

# THE MORE (SOCIAL GROUP MEMBERSHIPS), THE MERRIER: IS THIS THE CASE FOR ASIANS?

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# Background

- **Why does belonging to multiple groups enhance wellbeing?**
  - Provide individuals with access to psychological resources in the face of change, challenge, and adversity
    - Social capital (Putnam, 2000)
    - Social support (Cohen & Wills, 1985)
    - A sense of purpose and meaning in life (Jetten et al., 2015)

# Background



A group of diverse young adults, including men and women of various ethnicities, are sitting in a circle on a grassy field. They are all smiling and appear to be engaged in a conversation. The background is a soft-focus green field under bright, natural light. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

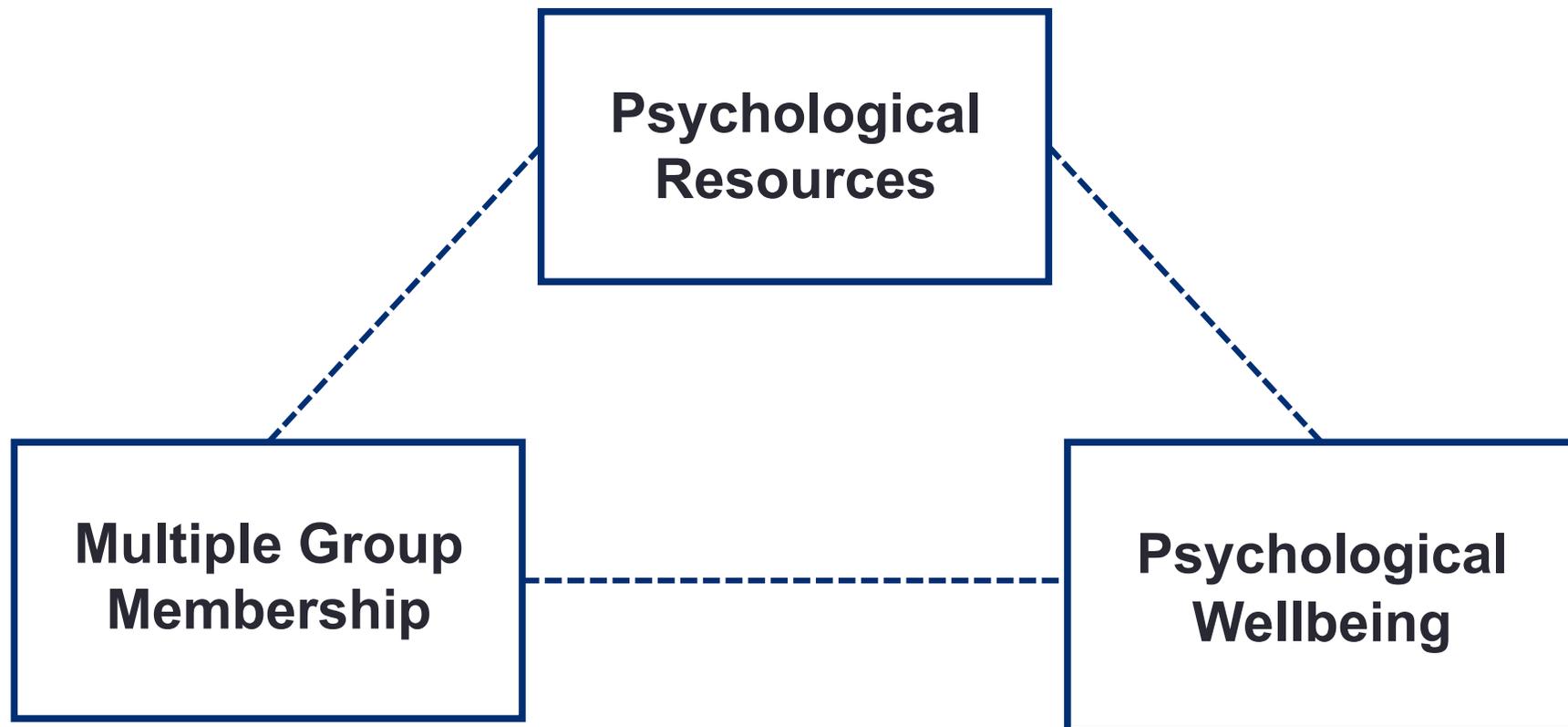
**On the whole, there appears to be a strong and consistent relationship between multiple group memberships and psychological wellbeing.**

# Background

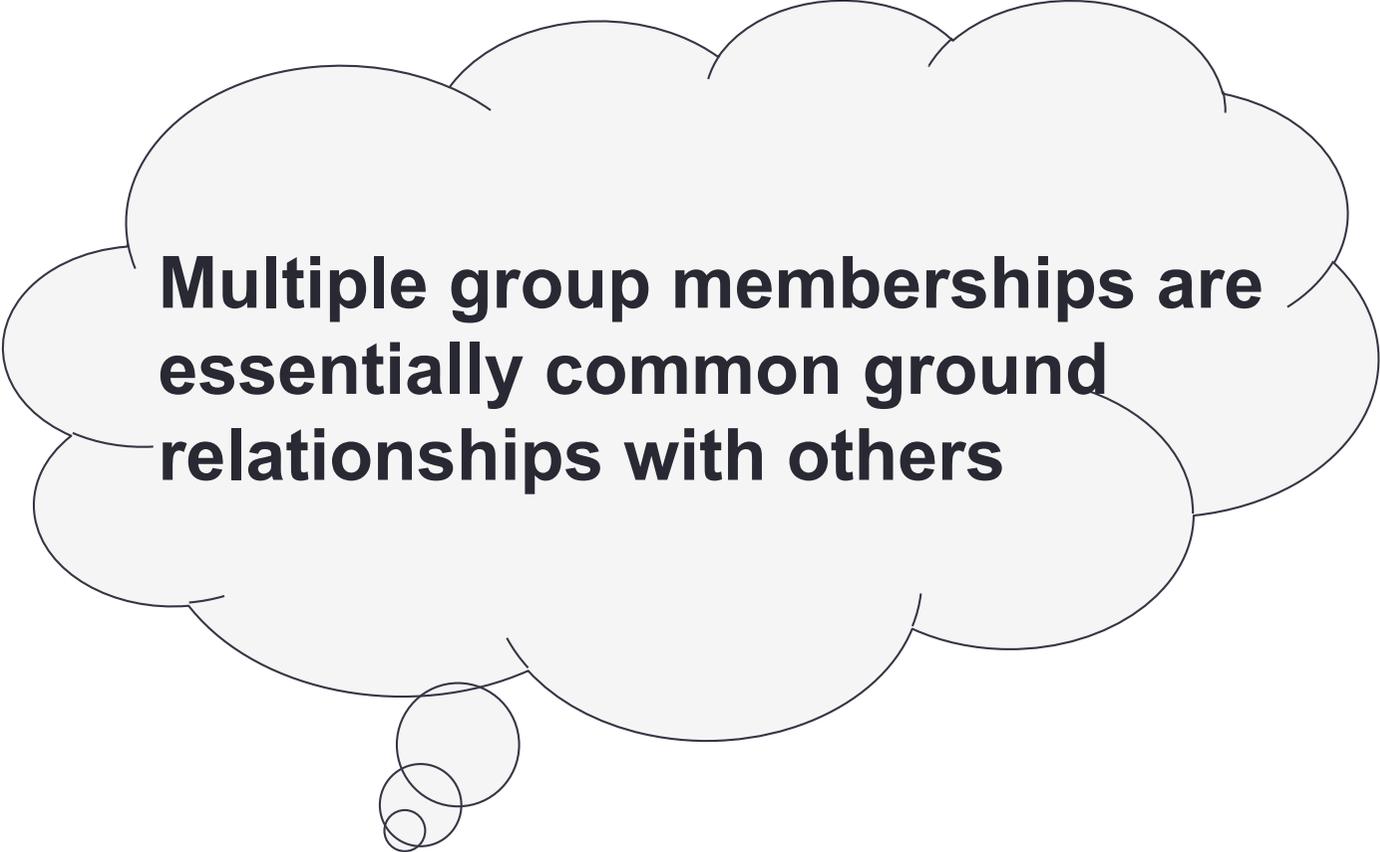
- However .....
- Empirical work on multiple group membership and wellbeing has been conducted primarily in Western societies
- Cultural variations in how people construe the self and relationships with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991)
  - Western cultural contexts: Individuals are encouraged to promote their uniqueness
  - Asian cultural contexts: Individuals are encourage to maintain closeness and harmony within social groups

# Multiple Group Membership and Wellbeing

# Multiple Group Membership and Wellbeing

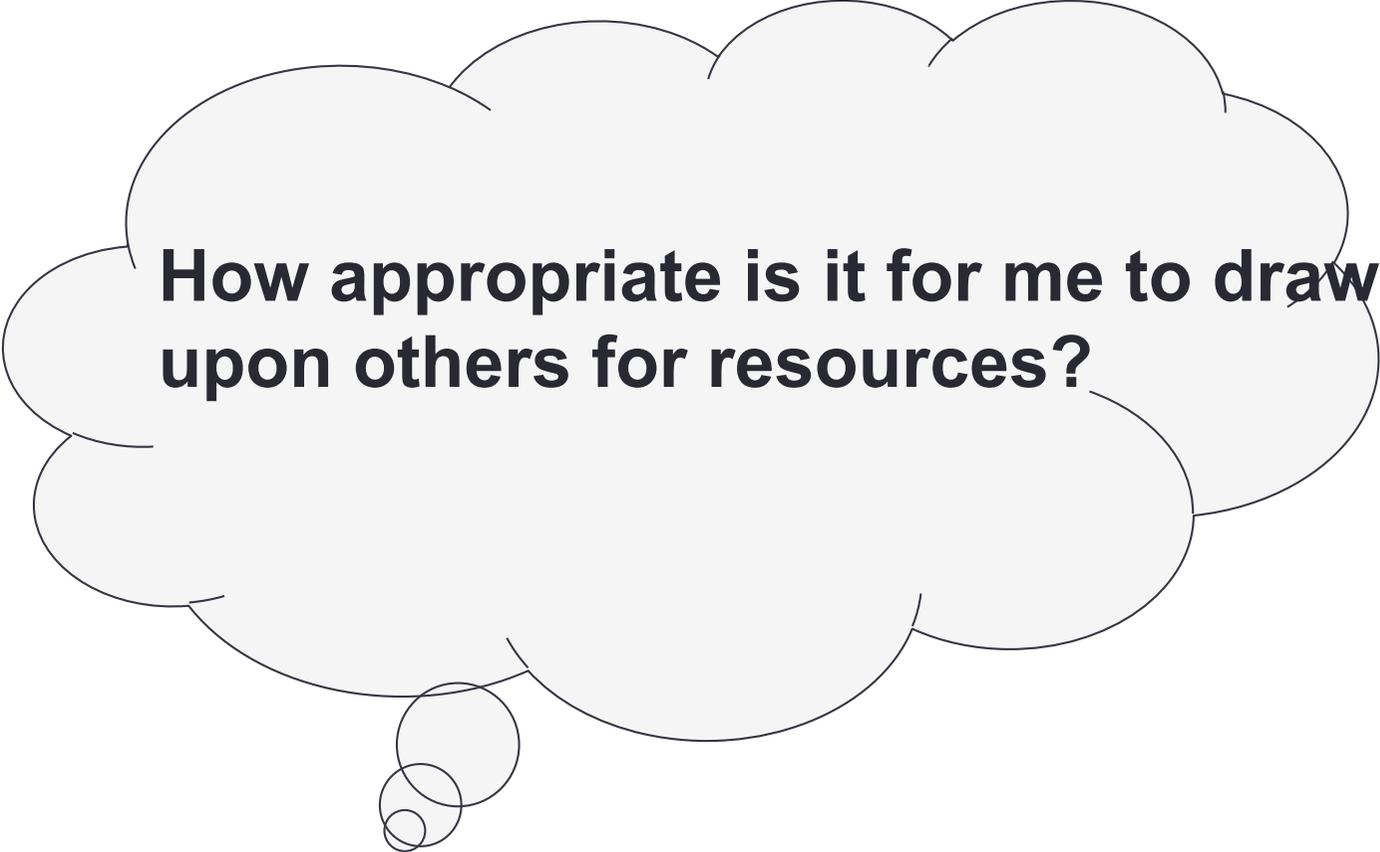


# Multiple Group Membership and Wellbeing



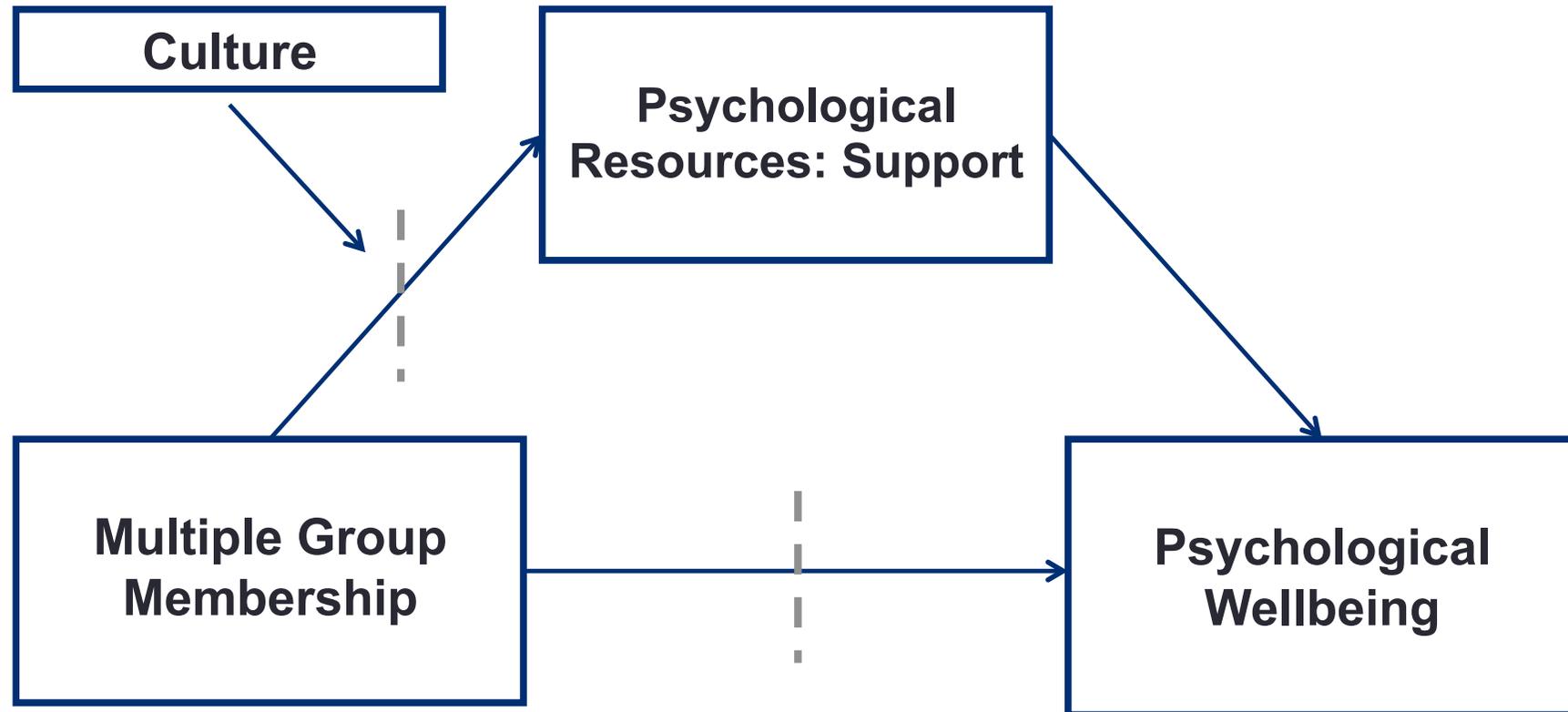
**Multiple group memberships are essentially common ground relationships with others**

# Multiple Group Membership and Wellbeing



**How appropriate is it for me to draw upon others for resources?**

# Multiple Group Membership and Wellbeing



Culture may influence shared assumptions about relationships (i.e., the extent to which one feels it is appropriate to draw upon support resources from others)

# Culture and Social Support

- Culture and Social Support (Kim, Sherman, Ko, & Taylor, 2006; Taylor et al., 2004)
  - Reliable cultural differences in individuals' willingness to use social support
    - Asians are less likely to report drawing on social support for coping with stress

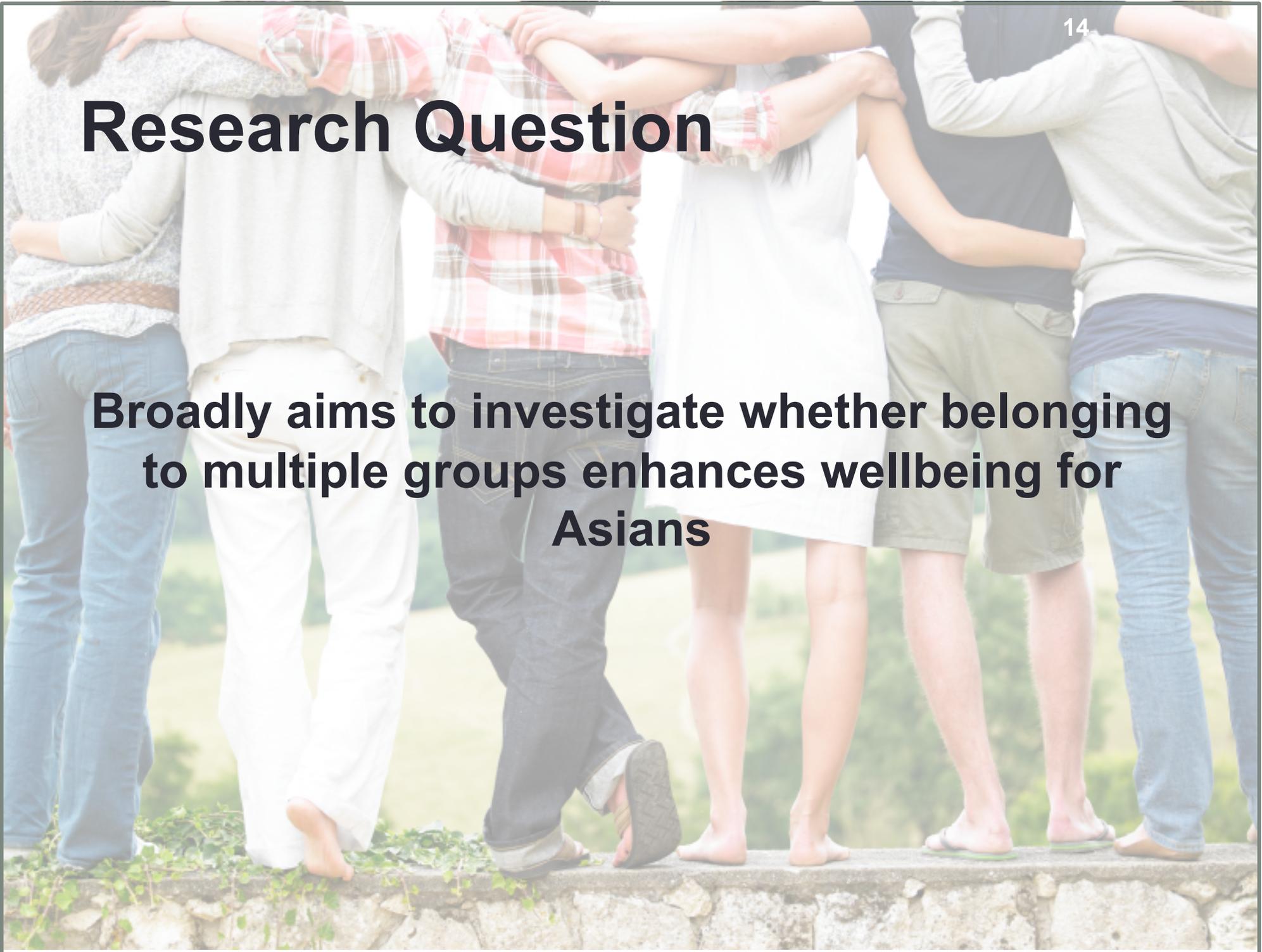


# Culture and Social Support

- Culture and Social Support (Kim, Sherman, Ko, & Taylor, 2006; Taylor et al., 2004)
  - Reliable cultural differences in individuals' willingness to use social support
    - Asians are less likely to report drawing on social support for coping with stress
- Asians are more sensitive to the negative relational consequences of support seeking
  - Disrupting group harmony
  - Burdening their social networks

# Research Question

**Broadly aims to investigate whether belonging to multiple groups enhances wellbeing for Asians**



# Study 1

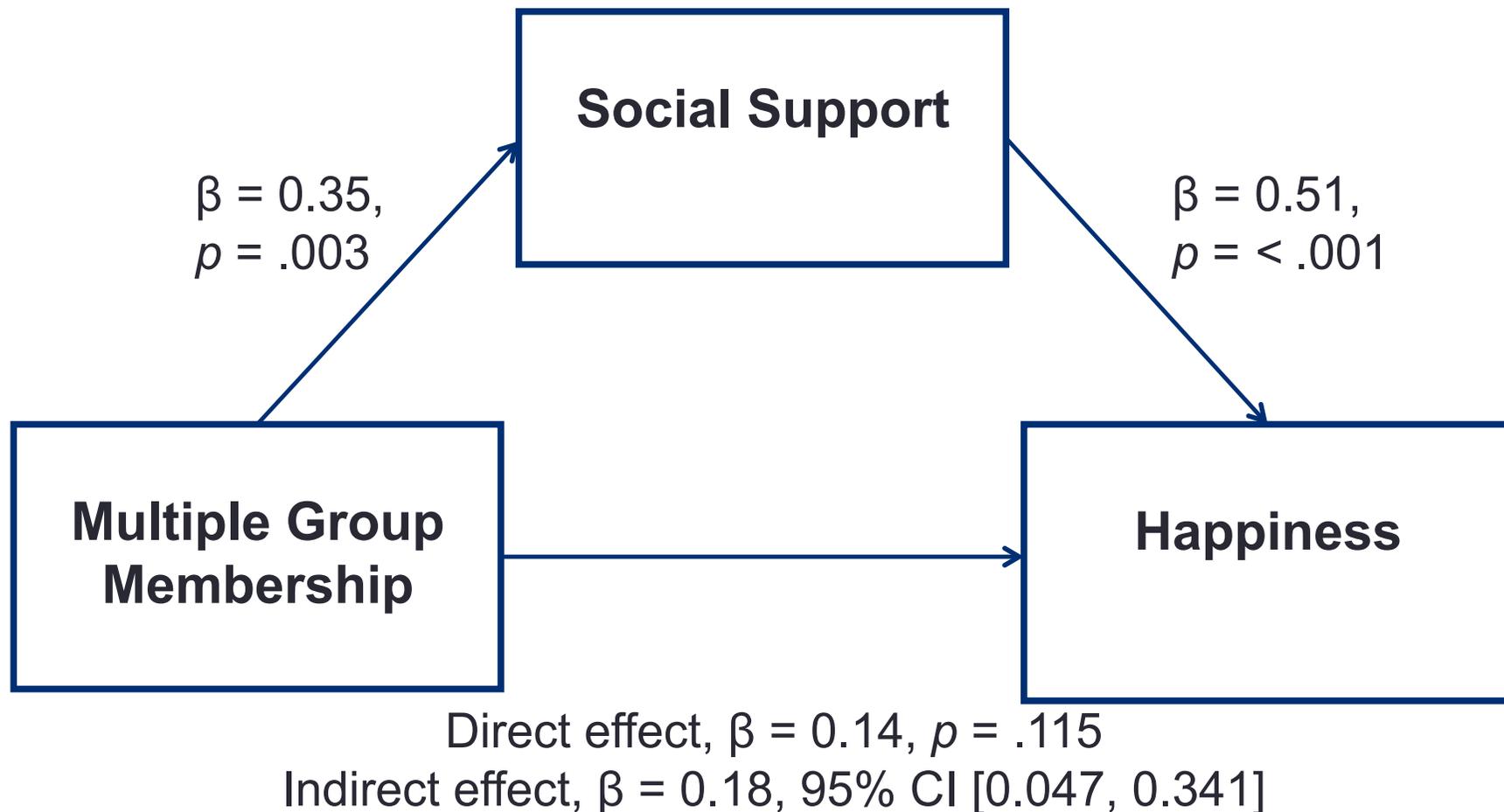
- **Participants:** 60 UQ international students of Chinese ethnicity born in Asia, 77 Australian Caucasians students
- **Measures:**
  - 2-item multiple group membership measure
  - 4-item social support measure
  - 1 wellbeing item (Presently would you describe yourself as: 1 “*Very unhappy*” to 5 “*Very happy*”)
  - The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale

# Study 1

- **Relationship between multiple group membership and happiness:**
  - Asian Participants:  $r = -.058$ ,  $p = .657$
  - Western Participants:  $r = .343$ ,  $p = .002$
  - $Z = -2.36$ ,  $p = .018$
- **Relationship between multiple group membership and depression:**
  - Asian Participants:  $r = .063$ ,  $p = .632$
  - Western Participants:  $r = -.317$ ,  $p = .005$
  - $Z = 2.22$ ,  $p = .026$

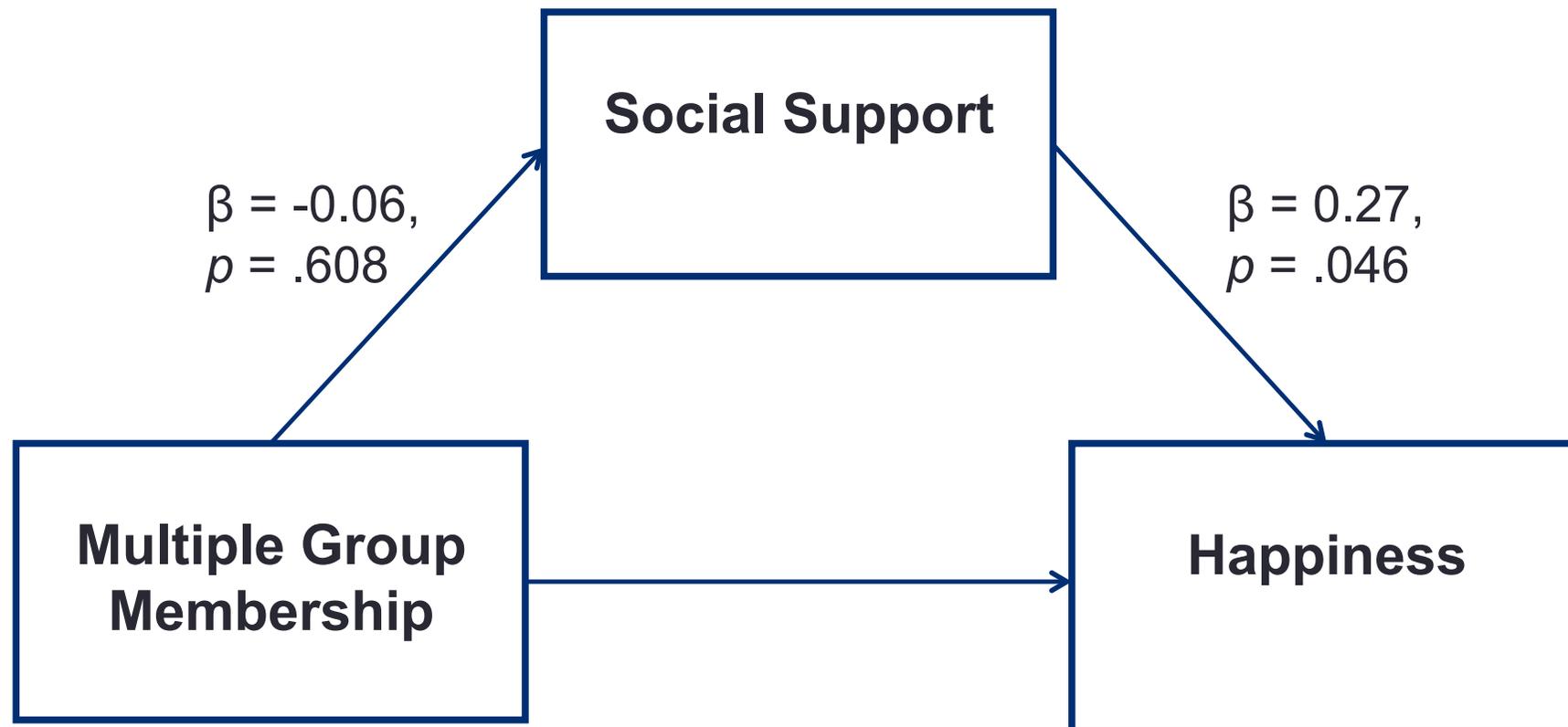
# Study 1

Australians Caucasians ( $N = 77$ )



# Study 1

Chinese ( $N = 60$ )

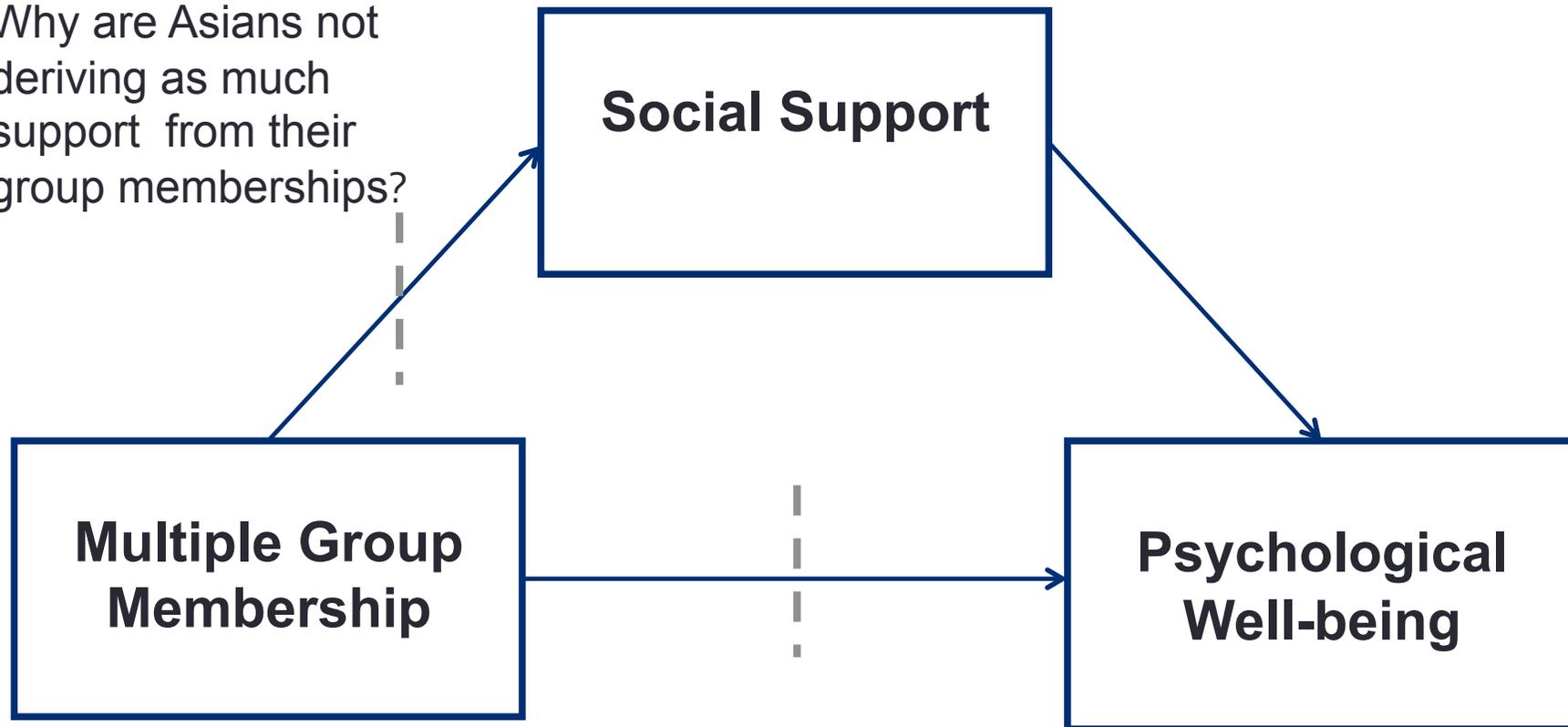


Direct effect,  $\beta = -0.04, p = .751$

Indirect effect,  $\beta = -0.02, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.136, 0.043]$

# Study 1

Why are Asians not deriving as much support from their group memberships?



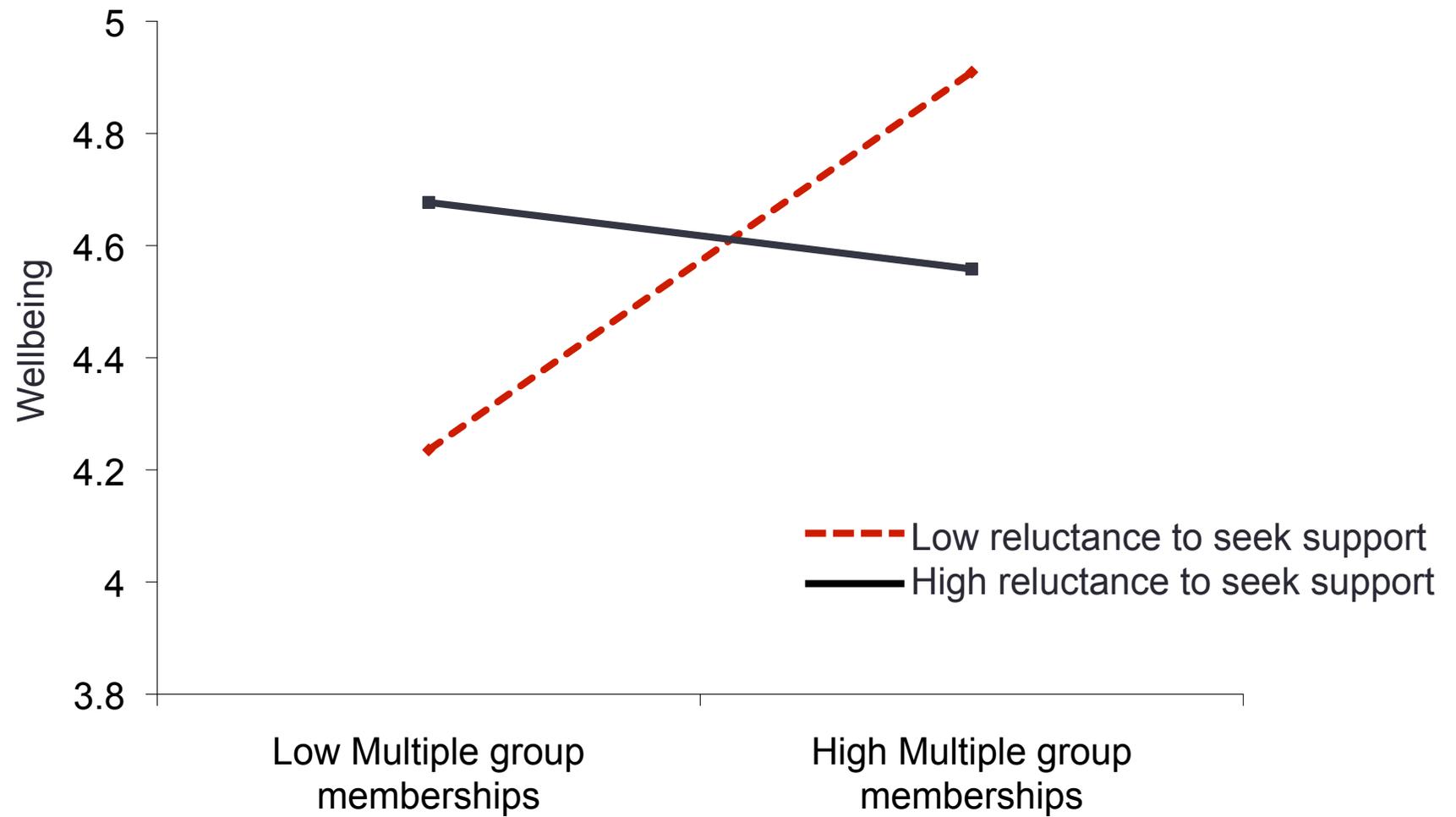
*Why don't  
we ask  
for help?*



## Study 2

- Participants: 105 students of Chinese ethnicity from a university in Singapore
- Relationship between multiple group membership and wellbeing:  $r = .130$ ,  $p = .186$
- The effect of multiple group membership on wellbeing was dependent on the extent to which one is reluctant to seek support from their relationships

# Study 2



# Study 3

- **Aim**

- To determine whether the effect between multiple group membership and wellbeing is smaller in Asian, compared to Western, cultural contexts

- **Method**

- PsycINFO and PubMed were searched for relevant studies
- Keywords: multiple group membership, social group memberships, and greater number of group identification.

## Study 3

- **What is the effect size for both Asians and Westerners?**
  - 27 effect sizes were calculated with a total sample size of 14,063 participants
  - An overall mean effect size of  $r = \mathbf{0.22}$ , 95% CI [.175, .267],  $Z = 9.13$ ,  $p < .001$

## Study 3

- **What is the effect size for Westerners?**
  - 20 effect sizes were calculated with a total sample size of 12,910 participants
  - A mean effect size of  $r = \mathbf{0.25}$ , 95% CI [.194, .302],  $Z = 8.67$ ,  $p < .001$
- **What is the effect size for Asians?**
  - 7 effect sizes were calculated with a total of 1153 participants
  - A mean effect size of  $r = \mathbf{0.13}$ , 95% CI [.072, .187],  $Z = 4.38$ ,  $p < .001$

# Summary

**Belonging to multiple groups may confer little, or fewer, wellbeing benefits for Asians relative to Westerners**

- **Asian norms about relationships and support seeking?**
- **Understanding the differences in processes may help unlock powerful resources multiple group memberships encompass**

**Thank you!**

