The Relationship Between Group Identification And Wellbeing in Students

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• 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.”


• 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

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mildly Distressed or Above</td>
<td>73.40%</td>
<td>75.50%</td>
<td>73.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Distressed or Above</td>
<td>41.50%</td>
<td>48.90%</td>
<td>42.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severely Distressed</td>
<td>28.70%</td>
<td>31.90%</td>
<td>24.50%</td>
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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)
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Health in Groups website: http://healthingroups.wix.com/healthingroups

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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

The secret to happiness? Try identifying with a diverse tribe

The Telegraph

Lifestyle | Good News

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

By Stefano Harfield

Happiness ‘is a sense of belonging’ research shows

By Tom Bawden
Thanks For Listening!

Any Questions?