

# The Relationship Between Group Identification And Wellbeing in Students



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Division of Psychology

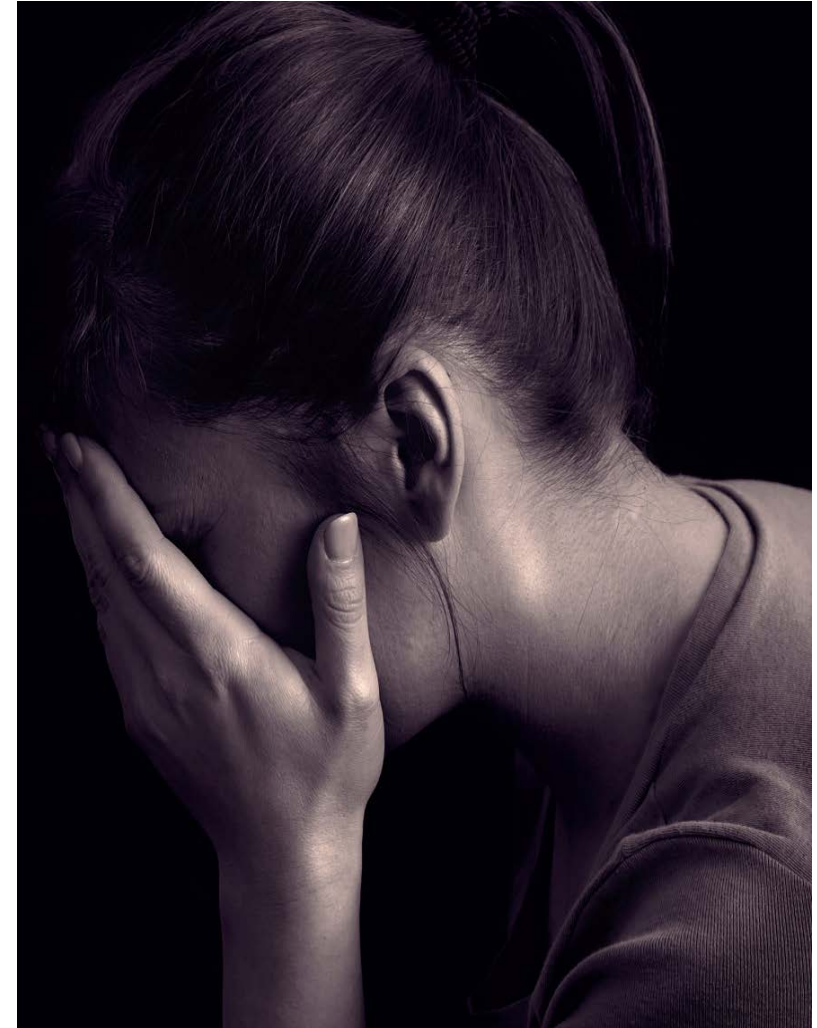
# Student Mental Health

- 78% of have experienced issues in the last year (NUS, 2015).
- 54% of these did not seek support.
- Significant implications for learning and teaching:

“Our colleges and universities should be places of educational and personal development, where students feel supported.

But these findings show us that **significant numbers of students are suffering with mental health problems, many of them silently”**

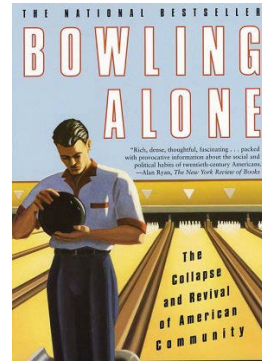
– Paul Blomfield MP, Chair of Parliamentary Group on Students.



# Why are Groups so Important For Wellbeing?

“As a rough rule of thumb, if you belong to no groups but decide to join one, you cut your risk of dying over the next year in half.”

-Robert Putnam – *Bowling Alone* (2000, p.331)



- Researchers increasingly aware of the role played by groups in affecting health and well-being.
- More socially-integrated participants less likely to develop common cold (Cohen et al., 1997).
- Generally felt this is due to the *social support* provided by social integration, which boosts immune system functioning (Uchino, 2004).

# Mixed Results

- Effect of social integration on health varies-why?
- Perhaps because focus on *quantity*, not *quality*.
- Social integration often defined as:
  - number of groups belong to
  - quantity of contact with members
- But not all groups provide positive experiences.
- Need to think about what group *means to us*.
- Do we *identify* with the group?



# What is Group Identification?

- No single definition, but involves sense of...
  - *attachment to & investment in* the group.
  - *psychological connection* with the group.
  - *shared experience* with group members ('we'/'us').



# The Group Identification Scale (GIS; Sani et al., 2015)

- We created & validated a 4-item measure of group identification:
  - “I feel a bond with (group)”
  - “I feel similar to the other members of (group)”
  - “I have a sense of belonging to (group)”
  - “I have a lot in common with the members of (group)”





# How Might Group Identification Improve Health?

- Health behaviours
- Self-esteem
- Sense of control over problems
- Sense of meaning and purpose
- Positive exchanges
  - > Stress reduction



# The Present Study: Aim

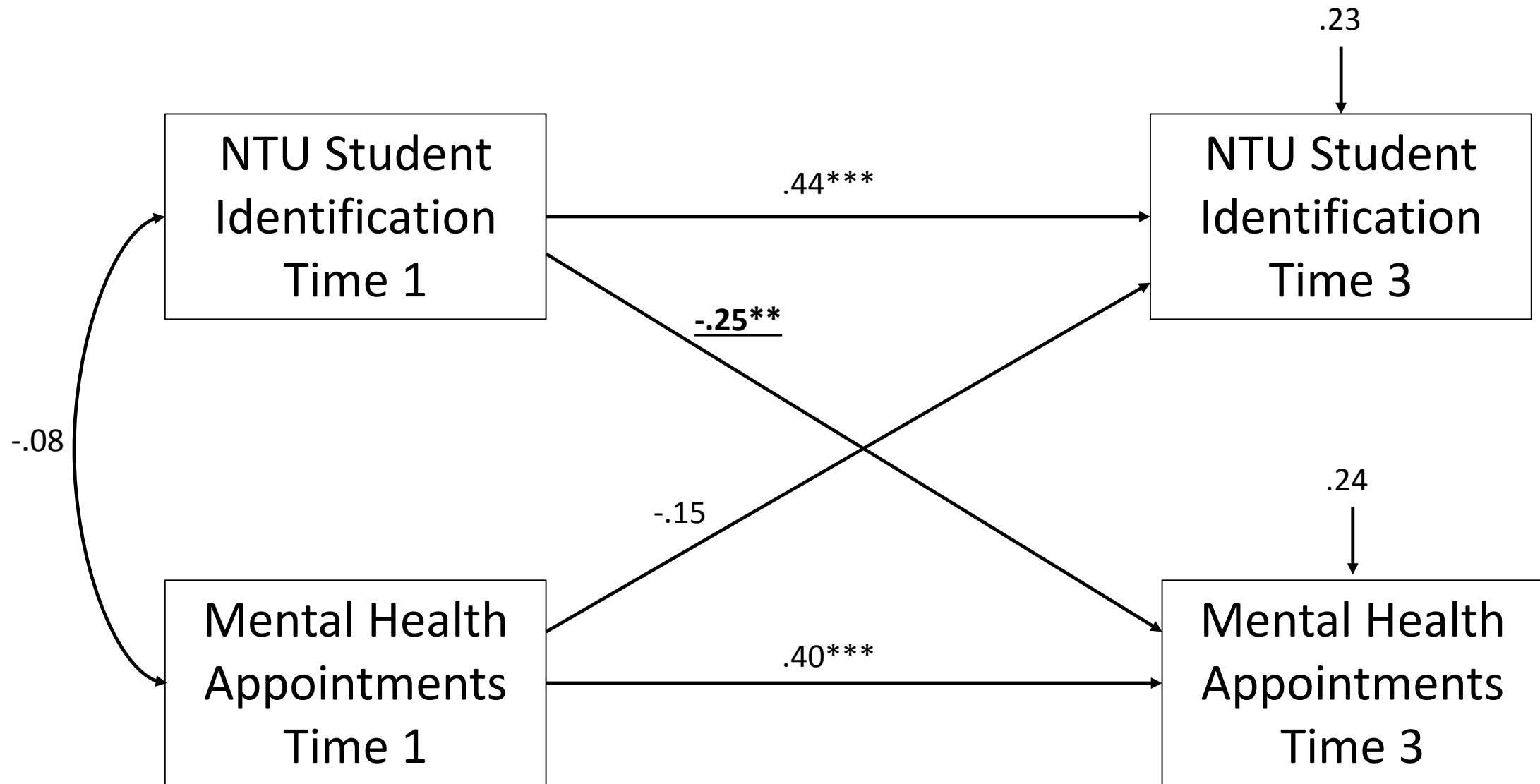
- To explore relationship between group identification & wellbeing in new NTU undergraduates.
- To explore this longitudinally.





# Results: Mental Distress

	Time 1 (Oct 2015)	Time 2 (Jan 2016)	Time 3 (Apr 2016)
<b>Mildly Distressed or Above</b>	73.40%	75.50%	73.40%
<b>Moderately Distressed or Above</b>	41.50%	48.90%	42.60%
<b>Severely Distressed</b>	28.70%	31.90%	24.50%



Note: \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Model Fit: CFI = .99, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .03. All path estimates are standardized.

# Conclusions and Implications

- Stronger NTU Student identification in first few weeks led to fewer mental health appointments in Term 3.
- Encouraging NTU Student identification as soon as possible may protect students' mental health.
- How can we encourage NTU Student identification?
  - Allow students to make decisions & have their say (Knight et al., 2010).
  - Pay particular attention to student groups who may feel isolated (international/BME/mature/disabled students)-Success For All initiative.
  - Consider offering Groups4Health to students experiencing social isolation ([www.groups4health.com](http://www.groups4health.com))



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Health in Groups website: <http://healthingroups.wix.com/healthingroups>

## Thanks To...

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# Some Recent Media Attention For Our Research



## A sense of belonging makes you happier: Feeling connected to social groups gives people a mood boost

- A study has found relationships to those around you really do count
- Scientists looked at happiness and life satisfaction in almost 4,000 people
- They found a clear link between identifying with a group and happiness
- Researchers say a 'subjective sense of belonging' is crucial to happiness

By Ryan O'Hare For MailOnline

**i News** The Essential Daily Briefing

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Opinion



by  
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## The secret to happiness? Try identifying with a diverse tribe



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## What's the secret to happiness? Scientists may have found the answer



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Health



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Tom  
Bawden

14:49  
Friday May 20th 2016

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## Happiness 'is a sense of belonging' research shows



SECTIONS THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

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## Sense of belonging can make you happier: study

People who feel a strong sense of belonging to social groups are much happier than those who do not, a new study has found.

By: PTI | London | Published: May 22, 2016 2:03 PM



# Thanks For Listening!

## Any Questions?

