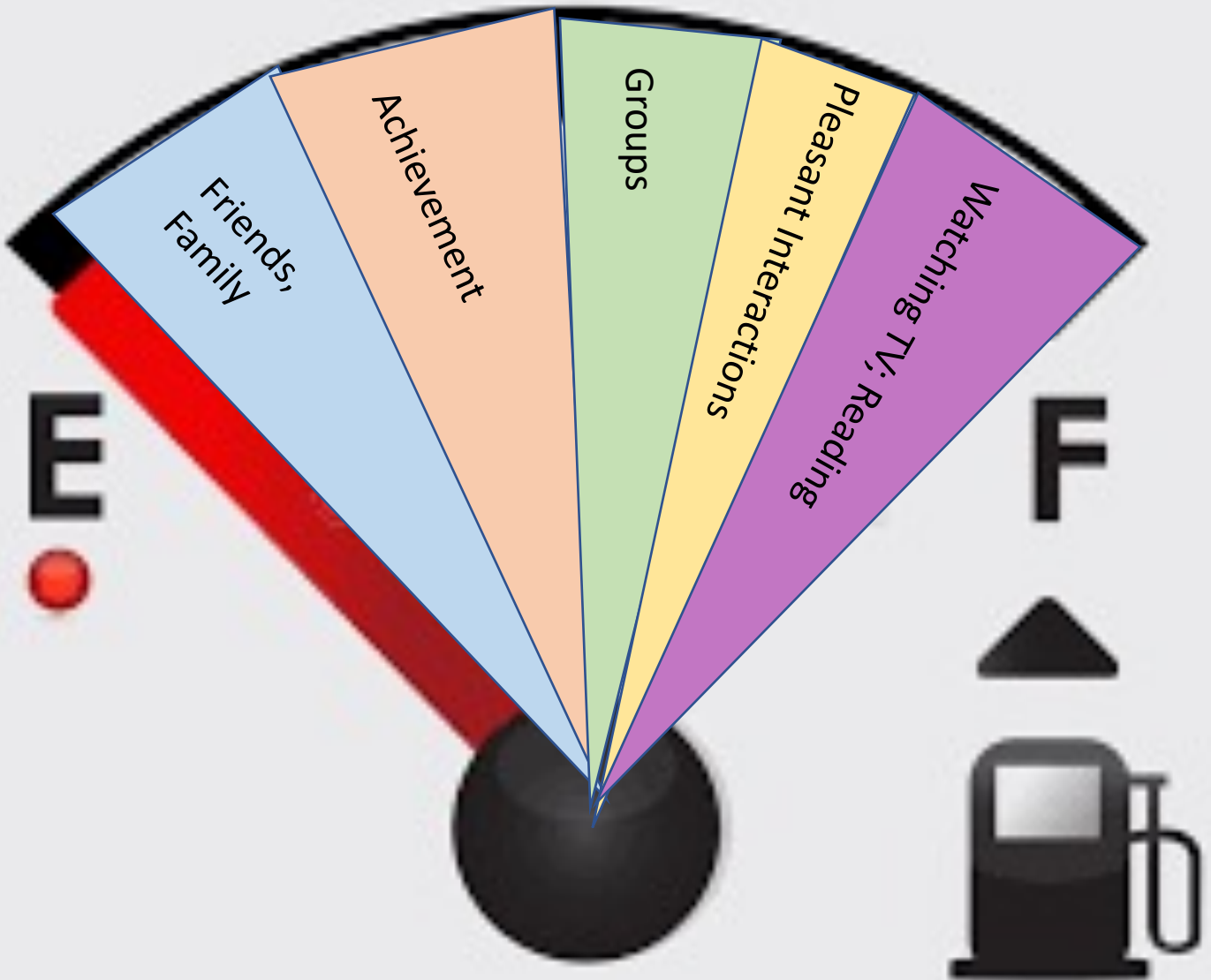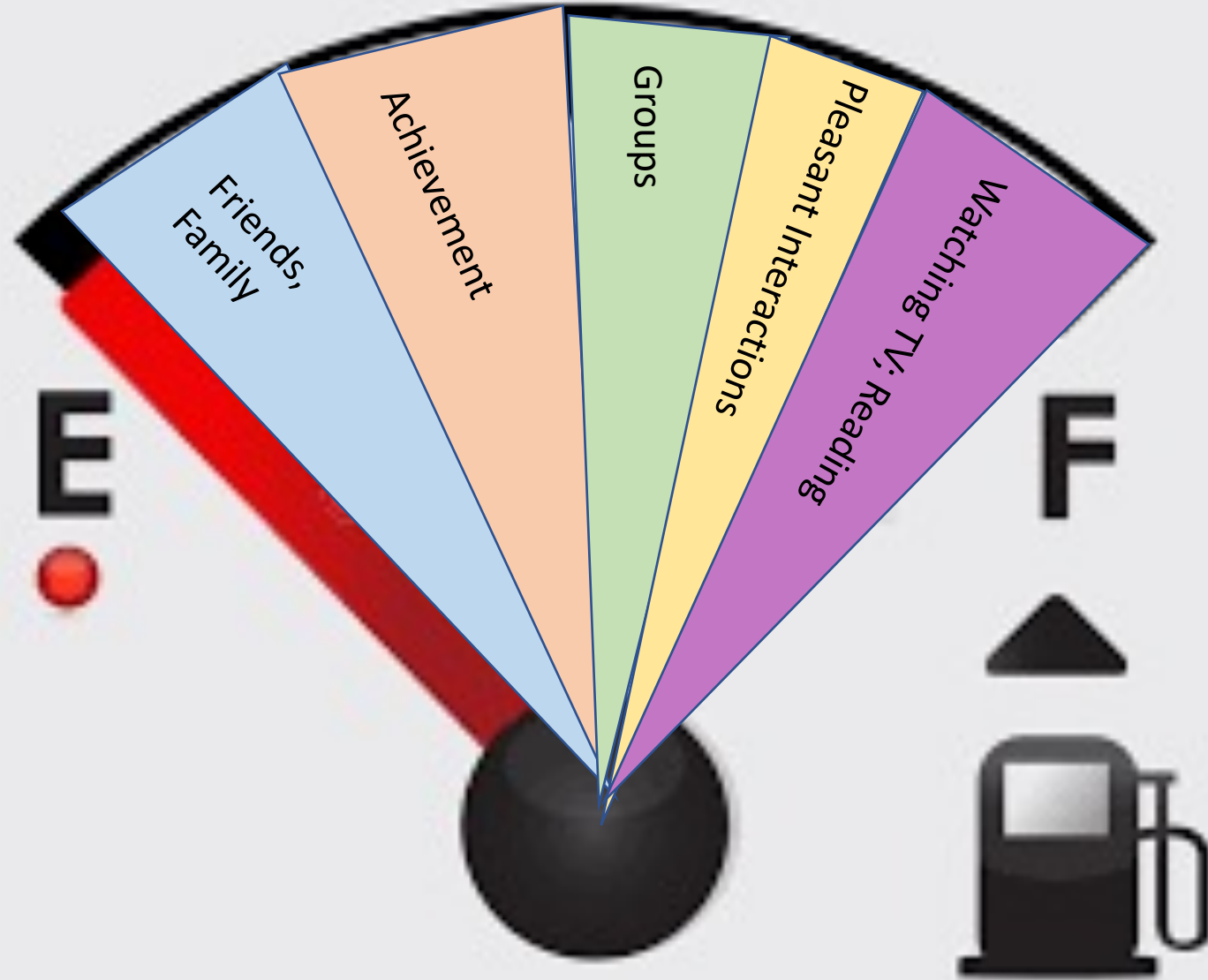
BUT IS IT REALLY THIS SIMPLE? NO
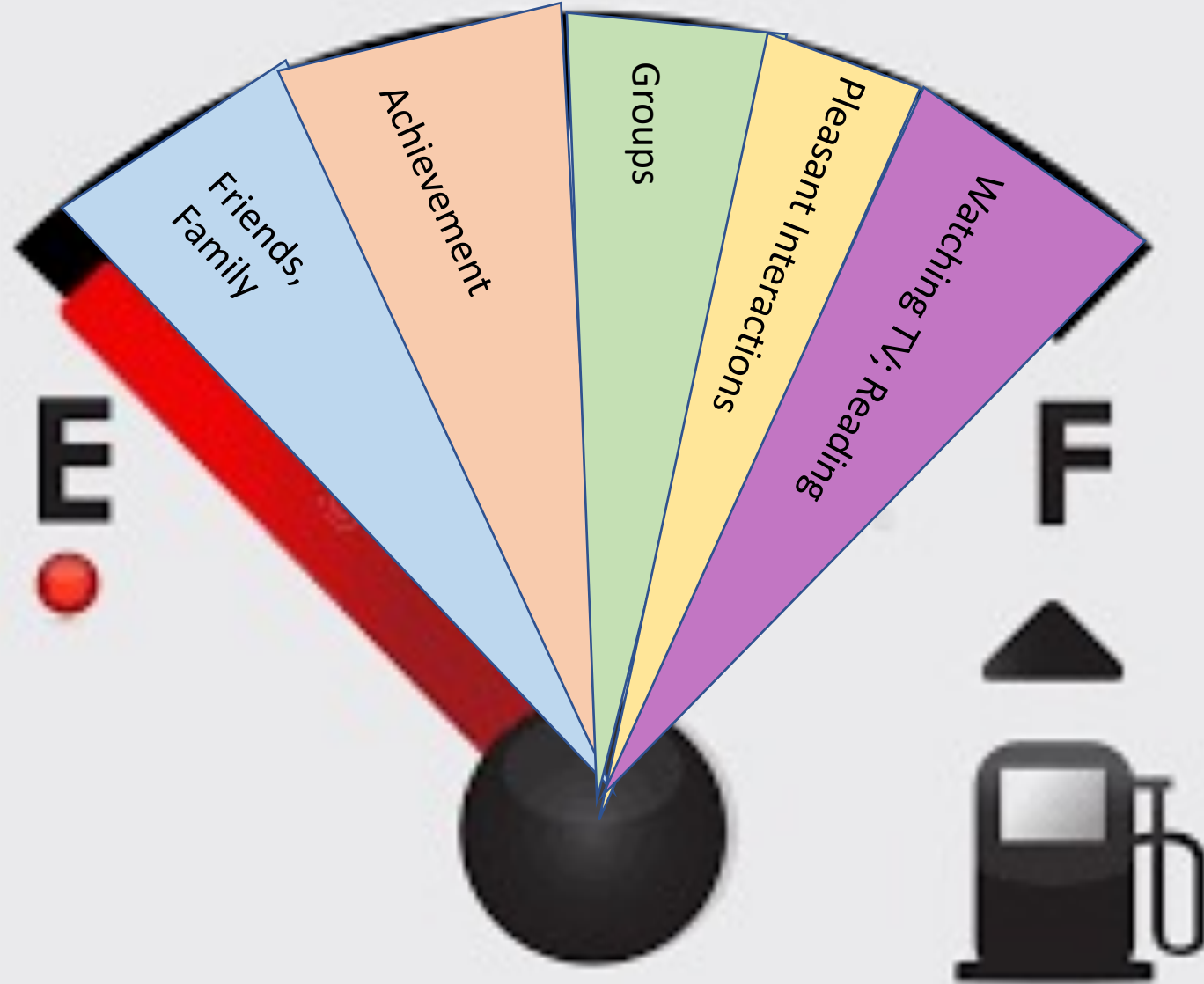
How one strives to belong matters.

What combination of ways one uses when striving to belong matters.

How one strives to belong matters

Three studies of pursuing belonging in two ways: Close relationships and General Approbation

ABBY HOPKINS (Studies 1 & 2)

YASMIN ALAMDEEN (Study 3)

Measuring Need to Belong.

- I have a strong "need to belong".
- I want other people to accept me.
- I do not like being alone.
- If other people don't seem to accept me, I don't let it bother me.

- *No 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Yes*

Measuring Achieved Belonging

- I feel accepted by others.
- I have a sense of belonging.
- I feel connected with others.
- I feel like an outsider. (reversed)

- *No   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Yes*

Measuring striving to belong in different ways

- STRIVING FOR CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS (FRIENDS & FAMILY)
- I often seek out my close others for support.   I often provide support to others. I try to just spend time with friends.

- STRIVING FOR APPROBATION (FAME & FORTUNE)
- I always want others to be impressed with me. I focus on getting good grades and awards.   I want the others I spend time with to reflect positively on me.

MEASURES OF STRIVING TO BELONG THROUGH:

	RELATIONSHIPS	APPROBATION
NEED TO BELONG		
ACHIEVED BELONGING		

QUESTION : How closely linked is each variable to need to belong and to achieved belonging?

IN THE NEXT SLIDE POSITIVE NUMBERS (CORRELATIONS) INDICATE THE ONE VARIABLE POSITIVELY PREDICTS THE OTHER. NEGATIVE NUMBERS INDICATE THAT THE TWO VARIABLES ARE NEGATIVELY LINKED.

STRIVING TO BELONG THROUGH

RELATIONSHIPS   APPROBATION

FEELING A NEED TO BELONG   #1 +.19   #2 +.35   #1 +.65   #2 +.24

HAVING ACHIEVED BELONGING

Question : How closely linked is high need to belong with striving for close relationships and striving for approbation?

Answer: Need to belong positively predicts both types of striving and the link with striving for approbation is especially strong.

STRIVING FOR

	C. RELATIONSHIPS	APPROBATION
NEED TO BELONG	#1 +.19 #2 +.35	#1 +.65 #2 +.24
ACHIEVED BELONGING	#1 +.45 #2 +.69	

ANOTHER FINDING: Striving to promote close relationships is linked to achieving a sense of belonging.

STRIVING FOR

	C. RELATIONSHIPS	APPROBATION
NEED TO BELONG	#1 +.19 #2 +.35	#1 +.65 #2 +.24
ACHIEVED BELONGING	#1 +.45 #2 +.69	#1 -.37 #2 -.24

BUT: Striving for approbation (fame and fortune) is actually NEGATIVELY linked
to achieving a sense of belonging.

And another (somewhat more sophisticated) study to get at causality, does day-to-day striving result in a sense of achieved belonging?
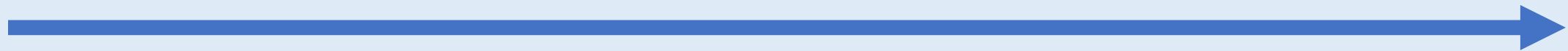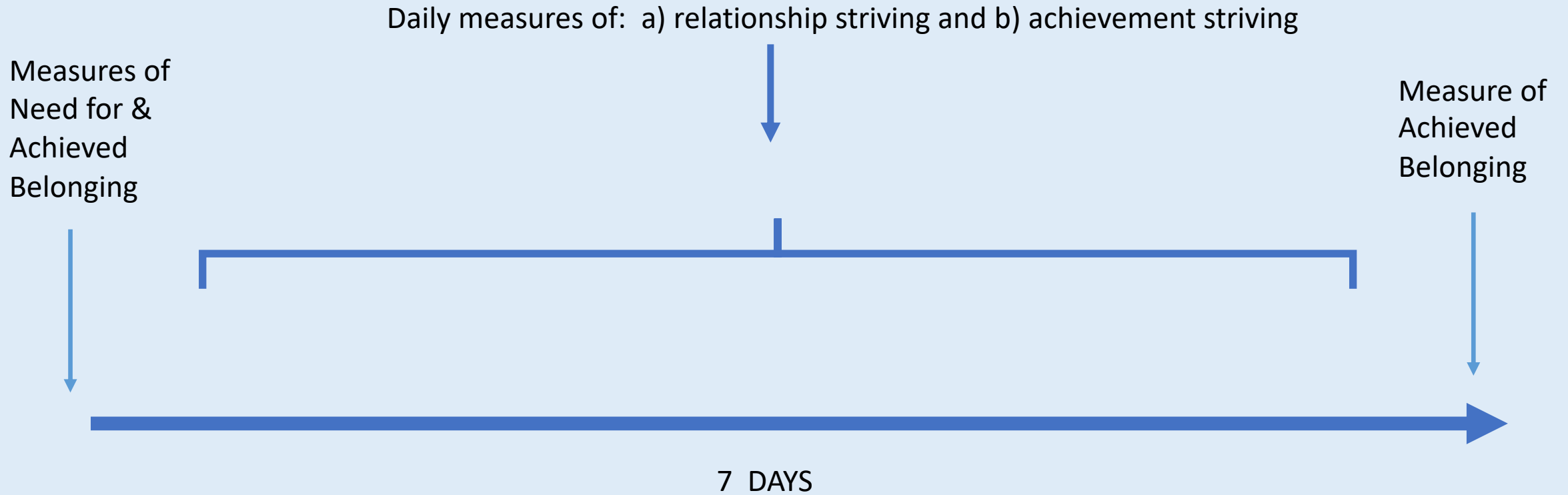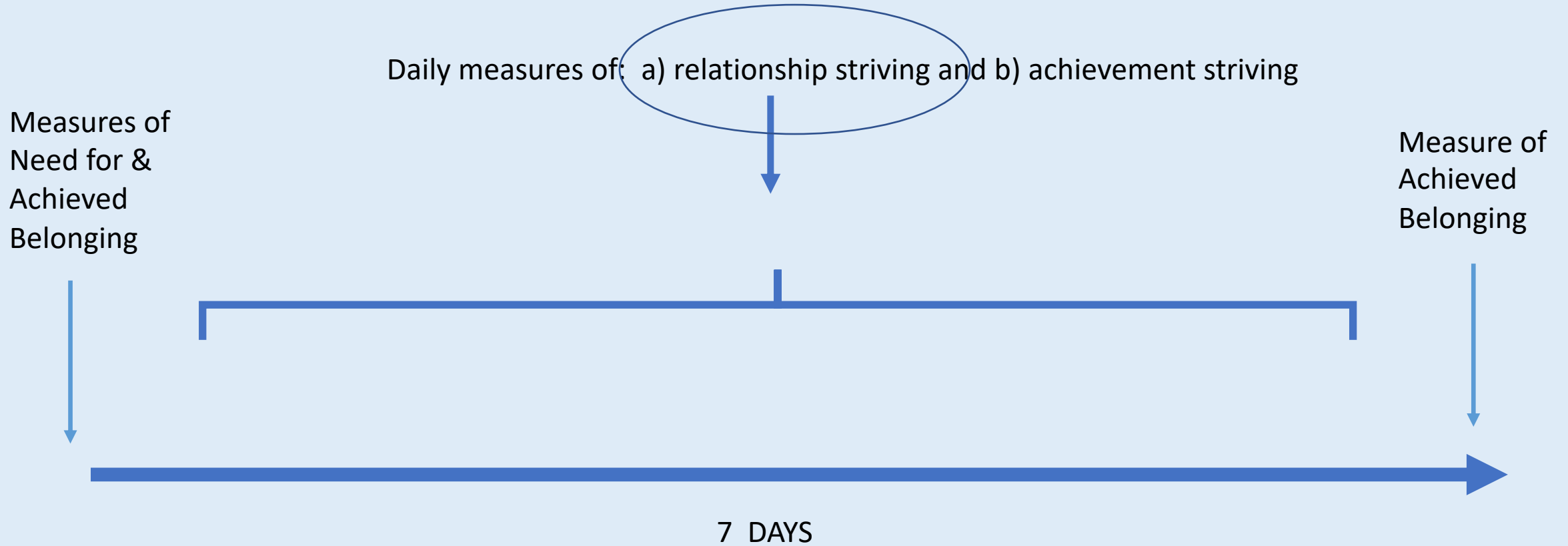
7 DAYS

Study 3:

Daily measures of: a) relationship striving and b) achievement striving

Measures of
Need for &
Achieved
Belonging

Measure of
Achieved
Belonging

7 DAYS

Study 3:

Daily measures of: a) relationship striving and b) achievement striving

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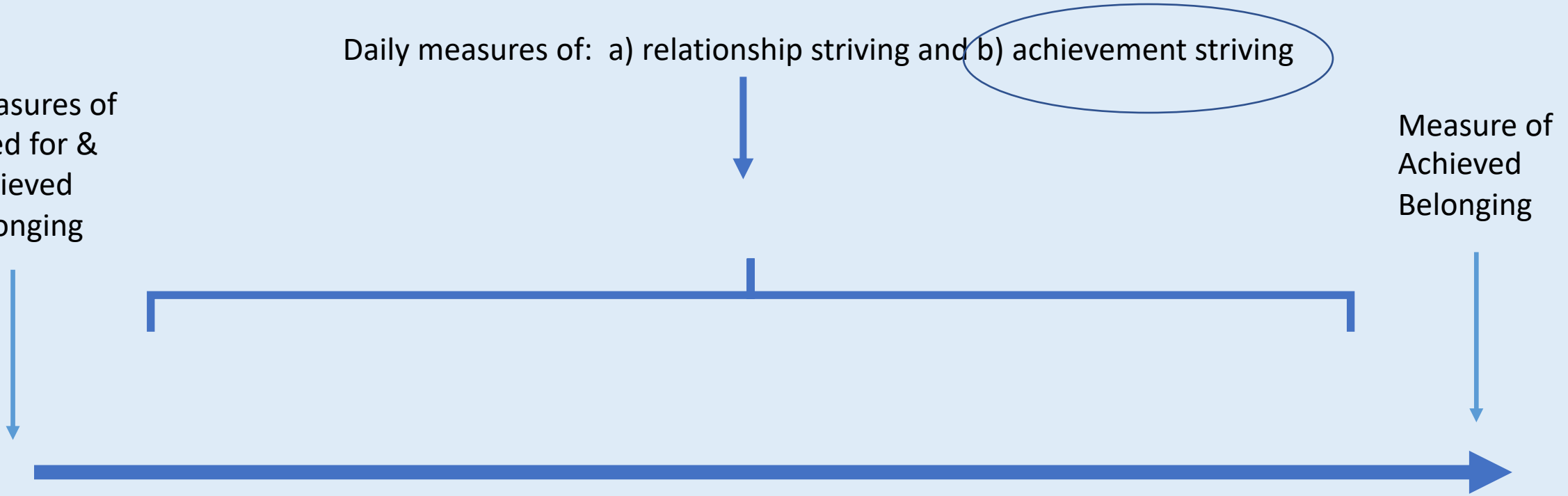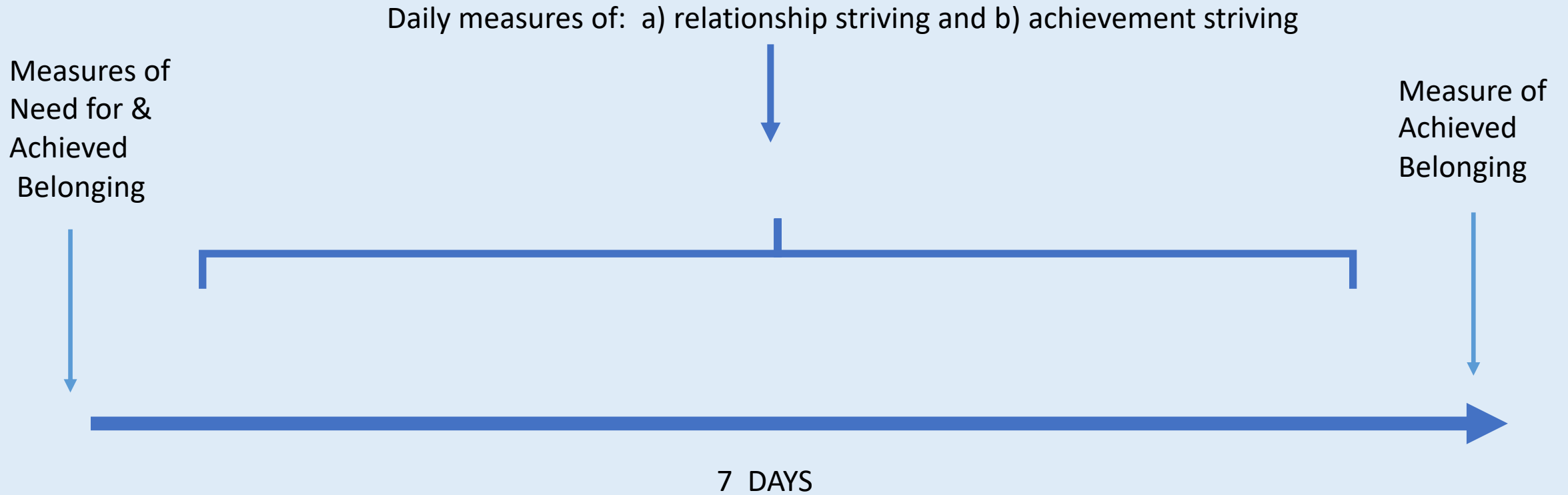
QUESTION: OVER THE COURSE OF ONE WEEK HOW DOES EACH TYPE OF STRIVING INFLUENCE THE *CHANGE* IN A SENSE OF ACHIEVED BELONGING?

Findings:

- #1. Striving to belong through forming, maintaining, or strengthening close relationships during that week led to jumps in a sense of achieved belonging from the beginning of the week to the end.

- #2. Striving to belong through achievements had no impact on changes in achieved belonging across the week.

And, another question: Can striving to belong in one way *interfere* with striving in another way?

- Since we know that forming mutually supportive relationships works to achieve belonging, we have become interested in whether other ways of striving to belong in other ways interferes with that.

Perhaps the simplest way interference might occur is through occupying time.

- For instanc, if you spend all day watching television (engaging in fictional worlds), you don't have time for friends and family.

BUT WE STUDIED SOMETHING A BIT DIFFERENT.

Jennifer Hirsch

Our speculation: Seeking general approbation will interfere with close relationships

l.   In part due to time limitations

BUT ALSO

2.   Due to competition with one's peers. (Competition, if one wins promotes feelings of accomplishment but if one competes with peers it can interfere with forming and maintaining close relationships.).

- We know how we're doing (accomplishment wise) largely by social comparison.
- If I focus on accomplishments when peer succeeds (instead of me) I will feel bad and when they fail (instead of me) I will feel good.
- If a focus on relationship building a peer succeeds I should be happy for them and celebrate; when they fail I should feel empathic distress and provide support.

Study 4

- Procedure
- We measured individual differences in ways of striving to belong.

Sample Pathway Items

Mutually Caring

- I am the type of person who works to understand and validate my close others

- I think of myself as someone who depends upon my close others for support

Seeking Approbation

- My sense of self is easily pushed around by how my close others are doing in life relative to how I am doing in life

- I want my close others to make me look good

- (NOTE: People could be: high on both, low on both, high on one & low on the other or middling on either or both.)

Study 4

- Procedure
- We measured individual differences in ways of striving to belong.
- Then we had our participants (all students) pick a particular friend and vividly imagine them succeeding on an academic test (getting a very good grade) or failing (getting a very poor grade).
- Finally, we asked how they felt right then (after imagining that.)

   How happy, excited, proud, sad and angry did they feel?

First, how did they feel after thinking about a friend succeeding?

Regression analyses for predicting emotion reactions after a close other succeeds using the pathways to belonging scales and adjusting for self-esteem and personal importance of event

Reaction	Mutually Caring	General Approbation
	β	β
Happy	.29*	
Excited	.26*	
Proud	.26*	
Sad	-.15*	
Angry	-.14*	

*p < .05

Regression analyses for predicting emotion reactions after a close other succeeds using the pathways to belonging scales and adjusting for self-esteem and personal importance of event

Reaction	Mutually Caring	General Approbation
	β	β
Happy	.29*	-.11*
Excited	.26*	n.s.
Proud	.26*	n.s.
Sad	-.15*	.23*
Angry	-.14*	.22*

*p < .05

Second, how did they feel after thinking about a friend failing?

Regression analyses for predicting emotion reactions after a close other fails using the pathways to belonging scales and adjusting for self-esteem and personal importance of event

Reaction	Mutually Caring β	General Approbation β
Happy	-.17*	
Excited	-.16*	
Proud	n.s.	
Sad	.44*	
Angry	n.s.	

*p < .05

Regression analyses for predicting emotion reactions after a close other fails using the pathways to belonging scales and adjusting for self-esteem and personal importance of event

Reaction	Mutually Caring β	Presentational β
Happy	-.17*	.18*
Excited	-.16*	n.s.
Proud	n.s.	n.s.
Sad	.44*	n.s.
Angry	n.s.	.34*

*p < .05

I'LL STOP HERE WITH THESE SUMMARY POINTS:

We are social creatures who need to belong to survive and to thrive.

Our need to belong drives at least five different types of behavior.

They all appear to work in the moment but having supportive relationships may be the most effective and enduring pathway to belonging.

Striving to belong in some ways may interfere with achieving belonging in other ways.

QUESTIONS? THOUGHTS?