
TRUST AND SELF-DISCLOSURE

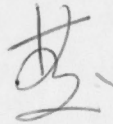
Li Lim

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DECLARATION

The research described in this thesis represents original work undertaken in the Department of Psychology, at the Australian National University. The writing and work outlined in the thesis chapters are solely my own.



Li Lim

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ABSTRACT

My research focus is on intergroup self-disclosure and the roles of trust and impression management in these cross-group communication contexts. This research is grounded in the theoretical understandings of the Social Identity and Self-Categorization theories, both of which have been widely applied in explaining and predicting various forms of social or group-level behaviour. This research initially looked at identifying the role of trust in influencing people's self-disclosing behaviours. Specifically, I wanted to determine how trust in strangers can be formed on the basis of shared social group-memberships and how this would impact upon people's self-disclosure patterns. While previous research in this area of group-based trust in strangers was primarily conducted within the domain of outcome-based decisions, such as the distribution of valued resources, I wanted to extend this work to the domain of *self-disclosure*. Through the five empirical studies reported in this thesis, I demonstrated that people's intentions and actual self-disclosing behaviours are highly determined by their self-perceptions within these interaction situations. Specifically, if people see themselves in terms of a particular group membership (i.e. Australian, student, woman, young person) within an intergroup interaction context, their communicative behaviours will reflect the norms and values of that particular social group. Communication intentions and behaviours, therefore, will be guided predominantly by the interests of the salient social in-group, and those of the interacting parties, *as group members*, rather than the interests of the specific individuals. Based upon preliminary findings from my first two studies, I went on to argue that people's willingness to self-disclose in an intergroup interaction situation may be highly determined by their desires to project a positive image of the salient

in-group to an out-group audience. Intergroup disclosure, therefore, may be characterized by an increase in willingness to share information that portrays the salient social in-group in a positive light, whilst at the same time withholding information that would paint a negative impression of the in-group.

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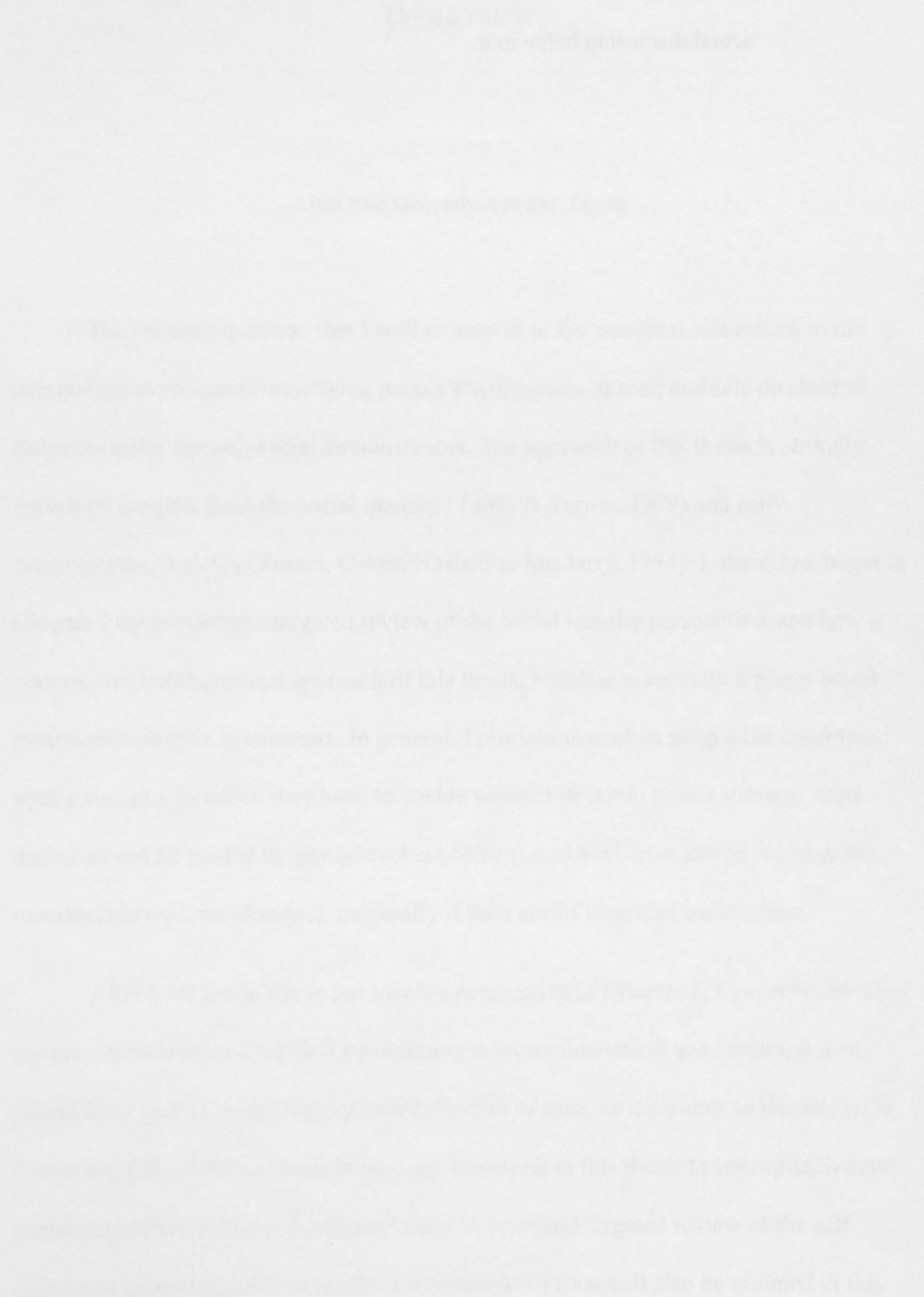
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CHAPTER 1.

OVERVIEW

Aims and Objectives of the Thesis

The research question that I seek to answer in the current thesis relates to the psychological processes underlying people's willingness to trust and self-disclose to strangers under varying social circumstances. The approach of this thesis is strongly guided by insights from the social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorisation theories (Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarty, 1994). I, therefore, begin in Chapter 2 by providing a targeted review of the social identity perspective, and how it underscores the theoretical approach of this thesis, which is essentially a group-based perspective on trust in strangers. In general, I propose that when people are confronted with a situation in which they have to decide whether or not to trust a stranger, their decisions can be guided by group level concerns (i.e. shared or unshared social group membership with the stranger), especially if their social identities were salient.

After a review of the social identity perspective in Chapter 2, I go on to develop my review on trust in Chapter 3 by outlining relevant theoretical and empirical trust research, as well as providing my own definition of trust, as it pertains to this thesis. In Chapter 4, I detail the rationale behind my reasoning in this thesis to conceptualize and measure trust in the form of self-disclosure. A brief and targeted review of the self-disclosure literature and how it relates to concepts of trust will also be outlined in this

Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, I review a potential variable that may moderate the relationship between group memberships of strangers and trusting intentions. Specifically, based on ideas put forward by Yamagishi and his colleagues, I propose that a type of “generalized reciprocity” may moderate people’s intentions to trust and self-disclose more to in-group than out-group strangers (Yamagishi, Jin & Kiyonari, 1999; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). Specifically, researchers from this perspective suggested that greater trust shown towards in-group members may be a result of a generalized exchange system through which people are expected to take into account the needs and interests of in-group others and, thus, behave in a more trustworthy manner for fear of incurring the wrath of one's own group members. Crucial to this “generalized reciprocity” idea, however, is the notion of “mutual knowledge”, which refers to the mutual recognition of shared in-group membership between strangers (Yamagishi et al., 1999; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). Specifically, it was suggested that in order for people to observe practices of generalized reciprocity, it was necessary that there be mutual knowledge of shared group-membership between the interacting parties (Yamagishi, Mifune, Liu, & Pauling, 2008; Yamagishi et al., 1999; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). It was argued by Yamagishi and colleagues that if people believed that their fellow in-group members were unable to recognize them as being in-group members, then there would be no incentive to trust these in-group others more, as they cannot expect favourable treatment in return (Yamagishi et al., 1999; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000; Yamagishi et al., 2008).

Chapter 6 in the current thesis summarizes the first four theoretical chapters and outlines the main hypotheses to be tested in the first two empirical chapters (Chapters 7 and 8). Based upon the theoretical reviews presented from Chapters 2 through to 5, the

three main questions that I set out to answer were: 1) Do people trust and self-disclose more to in-group than out-group strangers? 2) Is in-group trust and self-disclosure more likely to occur under conditions where knowledge of one's own social group membership is available (rather than anonymous) to a fellow in-group member? and 3) Is trust in in-group strangers over out-group strangers when knowledge of shared group membership is mutually available more likely to occur when social rather than personal identity is salient? Study 1 (Chapter 7) was primarily an exploratory study and five independent variables were manipulated in a mixed factorial design. Apart from stranger group-membership, identity salience, and the presence (or absence) of mutual knowledge, the nature of the risk involved in the trusting decision (group or personal), as well as the topic of self-disclosure, were also manipulated in Study 1. With the exception of social identity salience, which was manipulated between-subjects, all other variables were manipulated within-subjects. Findings from Study 1 indicated support for the idea that willingness to self-disclose to in-group strangers over out-group strangers under conditions of mutual knowledge may be more likely to occur when a person's social (rather than personal) identity has been rendered salient. Results from this study also pointed to the importance of the self-disclosure topic and the nature of risk in influencing people's trust decisions under conditions of social identity salience.

In order to further clarify some of the psychological processes underlying these initial observations from Study 1, I conducted a second empirical experiment, detailed in Chapter 8 (Study 2). Study 2 similarly examined the same five variables as in Study 1 but it expanded upon the design. Instead of one between-subjects factor, Study 2 manipulated three (identity salience, group membership of stranger, and presence/absence of mutual knowledge) out of the five variables as between-subjects

factors. In addition, a number of measures aimed at further teasing apart the processes behind people's self-reported willingness to trust and self-disclose were also included. Whilst results from Study 2 were broadly consistent with those of Study 1, no statistical support was found for any of the potential factors that were proposed to mediate the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. In both Studies 1 and 2, factors such as the perceived trustworthiness of the stranger, expectations of reciprocity from the stranger, or even perceived similarities between the self and the stranger – all of which, according to past literature, are important mediators in the trust development process (Brewer, 1981; Tanis & Postmes, 2005; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000) – were found to be unrelated to my main dependent measure of willingness to self-disclose. The independent variables examined in both Studies 1 and 2 did not appear to exert an effect on these potential mediators, and these potential mediators were also shown to be uncorrelated with the main dependent measures of trust and self-disclosure.

From both Studies 1 and 2, therefore, it appeared that whilst significantly influencing participants' willingness to self-disclose, the manipulated independent variables did not seem to predict any of the traditional trust antecedents. These results thus prompted a re-examination of my theoretical perspective and a re-interpretation of the empirical findings. If the independent variables do not have an effect on any of the factors expected to precede trust (intentions and behaviours), was the measure of willingness to disclose then really a measure of trust? Even though participants' self-reported willingness to disclose patterns were consistent with the main hypotheses, did they really represent trusting intentions, or were these findings a result of some other functioning mechanism? Prompted by these emerging questions, I revisited the self-

disclosure and group-based interaction literature and went on to propose an alternative theoretical framework (Chapter 9) that may better explain the findings obtained in Studies 1 and 2.

In Chapter 9, I propose that strategic impression management efforts, aimed at portraying a positive in-group image to members of a relevant out-group, may underlie participants' varying levels of willingness to self-disclose in the first two empirical studies. Whilst traditional definitions of self-disclosure tend to encompass the sharing of both negative and positive information (Cozby, 1973), self-disclosure as examined in most empirical work refers almost exclusively to the sharing of negative information. Consistent with past research, therefore, participants in both Studies 1 and 2 of the current thesis imagined themselves self-disclosing on a topic which was negative in nature (McKenna & Bargh, 1998; Pennebaker, Zech, & Rime, 2001). Another feature of both Studies 1 and 2, which is pertinent to this alternative theoretical framework, is that while participants' personal identities always remained anonymous, their *social* identities were either available (mutual knowledge) or anonymous (absence of mutual knowledge), to their interaction partner. I, therefore, suggest that it is precisely this availability or identifiability of participants' *social* identities that appeared to have influence their self-reported willingness to disclose (on a negative topic) to in-group and out-group members. While this interpretation is consistent with my original reasoning that the anonymity or identifiability of social identities has the ability to influence people's perceptions and behaviours (Foddy, Platow & Yamagishi, 2009; Platow, Brewer & Eggins, 2008; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000), this influence on people's willingness to disclose, however, may be operating through concerns for the salient in-group's positive image, rather than through perceptions of trustworthiness.

If it is as I have suggested, and the availability (or not) of social identities were indeed functioning to influence people's willingness to self-disclose through their concerns for the social image of the salient in-group, what then exactly is the nature of this influence and how does it express itself? Based on the findings from both Studies 1 and 2, as well as recent research, which shows that people are motivated to engage in actions that defend or promote the positive image of the in-group (Hopkins, Reicher, Harrison, Cassidy, Bull & Levine, 2007; Klein & Azzi, 2001), I suggest that when asked to self-disclose on a negative topic and that participants' social group memberships are available to out-group recipients, reported willingness to self-disclose may be inhibited. When a person's social identity is anonymous to the relevant out-group recipients, however, willingness to disclose may not be inhibited as these potential disclosers are unlikely to be seen as representatives of their in-group and hence, the content of their disclosures should not impact negatively upon the valued in-group. I also suggest in Chapter 9 that these above effects may be more pronounced under conditions of social, instead of personal identity salience.

Chapter 10 then goes on to outline two empirical studies (Studies 3 and 4), which I conducted to test this alternative theoretical viewpoint. Specifically, Study 3 manipulated the group membership of the potential disclosure recipient (in-group or out-group), and the availability of participants' own social identities (anonymous or identifiable) under conditions of high social identity salience. Findings from Study 3 indicated that when asked to imagine themselves disclosing on a negative, group-related topic, participants were significantly more likely to self-disclose to an in-group than an out-group member when their social group memberships were identifiable. When their social identities were anonymous, however, there were no significant differences in

participants' self-reported willingness to disclose to in-group and out-group strangers. These results were, therefore, broadly consistent with my suggestion that a desire to portray a positive image of the in-group may have inhibited people's willingness to self-disclose on negative topics to out-group members, especially when their social group memberships were identifiable.

Study 4, which is also reported in Chapter 10, then went on to test whether this new theoretical reasoning could be extended to explain and predict actual self-disclosing behaviour. In Study 4, therefore, I included a measure of actual self-disclosure in addition to the standard self-report measure of willingness to disclose. The design of Study 4 was mostly consistent with that of Study 3 except that identity salience – as a two level factor (personal or social identity salience) - was manipulated between subjects. With regard to the self-report measure on willingness to disclose, results from Study 4 were consistent with the predictions, as well as results from Study 3, which are detailed in Chapter 10. Results on the measure of actual self-disclosure were also in line with the predictions, indicating that participants disclosed significantly more to in-group than out-group members when their social identities were identifiable rather than anonymous. As predicted, this above effect was only significant for participants in the social identity salient conditions, but *not* the *personal* identity salient conditions. Results from Study 4 also indicated that participants' actual self-disclosing behaviours may have been partially mediated by their concerns about what they thought the disclosure recipient would do with the content of their disclosures (i.e. share them with others).

Having obtained preliminary support for this alternative theoretical viewpoint as the basis of people's varying self-disclosure patterns across inter-group and intra-group

interactions, I sought to explore further the underlying psychological processes. In Studies 3 and 4, I observed how people decreased their self-disclosure to out-group members on negative topics when their social identities were known. I theorized that this effect was a result of people being motivated to project a positive impression of the in-group to out-group others. If this were indeed the case, what happens then, if people were asked to self-disclose on a *positive*, instead of a negative topic? Will people seize the opportunity to actively project a positive image of the in-group? Or do people's concerns with the in-group image only extend to passive defence which restricts the amount of negative information shared? In Chapter 11, Study 5 explores this question by introducing a situation under which participants were asked to imagine themselves disclosing on a positive, group-related topic. Findings from Study 5 revealed a pattern of results consistent with those of Studies 3 and 4, indicating that participants were less willing to disclose on a negative topic to out-group members when their social identity was known, rather than anonymous. More importantly, however, willingness to disclose on a positive topic to out-group members was *higher* when participants' social identity was *known* rather than anonymous. These findings, thus, provide clear support for the role of inter-group impression management strategies in affecting group members' willingness to disclose on positive and negative self-information.

Finally, Chapter 12 of the current thesis summarises the progression of the theoretical development, as well as some of the key findings of the research program. In Chapter 12, I also discussed the implications of my empirical findings and how they may relate and be applied to issues outside the laboratory. Some limitations of the current research program will also be outlined and addressed in this final chapter.

A Note about the Format of the Thesis

All the empirical chapters in this thesis have been prepared as a series of manuscripts to be submitted for publication. All the theoretical chapters in this thesis (Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9), as well as the concluding chapter (Chapter 12) have been prepared in a traditional format to give context to the thesis as a whole. Given the format of this thesis, the text within the empirical chapters (Chapters, 7, 8, 10, and 11) is identical to the papers that will be submitted to journals for review. There is, therefore, a certain degree of repetition in terms of the introductory sections of the empirical chapters, as they are essentially based on the same theoretical ideas that I aim to examine in this thesis, and re-state ideas previously presented in some of my theoretical chapters. In order to maintain consistency and retain the flow of this thesis, I have made minor changes to the numbering system of the studies, sections, tables, and figures within these papers. I also include cross-references to specific chapters in these papers in order to facilitate a greater sense of connection, as well as included additional dependent measures which are pertinent to the research questions that this thesis seeks to address. Also, to avoid repetition, I have compiled one complete reference list for the whole thesis and this can be found at the end of this thesis. A context statement which places each chapter in the context of the broader theoretical aims of this thesis was also included at the beginning of each empirical paper.

CHAPTER 2.

THE SOCIAL IDENTITY PERSPECTIVE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON TRUST

The Social Identity Perspective

The social identity perspective is a term commonly used to describe views outlined in both social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Both these theories have been widely applied in explaining and predicting various forms of social or group-level behaviour. Theoretical and empirical research examined in the current thesis is heavily founded upon the social identity perspective. Although the roles of social identity salience and social group membership in influencing people's trusting decisions will be further elaborated in subsequent chapters of this thesis, some of the underlying psychological processes are not fully explored there. It is, thus, necessary to first explore some key tenets of these theories that are relevant to the current thesis.

The social identity perspective suggests that a person's self-concept comprises of two components: the personal and the social self. The personal self, or personal identity, refers to aspects of an individual's self-concept whereby he/she is seen as a unique individual ("I", "me"). The social self or social identity, on the other hand, is the part of the self as it relates to social groups that are meaningful to the particular individual ("we", "us") (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). While personal and social identities represent equally important components of an individual's self-perception, each of these identities influence and direct human behaviour at different points in time. In this way, even though a person's social identity is as much an expression of the self as his/her

personal identity (and vice versa), the salience of one identity, will, to a certain degree, inhibit the expression of the other (Onarato & Turner, 2004).

Depending on the salience of either the personal or social self, human social interaction can be broadly categorized into interpersonal versus inter- and intra-group behaviour respectively. The former refers to the interaction between two or more individuals that is determined by their interpersonal relationships and individual characteristics. Interpersonal behaviour in its purest form, therefore, is devoid of any influence from the social groups or categories that each of the interactants may be associated with (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Inter- or intra-group behaviour, on the other hand, refers to the perception and understanding of situations and/or behaviours as being fully determined by people's memberships in various social groups and categories, and completely unaffected by the personal characteristics of those involved in that specific context (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

In this thesis, my focus will be on examining trusting intentions and behaviours between strangers as an intergroup or intragroup behaviour, rather than as an interpersonal behaviour. Specifically, I propose that when people's memberships in a particular social group are made salient, that is, when their social identities are invoked, their interaction with a stranger will function as an intergroup or intragroup interaction, rather than as an interpersonal interaction. Under these circumstances where people's thoughts and behaviours are strongly influenced by group-level interests and concerns, their willingness to trust a stranger may be determined by their own salient group membership, as well as that of the stranger.

The Categorization Process

The notion that people's thoughts and behaviours can be strongly influenced by the salience of their identities in a particular social context is certainly not a novel one

(Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1984), and has been consistently demonstrated across a range of research topics, such as leadership (Haslam & Platow, 2001; Fielding & Hogg, 1997; Turner & Haslam, 2001), pro-social behaviours (Levine, Cassidy, Brazier, & Reicher, 2002; Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins, & Levine, 2006; Stürmer, Snyder, & Omoto, 2005) and stereotyping (McGarty, 2002; McGarty, Haslam, Turner, & Oakes, 1993; Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994). Assuming then, that we accept the premise that people's trusting intentions can be significantly influenced by their salient identities, a logical question that follows this assertion is: How are people's personal (or social) identities activated? Or in other words, how do people come to define themselves in terms of their own personal norms and values (as unique individuals), and how do they come to define themselves in terms of the norms and values of a salient social in-group? Given that the current thesis takes a group-based approach towards the study of trust, the following paragraphs give greater emphasis to the latter question of how people's social identities are invoked.

The salience of people's social identities produces intergroup behaviour by virtue of the categorization process (Turner, 1984). As Tajfel (1978) pointed out, categorisation is a process whereby individuals systematise and make sense of their environment. The relevant social categorizations people invoke under different interaction situations will guide people's cognitive perceptions, as well as their actions and behaviours. Specifically, through categorisation, perceived differences between different social categories, as well as the perceived similarities within the same social category, will both be accentuated. From Self-Categorization theory, we know that changes in the way that people categorize themselves vary as a function of an interaction between the readiness of the perceiver to employ particular self-categories, and “fit” (Oakes, 1987; Turner et al., 1987).

Firstly, as outlined in Blanz (1999), perceiver readiness, or accessibility of social categorizations within any given situation, can be influenced by both context factors and chronic accessibility. Specifically, it was suggested that each perceiver has within each of them, an internal hierarchy, which ranks various social categorizations in terms of their accessibility. The mean accessibility ranking of any social categorization, therefore, represents a perceiver's average tendency to code or identify stimulus persons or situations that possess certain characteristics in terms of that particular category membership. This chronic accessibility of social categorizations was conceptualized as largely being a product of an individual's past experiences (Bruner, 1957), and it has been further suggested that categorizations with high chronic accessibilities (i.e. sex, race) are ones which are more likely to become salient in a person's perception, compared to categorizations with low chronic accessibility (Blanz, 1999; van Knippenberg, van Twuyver, & Pepels, 1994).

Apart from what perceivers may bring with them to a particular interaction situation, short-term contextual factors present in the immediate environment may also impact upon the salience and accessibility of social categorizations (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). A study by van Twuyver and van Knippenberg (1995), for example, demonstrated that a priming exercise increased the accessibility of previously weakly accessible categories (university major and university town), and subsequently enhanced the use of the primed categorizations in a following social information processing task. Perceiver readiness or relative accessibility, therefore, refers to how an individual's past experiences, present expectations, motives, goals and needs can affect the relevance of social stimuli within a particular situation. In short, it controls the degree to which the perceiver will entertain certain possibilities, invoke certain

knowledge, or value certain traits and characteristics (Turner et al., 1994; Turner et al., 1987).

Fit, on the other hand, comprises of two components: comparative and normative fit. Comparative fit is based on the principle of meta-contrast (Oakes, 1987; Turner et al., 1987), which denotes that a collection of stimuli will be categorized as belonging to the same entity to the extent that the perceived differences between them is less than the perceived differences between them and the remaining stimuli within the particular context (Turner, 1985; Turner et al., 1987). Comparative fit can, therefore, be seen as referring to the perceived emergence of a central category against a contrasting background. For example, apples and oranges are more likely to be perceived as components of the broader category “fruit” (rather than apples and oranges), in a situation where meat and vegetables are present than just fruit (Haslam, Oakes, Turner, & McGarty, 1995). Normative fit, on the other hand, refers to the match in terms of content between category specifications and the instances being represented (Turner et al., 1987). In order to categorize a group of people as being old as opposed to young, for example, these people must not only differ (in appearance, actions etc.) from young people more than from each other (comparative fit), but must also do so in the direction consistent with people's normative expectations and beliefs (i.e. Old people should prefer lawn bowling to rugby in terms of sports participation).

The concepts of comparative and normative fit in the categorization process have been empirically tested in some studies (Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1991; van Knippenberg et al., 1994). Oakes et al., (1991), for example, demonstrated (Experiment 1) that tendencies to categorize stimulus persons into groups of males and females were more pronounced when all males shared an opinion on a (gender irrelevant) issue, which differed from a uniformed opinion held by all females (comparative fit).

Tendencies to categorize these stimulus persons into males and females were inhibited when opinions on the issue were randomly distributed across the gender groups (no comparative fit). Furthermore, Oakes et al. (1991), also demonstrated that the categorization of stimulus persons into distinct categories as well as the increase in salience of participants' own social identities were the most pronounced when comparative fit was coupled with normative fit. Specifically, normative fit was found to be obtainable when the content of attitudes expressed on a category-relevant issue were consistent with the perceiver's own stored expectations about the particular category membership. For example, normative fit for a male/female categorization was achieved in a study by van Knippenberg et al. (1994) when all male stimulus persons expressed disagreement with a "positive discrimination in favour of women" while all female stimulus persons were portrayed as being supportive of the position.

Invoking Social Identity Salience

As outlined above, the systematic interaction between perceiver readiness and fit is understood to be key components of the categorization process (Bantz, 1999; Oakes, 1987). Importantly, what this implies is that categorizing is inherently comparative and is, therefore, intrinsically variable, fluid, and context dependent (Turner, et al., 1987; Turner et al., 1994). A critical question which arises from this notion that self-categories are fluid and context dependent, and is pertinent to the current discussion on how salient identities can influence trusting intentions, focuses on the salient level of self-categorization. Specifically, when do people define themselves and others at the group level? In other words, when will people come to view themselves at a more inclusive (social) level as opposed to a more exclusive (individual) level?

One of the more obvious answers to the question of when social rather than personal identities are likely to become salient is the presence of intergroup conflict

(Tajfel, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Under conditions of intense intergroup conflict, it is more likely than not that individual from opposing social groups will behave towards one another in terms of their respective social group memberships, rather than in terms of their individual characteristics or individual differences (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Findings from Sherif's (1966) boy camp studies, for example, demonstrated that boys who had previously formed friendships but were subsequently assigned to opposing groups, put aside their interindividual relationships, and behaved antagonistically towards each other when their respective groups were in competition over valued resources.

Apart from intergroup conflict, one other prediction is that social identity will become more salient during intergroup interactions, and that personal identity will be more salient during intragroup interactions. A study by Hogg and Turner (1987), for example, demonstrated that intersex collective encounters between two males and two females (a situation expected to heighten the salience of inter category differences), resulted in both male and female participants categorizing themselves more in terms of their gender groups, and engaging in greater self-stereotyping consistent with positive aspects of their respective gender categories, than under intrasex dyadic encounters. Results from this study indicated that during intergroup interactions, the perceived differences in attitudes between men and women were larger than the perceived differences within each gender category. On the other hand, perceived differences within each gender category and between persons were larger than within-person differences in attitudes during intragroup interaction situations (Hogg & Turner, 1987). These effects, in turn, led to greater self-perceptions in terms of the salient social group-membership rather than a personal level of identity.

In addition, it has also been suggested that the relative position of the self within a comparative context will affect people's tendencies to invoke social comparison categories rather than inter-individual comparisons. Specifically, it has been suggested that compared to more moderate group members, extreme group members are more likely to categorize themselves and others as members of the same in-group or a comparison out-group (Haslam & Turner, 1992). This tendency of extremists to classify people into "us" and "them" more sharply, compared to moderates, is seen to be a result of a greater difference between the extremists' position and those of the majority of others within a social context. In short, the relatively polarized position held by extremists may lead them to perceive similar others as more similar to them, and different others as more different, compared to moderates (Haslam & Turner, 1995), thus rendering them more likely to employ social categorizations than personal ones. Overall, the above findings indicate that fundamentally, it is when intergroup differences tend to be perceived as larger than intragroup differences that we tend to categorize the self as "we" instead of "I", and see the included others as similar rather than different.

The categorization process, therefore, refers to the perception of a class of stimuli in terms of their shared common attributes that define and distinguish their class from others, and consequently enhance perceptions of similarity to members within their own class, and dissimilarity from members of different classes, in context. This cognitive process is thus, the basis of *social stereotyping* (Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963), a process whereby an agreement is reached amongst members of one social group that certain attributes are possessed by all or most members of some other group (Turner, 1984). Social categorizations within a given culture tend to be associated with various traits, attitudes, values and social norms (Turner, 1984). Being categorized as old, for

example, may be associated with being politically conservative within specific cultures. When individuals are perceived primarily in terms of their relevant group membership, we tend to assign them the stereotypical attributes associated with membership in that group, and they become perceptually interchangeable with other members of their own group, and perceptually distinctive from members of other groups. The stereotyping of out-group members, for example, may lead people to perceive out-group others as 'identical' since they are categorized on the basis of shared attributes which characterized their group and in terms of which they are interchangeable rather than unique and differentiated (Turner, 1984).

In other words, when people see themselves as group members and if the social situation is such that a meaningful group membership has been rendered salient, people become *depersonalized*. From Turner et al. (1987, p. 50), "Depersonalization refers to the process of 'self-stereotyping' whereby people come to perceive themselves more as the interchangeable exemplars of a social category than as unique personalities defined by their individual differences from others." According to this viewpoint, therefore, depersonalization, which is the shift from the personal to the social level of identity, is the process underlying group phenomena, such as social stereotyping, co-operation, shared norms and social influence processes (Turner et al., 1987). Two aspects of the depersonalization process are especially pertinent to the current discussion on trust: perceived interchangeability and greater adherence to group norms (Reicher, Spears & Postmes, 1995; Turner, 1984). In the following section, therefore, I will discuss how these two aspects of depersonalization may impact upon people's trusting decisions.

Developing Trust through Depersonalization Processes

While trust as a concept has been defined in various ways and examined through multiple different approaches, one of the underlying themes common to most research

in this area is the idea that trust is a highly desirable construct, which facilitates the development of positive social relationships and is crucial to the very fabric of social life (Cook, 2001; Fukuyama, 1995; Hardin, 2002). Putnam (1992), for example, views trust as a central tenet of social capital, which refers to the features of social organizations that can “improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action” (pp.167). In fact, Bok (1978), went as far as to say that trust is a “social good... and when it is destroyed, societies falter and collapse” (pp.28). Akin to helping behaviour, therefore, trust can be conceptualized as a form of pro-social behaviour through which positive social relationships with others may be established and maintained. Research in the area of pro-social behaviours (i.e. helping) and how they can be influenced by people's social group memberships and salient social identities, therefore, can serve to inform the current research on trust.

Under conditions of social identity salience where people come to see themselves more as group members, and less so as unique individuals, perceptions of similarities between the self and other members of the same social group will result in the minimisation of perceived interpersonal differences and an increased tendency to view the self as interchangeable with other in-group members (Turner, 1984). This heightened perception of commonalities between the self and other group members has been shown to increase the degree of pro-social behaviours towards in-group members, such as cooperation and helping (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997; Dovidio, Gaertner, Validzic, Matoka, Johnson, & Frazier, 1997; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Manner, Luce, Neuberg, Cialdini, Brown, & Sagarin, 2002). Specifically, the perceptual interchangeability between oneself and in-group others may lead people to perceive an overlap between one's own needs and motives, and those of in-group others (Turner, 1984). Goals and interests of one's own in-group members, therefore, become

the goals and interests of oneself, and vice versa (Brewer, 2008; De Cremer & Van Vugt, 1999; Kramer & Brewer, 1986). In this way, sharing a common social categorization should induce higher levels of cooperation, trust, and helping behaviour between in-group members, since the needs of in-group others are identical to one's own (Brewer, 2008; Turner, 1984).

A study by Sole, Marton and Hornstein (1975), for example, revealed that pedestrians were more likely to return a 'lost letter' if they believed that the owner (of the letter) shared a common social group membership with them. Furthermore, a study by Dovidio et al (1997) found that the re-categorization of former out-group members into a more inclusive, superordinate category increased participants' willingness to help, as well as self-disclose to these in-group members, compared to conditions whereby a more differentiated categorical division was emphasised. The researchers, thus, went on to conclude that the re-categorization of participants into a single, more inclusive social group resulted in the perceptual overlap between one's own interests and those of in-group others, which subsequently facilitated the development of pro-social behaviours (Dovidio et al., 1997). Trust as a form of pro-social behaviour, therefore, may be similarly enhanced towards in-group members following the categorization of self and others into a common social in-group. Specifically, perceived interchangeability between in-group members as a consequence of a psychological shift from a personal to a collective level of identity, therefore, can result in an increased tendency to trust in-group members more, compared to out-group members (Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Maddux & Brewer, 2005; Messick & Kramer, 2001; Tyler, 2003).

A study by Maddux and Brewer (2005), for example, found that participants of an on-line trust game were more willing to forego a safe option and trusted those whom they perceived to share a social group-membership with, rather than those categorized

as out-group members. When given a choice between receiving a guaranteed 3 USD from the experimenter, or an unknown amount ranging from 0-11 USD allocated by a stranger, participants were more likely to take a risk and choose the unknown amount, when the stranger was perceived to be an in-group rather than an out-group member (Maddux & Brewer, 2005). This idea of a form of depersonalized trust in those who are perceptually interchangeable with the self, can be summarized by the following quote, which suggests that shared membership in a salient social category “serves as a rule for defining the boundaries of low-risk interpersonal trust that by passes the need for personal knowledge and the costs of negotiating reciprocity” (Brewer, 1981 p.356). A study by Tanis and Postmes (2005) also indicated that participants who self-categorised as group members were more likely to expect favourable treatment from in-group than out-group members, and consequently trusted in-group members over out-group members.

Apart from fostering greater levels of trust in in-group others, categorisation and depersonalisation processes can also influence people's trusting intentions through their adherence to in-group norms under conditions of social identity salience.

Depersonalisation processes has been argued to result in people's behaviours being guided by the norms of values of the salient in-group, rather than their own personal norms and values (Turner, 1982; Turner et al., 1987). Specifically, it has been suggested that conditions which optimally accentuate the homogeneity of the in-group, and cause persons to be perceived primarily as group members rather than as idiosyncratic individuals, will result in increased compliance with the relevant in-group norms (Doise, 1969; Lea, Spears, & deGroot, 2001; Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1999; Reicher et al., 1995). Experiments conducted by Spears, Lea, and Lee (1990), for example, demonstrated that when participants' social identities were made salient (and

their own personal identities remained anonymous to others), there was greater compliance with group norms, compared to when participants' personal identities were made salient and identifiable. The researchers, thus, argued that greater perceptions of in-group uniformity or interchangeability under the social identity salient/personal identity anonymous conditions resulted in people's behaviours being strongly influenced by the dominant in-group norms. If the form of depersonalized trust suggested by Brewer (1981, 2008) above is understood as a type of “in-group trust” norm, where people can expect to place their trust in perceptually interchangeable in-group members without the need for individuating information, then it serves to reason that this in-group trust norm will be further enforced when people's social identities have been rendered salient.

To date, there has been a considerable amount of evidence which suggests that apart from self-definition, people also seek to evaluate themselves on dimensions relevant to their salient social group-memberships, when their social identities are salient (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Through comparisons between their own and other relevant social groups, people seek to maintain and enhance their self-perception as group members, and do so by positively distinguishing the in-group from the out-group on valued dimensions (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Findings from a large number of experiments, which revealed participants' in-group favouring tendencies on resource distribution tasks following categorization processes, can, therefore, be understood as the result of people's attempts to achieve positive distinctiveness for their social in-group (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971; Turner, 1975). In this way, it is reasonable to suggest that as much as possible, people will seek to define their salient in-groups positively in order to evaluate themselves more favourably. Given that the self-categorization process facilitates the

perceptual interchangeability between in-group members and consequently enhance perceptions of similarities, we can further infer that by attributing positive characteristics to ourselves as group-members, we are simultaneously attributing positive characteristics to other in-group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987). Most relevant to our current research topic are findings from previous studies which show that individuals tend to perceive in-group members as being more trustworthy, friendlier, and more cooperative than out-group members (Brewer & Sliver, 1978; Doise, Csepeti, Dann, Gouge, Larsen & Ostell, 1972; McAllister, 1995; Platow, McClintock & Liebrand, 1990). Comparatively favourable perceptions of in-group members in this form may, therefore, lead people to trust members of their own salient social group, more so than members of other groups.

Summarizing from the literature reviewed above, I conclude that people's trust in those whom they perceive as sharing a common social group-membership may be enhanced under conditions of social identity salience. Through depersonalisation processes, people's trust in in-group others can be facilitated through (a) A sense of depersonalized trust in group members (based upon shared goals and values), (b) Greater adherence to an "in-group trust" norm, and (c) Attribution of more favourable characteristics to in-group members. Theoretical and empirical research examined in this thesis will, therefore, be heavily informed by psychological concepts drawn from the social identity perspective. The precise nature of how people's salient identities and social group memberships will impact upon their trusting intentions and behaviours will be explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 3.

DEFINING TRUST AND THE ROLE OF RISK IN ESTABLISHING TRUST RELATIONS

Overview of Trust

Over the past three to four decades, trust has been the focus of extensive research projects in various disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, politics and economics (Hardin, 2001; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, Camerer, 1998; Rotter, 1967; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). This sustained interest in the issue of trust can be seen as arising from the general consensus that trust is an essential component of human social interaction and that trusting behaviour is something positive that should be encouraged and fostered (Kipnis, 1996; Rotter, 1980). Trust, for example, is often seen as a crucial element in the smooth functioning of various social and commercial activities (Albrecht & Travaglione, 2003; Kipnis, 1996; Shapiro, Sheppard, & Cheraskin, 1992; Tyler, 2003). A study by Albrecht et al. (2003) showed that perceptions of trust in management personnel influenced the degree to which employees felt committed to, and were willing to remain in a particular organization. Tyler (2003) also demonstrated that trust was a good predictor of people's job satisfaction and willingness to engage in extra-role behaviour in an organizational setting. In addition, trust has also been touted as one of the most desired qualities in close and romantic relationships (Fehr, 1988; Regan, Kocan, & Whitlock, 1998, Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985). Specifically, research has demonstrated that feelings of trust in a romantic partner can function to preserve relationships in the face of adversity or conflict (Miller & Rempel, 2004).

Apart from being crucial in the maintenance of pre-existing relationships, trust also plays an important role in the development of new relationships through facilitating interactions between initial strangers (Seligman, 2000). Unlike earlier societies, which were organized around kinship bonds and familial ties, modern society increasingly brings us into contact with previously unacquainted individuals. Trust, therefore, becomes instrumental in enabling us to initiate interactions with these strangers in the absence of additional information or good reasons to do so. While there is a general consensus regarding the importance and benefits of trust in various aspects of our social life, debate persists around how trust should be defined and conceptualized (Kramer, 1999; McAllister, 1995). In light of this constant debate, it may be helpful to start this chapter by first considering what trust is *not*, before delving into our discussion of what trust actually is.

Distinguishing Between Trust and Related Concepts

Confidence

One of the many concepts that trust is often conflated with is confidence, and the distinction between these two concepts is an important one to make. As pointed out by Luhmann (1988), both trust and confidence are founded upon positive expectations regarding the motives and intentions of one's interaction partner, but what characterises trust and sets it apart from confidence is the conscious recognition of alternative (negative) outcomes that would result in the event that one's trust should turn out to have been misplaced. To have confidence, for example, may refer to a person's expectations that a newly purchased car will function smoothly. Trust, on the other hand, may be one's willingness to purchase a second hand car from an unfamiliar car dealer, despite being aware of the risks involved (i.e. car not functioning as well as

expected). The distinction between confidence and trust was also made by Barber (1983), who argued that while confidence may refer to one's expectations of another regarding his/her competent role performance, trust, on the other hand, are positive expectations that the subject of one's trust will be willing to place his/her interests before those of their own. In short, therefore, confidence is the expectation of competence, while trust is the expectation of benign intent from one's interaction partner (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994).

Assurance

A second distinction that I will make in this review is that between trust and *assurance* (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). While the concept of trust may usually be used in reference to one's expectations of goodwill from an interaction partner, assurance refers to expectations of positive behaviour from one's partner for reasons *other* than the goodwill of the partner (Yamagishi Yamagishi, 1994). The concept of assurance, therefore, functions not through positive expectations regarding the intentions or personal dispositions of one's interaction partner, but rather through the knowledge that the partner cannot seek to harm them without harming themselves in the process. As outlined in Yamagishi and Yamagishi (1994), for example, the full range of social capital that could have been established between people in a committed relationship (i.e. business partners), such as mutual interdependence, social reputation, as well as the possibility of retaliation, would all serve to ensure that one party cannot harm the other without harming the self. Assurance, therefore, is based upon the alignment of one's own self-interest with that of other parties in a specific relationship. This is, thus, different from trust, which is based upon (positive) perceptions of the interaction partner's traits, motives, and intentions (Yamagishi Yamagishi, 1994). Whilst Dasgupta (1988) referred to the need for a credible and appropriate sanctioning

system in ensuring the occurrence of ‘trustworthy’ behaviour, this form of ‘trust’ may in fact be more suitably classified as *assurance*.

Predictability

Finally, in this section, I seek to distinguish between the concepts of trust and *predictability*. Deutsch (1973, p. 148) initially defined trust as “confidence that one will find what is desired from another, rather than what is feared”. This definition, therefore, emphasizes the predictability of *desired* behaviour. From this definition, however, other researchers have gone on to suggest that predictability *per se*, *not* the predictability of *positive* behaviour, is central to the concept of trust (e.g., Dasgupta, 1988; Gambetta, 1988; Rempel, et al., 1985; Shapiro et al., 1992). Shapiro et al. (1992), for example, argued that the predictability of un-cooperative or negative behaviour can also be understood as a form of trust. Specifically, the authors suggested that trust is simply the ability to predict other people's behaviours accurately, and respond reliably in any given situation. Argued this way, whether certain behaviours are desirable (or not), is not central to the very definition and nature of trust (Shapiro et al., 1992).

In this thesis, however, I would argue that while trust and predictability can both be seen as functioning to reduce risk perceptions in an interaction situation, trust, as a social construct that facilitates the formation of meaningful relationships, should be extended beyond mere predictability (Deutsch, 1958; Tyler, 2001). In fact, Deutsch noted that “predictability is clearly not sufficient to characterize the everyday meaning of trust” (1958, p. 265). Simply being able to predict negative behaviour which may result from un-cooperative behaviours, therefore, cannot satisfactorily be seen or conceptualized as an expression of trust. As pointed out by Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), trust increases people’s willingness to take risks *and* to be

vulnerable, but predictability does not. The mere knowledge regarding the likely behaviour of an interaction partner does not necessarily increase our desire to be vulnerable to him/her.

Defining Trust

In the previous section, I differentiated between trust and a few related concepts. In this section, I will go on to outline various definitions and characteristics of trust as traditionally examined in the literature. It should be noted from the onset, however, that definitions of trust are wide ranging and varied, so in this section, I will only be elaborating upon a few of the more widely recognized and adopted positions. Firstly, trust as defined by one of the earlier theorists, Julian Rotter, refers to “a generalized expectancy held by an individual that the word, promise, oral or written statement of another individual or group can be relied on” (Rotter, 1980, p. 1). While Rotter’s definition appears to describe the type of trust that people have in a *specific* party, this definition has more commonly been adopted by researchers to refer to a form of generalized trust in others. The Rotter Interpersonal Trust Scale (ITS), for example, is an additive scale which samples people’s trusting behaviours across a wide range of situations and targets (Wright & Tedeschi, 1975). A representative item of the ITS, which is “In dealing with strangers one is better off to be cautious until they have provided evidence that they are trustworthy”, clearly conceptualizes and measures trust in a manner which bears resemblance to a form of personal disposition, rather than trust in a specific party. A number of laboratory experiments have also gone on to show that high trustors (as measured by the ITS) are less likely to lie, are rated by their peers as being more trustworthy, and are in fact more trusting of others (Rotter, 1967; Schlencker, Helm, & Tedeschi, 1973). Defined and measured this way, trust becomes an individual predisposition or a personality trait which determines people’s likelihood

to trust others, even in the absence of any information about the trustee or the particular trust situation they have been presented with (Mayer et al., 1995).

In contrast to the above approach, which placed greater emphasis upon the personal predispositions of the trustor, the position adopted by Mayer et al. (1995) focused more on the individual characteristics of the potential trust recipient in their definition of trust. Trust, conceptualized by Mayer et al. (1995), therefore, refers to “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectations that the other party will perform a particular action important to the trustor” (p. 712). In their paper, these researchers identified three core components of the potential trustee which would serve to inform people's trust decisions: ability, benevolence, and integrity. Ability, according to this definition, is similar to the earlier conception of confidence, which refers to the perceived expertise of the trustee in a specific domain (e.g., trusting an accountant with your tax returns; Good, 1988; Kee & Knox, 1970; Sitkin & Roth, 1993). Benevolence, on the other hand, refers to the trustee's general positive orientation toward the trustor, where perceptions of high benevolence in the trustee would correspond with greater assessments of trustworthiness by the trustor (Kee & Knox, 1970; Mayer et al., 1995). Finally, the concept of integrity was used to refer to aspects of the trustee's attitudes and values which the trustor may deem acceptable, and may hence be facilitative towards trust development between the two parties (Mayer et al., 1995). Specifically, a trustee will be seen as possessing high levels of integrity if he/she has a good reputation among others, a strong sense of justice, and consistency between attitudes and behaviours, all of which should conform to the trustor's own standards (Mayer et al., 1995).

While trust as defined by Mayer et al. (1995) appears to describe a form of behavioural disposition or trusting intentions, placing its emphasis upon people's

willingness to act, Deutsch (1958) conceptualised it more in terms of an actual behaviour. Specifically, Deutsch (1958) defined trust as "...behaviour which an individual (engages in) and perceives to have greater negative motivational consequences if the expectation is not confirmed than positive motivational consequences if it is confirmed" (p. 266). From Deutsch's (1958) point of view, therefore, the defining feature of trust is an act performed by an individual while recognizing that if his/her trusting beliefs were ill-founded, then he/she will be worse off than if they had not acted in a trusting manner at all. Deutsch's (1958) perspective on trust shares some commonalities with that of Mayer et al.'s (1995) in that they both emphasized the importance of expectations in influencing trusting intentions and trusting behaviour respectively. These researchers, however, ultimately diverge on what they perceived to be the core components of trust. While Deutsch (1958) perceived trust as being motivated by situational factors (i.e., cost-benefit analysis), Mayer et al. (1995) saw trust as being primarily motivated by the individual characteristics of the trustee.

Trust: The Role of Risk

From the above discussion, it is clear that trust researchers hold divergent opinions about what the core elements of trust are. Some view trust as a personality trait associated with each individual trustor, some see it as an expectation primarily informed by characteristics of the potential trustee, while others conceptualize it more in terms of an actual behaviour informed by people's cost-benefit analysis of the interaction situation. Despite this lack of a consensual definition, however, most researchers tend to agree that a central component of the trust process is *risk* (Cook, Yamagishi, Cheshire, Cooper, Matsuda & Mashima, 2005; Deutsch, 1958; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Johnson-George & Swap, 1982; Rosseau et al., 1998; Schlenker et al., 1971). Risk is something which arises out of uncertainty (Siegrist, Gutscher, & Earle, 2005; Slovic, 1987;

Viklund, 2003). Specifically, perceptions of risk are inherently associated with the fact that people cannot know for sure what will happen as a result of their decisions, behaviours etc. Perceptions of risk in the trust process, therefore, can be seen to be caused by people's uncertainty about the wisdom of their decisions to trust (or not). In this way, risk is central to the trust process because without this inherent uncertainty, there would be no need for trust (Luhmann, 1988; Viklund, 2003).

Simmel (1964), for example, proposed that the need for trust arises when the amount of knowledge we possess about a person or situation is somewhere between total knowledge and total ignorance. This argument is similar to the one put forward by Luhmann (1988), who suggested that trust is especially important in the absence of total knowledge. What these researchers suggested, therefore, was that when there is total knowledge, trust is not needed; but when there is total ignorance, there is no rational basis to trust either (McAllister, 1995). All human beings, for example, know that they will die one day. One does not then have to *trust* that one will die; one *knows* that one will die. Similarly, one cannot *trust* a passer-by on the street with a million dollars of his/her own money; one can only *gamble* that the passer-by on the street will not make off with that one million dollars. Lewis and Weigert (1985) also pointed out that trust occurs not when people have complete knowledge of a situation or person, but when people have *faith* that the uncertainty or risk in the situation is manageable and benign. To trust, therefore, is to have faith that aspects of a belief are true beyond the available evidence (Rempel et al., 1985). Trust is, thus, most relevant when there are certain elements of the situation which are unknown to the trustor and beyond the trustor's control. In other words, trust is most needed in the face of risk, when there is *incomplete* knowledge and uncertainty about the situation and/or the motives and intentions of the trustee (Seligman, 2000; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). The possession of

information which is somewhere between total knowledge and total ignorance, therefore, essentially characterizes the risk present in most trust situations.

Building upon this idea, some researchers have even gone on to argue that the act of trusting is conceptually equivalent to taking risks (Yamagishi, 2000). Most researchers, however, regard the relationship between trust and risk as being less simplistic and more multi-faceted (Frewer, Howard, Hedderley, & Shepherd, 1996). For some, risk is more akin to an antecedent of trusting behaviour (Cook et al., 2005; Luhmann, 1988). Findings from Cook et al.'s (2005) studies, for example, found that participants' willingness to take risks precipitated the formation of trust relationships, which consequently resulted in higher cooperation rates between interaction partners. According to these researchers, therefore, an individual's willingness to take risks is thus a precursor to trust (Cook et al., 2005; Holmes & Rempel, 1989). On the other hand, research by Tanis & Postmes (2005), for example, has shown that perceptions of trustworthiness in an interaction partner increased participants' willingness to take risks. Interestingly, therefore, while trust presupposes a situation of risk and uncertainty, it is also conceptualized as an attitude or belief which allows you to take risks (Viklund, 2003). In other words, while there has to be risk for there to be trust, the less trust we have, the less willing we will be to take risks (Viklund, 2003).

More recently, an important differentiation that trust researchers are increasingly emphasising, and is meaningful to our current discussion regarding risk as a core element of trust, is the distinction between trust perceptions and trusting behaviours (Hardin, 2001; Mayer et al., 1995; McKnight, Cummings & Chervany, 1998; Messick & Kramer, 2001; Rousseau, 1998). As previously mentioned, Mayer et al. (1995) conceptualized trust as people's perceptions regarding the trustworthiness and integrity of the trustee. Trusting behaviours, on the other hand, would represent people's actions

or willingness to act upon those (trust) beliefs (Deutsch, 1958; Hardin, 2001). Trust perceptions, thus, can be seen as an assessment of a person/situation, which is essentially risk free; while trusting behaviours involve action as a result of trust perceptions, and as such, entails a certain amount of risk, *especially* if the trust beliefs were ill-founded. Discussions concerning the relationship between trust and risk, therefore, are especially important in analyses of trusting *behaviour*.

Consistent with the above approaches, I am also of the position that trust and risk are two closely related concepts, and any attempts to better understand trust development processes should take into account the role of risk. In fact, I suggest that while there are multiple definitions of trust, each of them share an underlying principle. Specifically, I propose that contention surrounding the definitions and antecedents of trust can be understood as the result of researchers focusing on different factors to explain or predict people's willingness to take risks and, hence, trust. The personality approach to trust, for example, suggests that trust-related experiences accumulated throughout a person's lifetime will result in a relatively stable personality characteristic, which determines an individual's overall propensity to trust others (Jones, 1996; Rotter, 1980). Understood this way, individual propensities to trust are primarily influenced by people's risk perceptions (Gill, Boies, Finegan, & McNally, 2005; Jones & George, 1998; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; McAllister, 1995). A study by Seigrist et al. (2005), for example, found that participants' general trust levels were negatively correlated with their risk perceptions, with high trustors perceiving lower levels of risk than low trustors. Lower levels of risk perceptions, therefore, may render high trustors more likely to engage in trusting behaviours compared to low trustors. These results, thus, indicate that individual trust propensities as understood by researchers such as Rotter (1980), are conceptually related to individual risk perceptions.

In contrast to the above approach, researchers who take a rational choice or cost-benefit analysis approach to trust tended to focus on the shared goals and common interests as the basis of risk minimizing information that facilitates trusting perceptions and behaviours (Hardin, 1991; Kramer, 1999; Schelling, 1960; Williamson, 1993). Sheppard and Tuchinsky (1996), for example, suggested that trusting behaviour will occur when the interaction partner stands to lose too much if he or she engages in untrustworthy behaviours; and that the partners' interests are in line with those of the self. This position is aptly illustrated in Hardin (2001), which argues that trust will engender when "my trust of you, is encapsulated in your interest in fulfilling the trust" (p. 3). From this perspective, therefore, the trustees' own personal interests, which are congruent or *encapsulated* in the trustors' interest, minimize perceptions of risks and serves as an insurance of trustworthy behaviour by the trustee (Hardin, 2001). In fact, trust in this form is really much closer to the prior definition of assurance, which relied on external sanctioning systems to enforce cooperative or trustworthy behaviours (Dasgupta, 1988; Kipnis, 1996; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994).

In addition to the personality and rational choice approaches, other trust researchers have focused on the underlying social relations between interacting parties as the basis of risk-minimizing information which would facilitate the development of trusting intentions. Social relationships between interaction partners, such as past interactions with the potential trustee, for example, appear to be important predictors of risk perceptions and trusting behaviours. Trust in this form, which is based upon past interactions and experiences with the potential trustee, can be referred to as history-based trust (Kramer, 1999). According to this viewpoint, the accumulation of information through repeated interactions provide the basis for more confident predictions regarding the motives and intentions of the potential trustee, consequently

resulting in a decrease in risk perceptions and an increase in trusting behaviours (Boon & Holmes, 1991; Jones & George, 1998; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Linskold, 1978; Rousseau et al., 1998; Shapiro et al., 1992). A study by Serva, Fuller and Mayer (2005) for example, found that perceptions of an interaction partner's trustworthiness were strengthened over repeated interactions, especially if the partner's behaviours were consistent across each transaction. This increase in trusting perceptions and trusting behaviours, therefore, can be seen as a result of reduced risk perceptions that were reinforced through the partner's cooperative behaviour over repeated interactions.

When first-hand information about the potential trust recipient is unavailable, reputations or recommendations obtained from a credible third-party source can also function to reduce people's risk perceptions and increase their trusting intentions and/or behaviours in the trustee (Burt & Knez, 1995; Ferrin, Dirks, & Shah, 2006; McEvily, Perrone, & Zaheer, 2003; McKnight et al., 1998; Uzzi, 1997; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). This type of trust, therefore, can be referred to as reputation-based trust. Heimer (2001) illustrated this point in her account of pregnant women seeking abortion during times when abortion was classified as an illegal act. During that period in time, legal restrictions and the risks inherent in the abortion procedure compelled women to rely on recommendations by trusted others to minimize risk when seeking out comparatively reliable and reputable abortionists (Heimer, 2001). A potential trustee's reputation among trusted third-parties can, therefore, serve to reduce risk perceptions and increase the occurrence of trusting behaviours towards this trustee (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). While positive reputations can serve to foster greater trust in certain individuals, it can also function to *reduce untrustworthy* behaviour by some. People who have established for themselves a trustworthy reputation, for example, stand to lose a lot more than they would gain by engaging in opportunistic or untrustworthy behaviour

(Ensminger, 2001). Recognition of this fact would thus prompt people to trust those with an established reputation more, compared to relatively unknown individuals.

Summarizing from the above information, it is clear that each of the different approaches to trust differ in what they perceive to be the dominant risk-reduction mechanism that would ultimately propel individuals to behave in a trusting manner. While personality theorists focused on personal dispositions fostered through past experiences, rational-choice theorists emphasised the alignment of interests between trustor and trustee. Finally, there are also those who identified social capital such as reputations or recommendations by trusted parties as the source of risk-reducing information. The approach that I have adopted in this thesis is similar to the above theories in the sense that I also identified a core factor which I believe reduces people's perceptions of risk, and serves to facilitate the development of trusting relations. As previously outlined in Chapter 2, this factor that I have identified is the shared social group-membership between trustor and trustee, particularly under conditions of social identity salience. I will go on to further elaborate upon this point in the following sections of this Chapter.

My Conceptualization of Trust

Having reviewed various trust perspectives, I will now delineate my understanding of trust and go on to propose a definition of trust that will be employed throughout this thesis. Firstly, consistent with past theorists, I propose that trust will be most needed under conditions of uncertainty. Specifically, I agree with previous viewpoints which stressed that while trust is not needed under conditions of complete knowledge, it is also not possible to trust when there is complete ignorance (of the situation/person). In other words, I propose that trust becomes a relevant concept when there are elements of manageable risk present in the situation. Trust situations as

examined in this current thesis, therefore, will always involve a risk component. Specifically, participants in the experimental studies of this thesis will always be made aware of the potentially negative consequences that could ensue if their trusting intentions and behaviours were not reciprocated. As described at the outset of this chapter, trust as manipulated and conceptualized in this thesis, therefore, is distinct from the concept of assurance. Trust situations as examined in this thesis will always allow for the potential trustee to engage in behaviours that would be to the detriment of the trustor, and which would not be detrimental to the interests of the potential trustee. In other words, the trustor's interests are never completely aligned with those of the trustee. The trustor can, thus, never be *assured* that the potential trust recipient will look out for his/her best interests.

Also congruent with the viewpoint of Mayer et al., (1995), trust as defined in the current thesis emphasizes the role of positive expectations (informed by characteristics of the trustee) in the trust development process. Whilst Mayer et al., (1995) outlined three key characteristics of a potential trustee (benevolence, integrity, ability), I shall only be focusing on two out of the three aspects - benevolence and integrity - in this thesis. In the context of the current thesis, the ability component is irrelevant to our discussions as the trust development processes that I am interested in is unrelated to people's perceptions of how capable someone is. As foreshadowed in Chapter 1 (and will be further detailed in the following sections), trust as examined in this thesis will be measured in the form of self-disclosure. Whether or not the trustee is capable of performing certain role requirements, therefore, should not be central in influencing people's willingness to trust and self-disclose. Furthermore, as this thesis focuses on trust development among strangers, it is unlikely that knowledge regarding a person's ability to perform certain activities will be made available and hence should be less

relevant to the formation of trusting perceptions and behaviours. Instead, I shall be focusing on people's perceptions of benevolence and integrity in the trust situation, and how it affects people's likelihood to engage in trusting behaviours. Unlike personality theorists, I do not see trust as a largely stable trait that remains constant within an individual across different contexts. Instead, I conceptualize trust as a variable property that develops in the context of the specific interaction, based on factors that can take on different meanings as a function of people's salient identities under those specific conditions. For the current research program, therefore, I see trust as *the willingness to place one's (unknown) fate in the hands of another with the expectation that the other will, at least, not harm oneself, despite believing that the other could act to one's detriment.*

Trust in Strangers

Whilst research in the area of trust has been wide ranging, a more recent focus is on the concept of trust in strangers (Foddy, Platow & Yamagishi, 2009; Kramer, 1999; Tyler, 2003). The term stranger(s) commonly refers to a group or an individual who is not related to the self, and about whom we have no prior knowledge, or with whom we have not had any past interactions. In that respect, people are often limited in their ability to predict the motives and intentions of stranger(s), consequently impeding their ability to make substantive trust judgements in their interactions with these strangers. Given the amount of risk and uncertainty, it is therefore unsurprising that some people may shun or avoid developing new relationships with strangers, and choose to remain in more secure and established relationships (Macy & Skovertz, 1998; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). In fact, as previously suggested, trust requires a willingness to put oneself in a position of risk, and hence is unlikely to occur among strangers or mere acquaintances (Scanlon, 1979).

Trust in strangers, however, is not uncommon, and theoretically, there is no reason to believe that strangers would be in any way more dishonest and untrustworthy, compared to people whom we do know. Furthermore, plenty of people are willing to venture outside their familiar environments and established relationships, and interact with strangers (Macy & Skovertz, 1998). The most relevant question for psychologists, therefore, is not “*will* people trust strangers?” but rather, “*when* and *why* will people choose to trust strangers?” From a review of the relevant literature, I surmised that the recent surge of research interest in this area of trust in strangers may have arisen from a shift in the dynamics of our social environment which necessitates contact with, and trust in strangers on a daily basis (Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck, 2002; Kipnis, 1996; Putnam, 2001; Shapiro et al., 1992; Tyler, 2003).

As foreshadowed at the beginning of this chapter, the advancement of technological devices and the expansion of our communication networks have resulted in a social environment that is no longer restricted to our immediate network of families, co-workers and friends. In a workplace environment, for example, collaboration between local, as well as international organizations has become increasingly popular and achievable. This trend of cross-institutional cooperation creates novel work groups that may consist of previously unacquainted individuals, as well as virtual team-members who rely solely on computer-mediated communication (i.e., email, web-conferences; Smith & Kollock, 1999; Foddy et al., 2009) to co-ordinate their work efforts. Given the lack of prior work history, pre-established relationships, and, in some circumstances, the absence of actual, face-to-face contact with team members, these new working conditions demand reciprocal trust among people who are virtual strangers.

In addition to being important for the smooth functioning of work environments,

trust in strangers also plays a crucial role in other forms of computer mediated communication. Following the increased popularity of online health services (e.g. online cognitive-behavioural therapy and symptomatic diagnostic websites), trust in health services providers (i.e., physicians, psychologists) has become a research topic of interest in these relevant fields (Fletcher-Tomenius & Vossler, 2009). In contrast to “real-life” physicians or psychologists, who often come recommended by those whom we already trust and have well-established reputations, knowledge regarding online health providers may be relatively limited, thus mirroring a stranger-trust situation. Recent research, for example, has found that perceptions of trustworthiness in an online health advisor predicted people’s involvement in the health program, as well as future intentions to use that particular service again (van Vugt, Konijn, Hoorn, & Veldhuis, 2009). All these potential real-life implications, therefore, point to the importance of establishing greater understanding in the area of stranger trust.

In the trust approaches previously discussed, perceived risk in a given situation is usually minimised by the acquisition of trust-related information by the trustor about the potential trustee. This information, obtained through previous interactions with the trustee, which serves to reduce risk perceptions and facilitate trust development, however, is unavailable and thus insufficient in explaining and predicting patterns of trust in strangers. Whilst personality researchers may argue that individual trust propensities will dictate people’s trusting perceptions and behaviours in interactions with strangers, past research has demonstrated that the direct relationship between trusting predispositions and trusting behaviours is relatively weak (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007). At best, the effect of individual trust propensities on actual trusting behaviour appears to assert its influence *through* other factors, such as perceptions of benevolence and integrity (Colquitt et al., 2007).

Hardin (2001), for example, pointed out that most traditional measures of individual trust propensities may, in fact, reflect an individual's trust in people whom he/she is familiar with, instead of a trust in generalized others. Specifically, responses on measures which asked people, "Would you think that one can trust other people, or should one be careful with others?" may be based upon one's own experiences with friends or acquaintances. Instead of measuring trust in generalized others, therefore, these measures may, in fact, reflect the amount of trust that people have in those whom they are familiar with, people whom they based their responses on. These types of trust measures, therefore, do not fully capture generalized trust in others because people whom we interact with on a frequent basis would most likely be those whom we deem worthy of our trust to start with. If measures of trust in generalized others were in fact reflecting the amount of trust that people have in *trusted* others, this could potentially account for the weak correlation between measures of generalized trust and trusting behaviours across a wide range of situations (Colquitt et al., 2007), thus highlighting the limitations of existing measures of generalized trust in predicting actual trust in strangers.

Group-Based Trust in Strangers

In light of the limitations discussed above, the current thesis seeks to adopt a group-based approach in explaining and predicting the development of trust in strangers. This alternative perspective on trust conceptualizes it as a product of people's salient identities and shared category-membership between trustors and potential trustees, and appears more appropriate in addressing the issue of trust in strangers (Brewer, 2008; Haslam, 2004; Kramer, 1999; Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Messick & Kramer, 2001; Tyler, 2003). As discussed in Chapter 2, conditions which facilitate the categorisation of the self as a member of a salient social group will give rise to

depersonalization processes, where people will increasingly come to perceive themselves and in-group others as interchangeable exemplars of the salient social group, and less so as idiosyncratic individuals (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Also previously detailed in Chapter 2, trust in in-group others may be enhanced through three avenues following categorisation and depersonalisation processes. Firstly, perceptual interchangeability between oneself and in-group others will result in the perceived overlap between one's own needs and those of in-group others (Brewer, 2008; Turner, 1984). Shared social group-membership, therefore, should induce higher levels of trust in in-group members, since the needs of in-group others are identical to one's own (Turner, 1984). Secondly, depersonalisation processes, which have been shown to increase people's adherence to in-group norms and values (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1999; Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995), may similarly increase people's adherence to an "in-group trust" norm under conditions of social identity salience. Finally, self-categorisation processes will lead people to evaluate themselves in terms of their social group-memberships, and render it more likely that people will attempt to positively distinguish themselves from a comparison out-group on relevant dimensions (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In this way, people may seek to attribute more positive characteristics to in-group than out-group members. Consequently, depersonalised in-group members who are perceptually interchangeable with the self will be seen as similarly possessing more positive qualities, compared to out-group members (Brewer & Sliver, 1978; McAllister, 1995). Comparatively favourable perceptions of in-group members in this form may, therefore, lead people to trust members of their own salient social group, more so than members of other groups.

From the above summary, it is clear that the functioning mechanisms of a group-based approach to trust in strangers are free from the constraints of other approaches

previously discussed. It need not rely on one's previous experiences or interactions with the trustee, or even recommendations from trusted other, all of which are unobtainable with strangers. Instead, a group-based approach relies upon the psychological re-categorization of previously unacquainted individuals into in- or out-group members. People's risk assessments of the interaction situation will thus be informed by the knowledge they possess regarding the relevant group dynamics and social relationships, while their thoughts and behaviours will be guided by the norms and values of the salient social group-membership.

As with most other forms of trust, however, group-based trust is by no means a fail-safe option in deciding whether or not to trust strangers. The recent sentencing of a 150-year jail term for ex-financial advisor and fraudster Bernard Maddoff represents an extreme case of in-group trust gone wrong. Maddoff, who ran a Ponzi scheme, defrauded affluent members of his own in-group (the Jewish community). This kind of “affinity fraud”, which is based upon shared category memberships between the fraudster and his/her victims (Fairfax, 2003), is a clear illustration of the risks and dire consequences that could potentially result from an exploitation of in-group trust. Given the great amount of risk and uncertainty involved in trusting strangers, another goal of the current thesis is to examine whether the nature of the risks that people encounter in different situations will influence their likelihood to engage in group-based trust. For example, will people be more likely to engage in in-group trust when the risk involved in the trusting decision concerns them as a group member, rather than as a unique individual? Will people be more sceptical of an out-group member's intentions and behaviours when the well-being of the valued in-group, rather than their *personal* well-being is at stake, particularly when their social identities are salient?

Trust and Self-disclosure

As evident from the above discussion, risk is a prominent feature of most trust research (Deutsch, 1958; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Johnson-George & Swap, 1982; Rempel, et al., 1985; Rosseau, et al., 1998; Schlenker, et al., 1971; Seigrist et al., 2005). This tendency to emphasize the risk component in trust processes meant that most of the existing research in trust, and especially trust in strangers, has been conducted with social dilemma situations in which the amount of risk and benefits can be clearly quantified (Foddy et al., 2008; Maddux & Brewer, 2005; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). Participant behaviour in terms of resource distribution or acceptance in these intergroup social dilemma situations have thereby been seen to represent people's willingness to trust (or distrust) others.

Although providing valuable insight into trust processes, certain limitations inherent in these experimental situations may restrict our understanding of the full range of trust behaviours. Specifically, in social dilemma situations, the risk and benefits associated with each decision are clearly known. Participants are always clear in terms of what they stand to gain, and what they stand to lose, *before* any decision is made. Trust, however, is not always restricted to situations where exact knowledge regarding the pros and cons of trusting are available. In fact, the decision to trust is probably the hardest when the consequences of trusting, especially the potentially *negative* consequences of *mistrusting*, are difficult to estimate beforehand. It is trust in these situations, whereby the consequences of trusting are ambiguous, that I wish to examine in this current thesis.

Most importantly for the current research project, the potentially negative consequences from self-disclosure, unlike those in prisoner dilemma games, cannot be quantified in exact terms. People, for example, cannot know exactly what the disclosure

recipient will do with any information they choose to share with him/her. Will they tell one, two, three, or a group of people what you shared with them? Will they distort the content of your disclosure? Will the disclosure recipient ridicule you, and if so, to what extent? I, therefore, contend that all these uncertainties associated with the decision to self-disclose (or not), better captures the full-range of concerns involved in a trust decision-making process encountered in everyday life. Trust in this research project was, thus, examined in the form of people's willingness to self-disclose. A review of the self-disclosure literature and how it relates to trust in strangers will be further discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4.

ESTABLISHING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUST AND SELF-DISCLOSURE

Introduction

Within the field of psychology, self-disclosure has been studied by researchers from a variety of sub-disciplines, such as clinical psychologists, social psychologists, as well as personality researchers. Whilst the concept is a seemingly straightforward one, what exactly do psychologists mean when they refer to this phenomenon of self-disclosure? According to Rosenfeld (1992), to disclose is to make known or reveal. Self-disclosure, therefore, is “the act of making yourself known, of revealing yourself” (p.326). In a similar vein, self-disclosure was defined by Cozby (1973) as any type of information about oneself which he/she communicates verbally to another; while Pearce and Sharp (1973) emphasised the *conscious* sharing of self-information through which an individual makes him/herself known to another person. Defined in these terms, self-disclosure, thus excludes information elicited from a person by force, threats, or other coercive means (Pearce & Sharp, 1973). From these above definitions, it appears that there is a certain degree of consensus within the field about what self-disclosure means, at least when it is defined in such broad and general terms.

In contrast to these relatively broad definitions, the operationalization of self-disclosure in most theoretical and empirical research tended to be more multi-faceted and specific in their approach towards this research topic. For example, while formally

defined as the process of sharing personal information with others, self-disclosure as discussed in the literature places greater emphasis on the sharing or revealing of sensitive or potentially negative self-information (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993; McKenna & Bargh, 1998; Pennebaker, Zech, & Rime, 2001). Specifically, even though information such as “I am an alcoholic” and “I hate broccoli” can both, by definition, be classified as self-disclosures, it is information in a similar vein to that of the former that is the predominant focus of most self-disclosure research. The term ‘self-disclosure’, as commonly understood within our society, is qualitatively different from ‘telling’ or ‘communicating’, and in and of itself, implies the sharing of intimate information that goes beyond superficial descriptions of the self, and/or certain events. As argued by Pearce and Sharp (1973), therefore, it may be more appropriate to define self-disclosure as the sharing of information that is intimate or private in nature, and not readily available to others.

Whilst most definitions of self-disclosure conceive of it as an action or behaviour which occurs during social interactions (Cozby, 1973; Derlega et al., 1993; Wheelles & Grotz, 1977), some researchers have approached this topic from a personality trait perspective, conceptualising it instead, as a relatively stable individual characteristic (Berg & Derlega, 1987; Jourard, 1964; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958). Self-disclosure as a personality trait is most commonly measured through self-report questionnaires, such as Jourard's Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (JSDQ). The initial JSDQ (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958) consisted of 60 items of personal information (i.e. The type of literature that interests me the most), with 10 items for each of the 6 content areas (attitudes and opinions, tastes and interests, work and studies, money, personality, and body). Individuals would then respond to each item of information by indicating the extent to which each item had been revealed to specific disclosure target persons (i.e.

Mother, same-sex friend). Despite relatively widespread usage, however, there is little evidence that the JSDQ is a valid measure of people's actual self-disclosing behaviours. Specifically, studies have found little to no correlation between people's self-rated disclosures (as measure by the JSDQ), and their actual self-disclosing behaviours (Burhenne & Mirels, 1970; Himmelstein & Kimbrough, 1963; Lubin & Harrison, 1964).

Several explanations have since been offered for the relatively poor predictive validity of the JSDQ. Some researchers, for example, suggested that people's self-disclosure tendencies, as measured by the JSDQ, reflected their past history of self-disclosure to familiar others, such as parents and friends (Cozby, 1973). Actual self-disclosure as measured in subsequent studies, however, had subjects disclosing to the experimenter or previously unacquainted peers. This discrepancy may, thus, be responsible for the lack of any reliable correlation between participants' rated self-disclosure and actual self-disclosing behaviours (Cozby, 1973). In addition, it has been suggested that the JSDQ may have been incapable of tapping into a full range of self-disclosure dimensions (Wheless & Grotz, 1976). Specifically, researchers have suggested that there can be three basic parameters or dimensions of self-disclosure, namely (a) breadth (the amount of information disclosed), (b) depth (intimacy of information disclosed), and (c) duration (amount of time spent disclosing), (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Cozby, 1973). The JSDQ, however, may only be capable of assessing the depth of information that participants may have disclosed to specific targets, but not the duration or breadth of these disclosures (Wheless & Grotz, 1976). This inability of the JSDQ to capture all dimensions of self-disclosure, therefore, may have rendered it a poor predictor of people's actual self-disclosing behaviours.

Apart from these potential explanations, I would also like to note that the JSDQ measures participants' *self-perception* of their past disclosures. In other words, it

measures what people remember and think they have disclosed about themselves to others in the past. These perceptions, however, may not be entirely accurate representations of people's own past behaviours. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, people's perceptions of any specific interaction situation can be influenced by various factors, such as their own past experiences, current expectations, as well as their goals and motives in that particular context (Blanz, 1999; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). In this way, people may be motivated to perceive certain self-disclosure situations as being more meaningful and memorable than others, and consequently misrepresented their own past self-disclosing behaviours when completing the JSDQ. People, for example, may not remember talking about their favourite radio and TV programs to the stranger sitting next to them in a hospital waiting room, but may recall talking about their future plans in a fancy restaurant with their romantic partners. It is, therefore, possible that the predictive validity of the JSDQ may have been compromised as a result of the discrepancy between people's *perceptions* of their own self-disclosure and their actual self-disclosing behaviours.

In addition to the limitations of its measurement instruments, I would argue that the very concept of self-disclosure as a personality trait is a problematic one (Cozby, 1973). Past research, for example, has demonstrated that people's self-disclosing behaviours are heavily influenced by situational factors, such as the social relationships between the discloser and the disclosure target (Collins & Miller, 1994; Hill & Stull, 1987), the goals and motives of the discloser (Derlega & Chaikin, 1977; Goffman, 1956), as well as the evolving dynamics of the self-disclosure situation (Murphy & Strong, 1972). It is evident, however, that none of the aforementioned situational variables that have been shown to impact upon people's self-disclosing behaviours can be adequately accounted for by any of the existing instruments which seek to measure

self-disclosure as a personality variable. Furthermore, it serves to reason that people's self-disclosing intentions and behaviours in any given context should be dynamic and subjected to change (Ittelson & Cantril, 1954; Morton, 1978; Rosenfeld, 1992). To conceptualise self-disclosure as a relatively stable individual characteristic, therefore, fails to capture the fluidity of the evolving social relationships and how it may impact upon people's self-disclosure intents and behaviours. Based upon this recognition, this thesis seeks to understand self-disclosure as a process which occurs when individuals interact with others under specific social situations, rather than as characteristics of either the discloser or disclosure target.

Why do People Self-Disclose?

Stress Relief

Having established self-disclosure as an action or behaviour, rather than an individual characteristic, I will now go on to look at some of the reasons which motivate people to reveal relatively private or potentially sensitive information to others. Why would people choose to disclose to others self-information that they know could potentially impact negatively upon their own self-image? A review of the literature reveals a number of common factors which have been identified as reasons for why people self-disclose. First of all, many researchers talked about the need to “get something off your chest”, or the need to share with others certain emotions such as stress, anxiety, or even fear and shame (Kowalski, 1999; Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp, 1990; Rosenfeld, 1992). Specifically, it has been suggested that emotional episodes (both positive and negative) may prompt the need for social interaction through which people would communicate openly about the emotion-eliciting event and one's own feelings and reactions towards it (Luminet, Bouts, Delie, Manstead, & Rime, 2000; Rime, Mesquita, Philippot & Boca, 1991; Rime, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, &

Philippot, 1998). Such a need to share one's experiences and feelings with others has been found to occur even after relatively minor emotional events (Rime, Philippot, Boca, & Mesquita, 1992).

Whilst positive emotions have the capacity to enhance self-disclosure tendencies, this need to share with others may be especially salient when experiencing negative mood states (Ignatious & Kokkonen, 2007; Stiles, 1987). According to Stiles (1987), for example, people may feel a greater need to self-disclose when swamped by psychologically distressing emotions, such as fear, depression, or anger. Specifically, it has been suggested that people may be motivated to share with others their negative emotions in the belief that it may help alleviate the emotional burden that they are experiencing and subsequently assist in their path to recovery (Rime et al., 1998). This hypothesis was put to the test by Pennebaker et al. (2001) and these researchers found that while participants consistently reported that the sharing of negative emotions made them feel good and that they took comfort from the self-disclosure process, the emotional impact of the negative event, however, did not lessen as a result of their self-disclosures. In other words, even though participants perceived the self-disclosure process as being beneficial to their well-being, the actual burden of their negative emotions was not significantly reduced after sharing their experiences with others. Despite the correlation between psychological distress and the desire to self-disclose being demonstrated in both clinical (Burchill & Stiles, 1988) and non-clinical populations (Stiles, Shuster, & Harrigan, 1992), therefore, the argument that self-disclosure helps relieve negative emotions has not been consistently demonstrated (Pennebaker, et al., 2001).

Relationship Development and Maintenance

As discussed in the above section, past research has shown that people's willingness to self-disclose may be motivated by more individualistic reasons, such as their own personal desires to relieve their emotional burden by sharing with others their negative experiences, thoughts and feelings. Self-disclosure, however, has also been shown to serve a more affiliative role in social interaction processes. Researchers have suggested, for example, that the ability to share with others one's feelings and thoughts is a fundamental skill in developing and maintaining social relationships (Chaikin & Derlega, 1976). The process of social penetration (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Dindia & Allen, 1992), thus, refers to the development and gradual deepening of social relationships following increasing levels of self-disclosure. One of the reasons why self-disclosure seemingly facilitates the development and maintenance of social relationships appears to be that the act of self-disclosure conveys to the recipient of one's disclosure that the relationship is of importance, and that one feels positively about him/her (Collins & Miller, 1994; Rosenfeld, 1992). A meta-analysis conducted by Collins and Miller (1994), for example, found that participants self-disclose more to people whom they like, and eventually come to like those in whom they confide. Whilst self-disclosure may initially signify a desire for intimacy and closeness, it can also, in turn, heighten the intensity of the relationship as self-disclosure levels increase over the course of a particular relationship (Derlega & Chaikin, 1977; Shaffer, Pegalis, & Bazzini, 1996). In this way, self-disclosure and interpersonal closeness are reciprocally related (Derlega et al., 1993). Through the act of making oneself known to others, therefore, existing relationships are enhanced and new relationships established.

Reciprocity

As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, self-disclosure can be broadly defined as the process of making aspects of the self known to another. Defined this way,

the self-disclosure process, thus, presupposes a recipient, either real or imagined (Ignatius & Kokkonen, 2007). In fact, the disclosure recipient is key to this the whole process because one of the most important reasons for why people self-disclose is referred to as the 'reciprocity effect' (Altman, 1973; Derlega, Harris, & Chaikin, 1973; Jourard & Friedman, 1970; McAllister & Bregman, 1985). Specifically, the idea of a 'reciprocity effect' between disclosers and their recipient(s) suggests that self-disclosure begets self-disclosure. Several studies, for example, have, consistently demonstrated that the more intimately people share information about themselves with another, the more intimately the disclosure recipient will share information in return (Derlega et al., 1973; Ehrlich & Graeven, 1971; Jourard et al., 1970; Morton, 1978; Worthy, Gary, & Kahn, 1969). While the reciprocity effect appears to be relatively consistent, the reasons underlying this phenomenon is less well established and several factors have been put forward to explain this finding. Why do people respond to disclosures with disclosures of their own? In answer to this question, some researchers suggest that the reciprocity effect may be a result of modelling behaviour. Specifically, modelling behaviour refers to the matching of the intimacy level of one's disclosure content to the disclosure content of the interaction partner in a bid to respond appropriately to situational demands (Rubin, 1973). This idea is, thus, consistent with that of a generalized "norm of reciprocity" (Gouldner, 1960), in which disclosure by one member of an interacting dyad establishes the context for the appropriate level of self-disclosure and the other party is obliged to reciprocate at a similar level of disclosure because failure to respond in kind may be met with social disapproval.

In addition to modelling, it has also been suggested that the reciprocity effect may be mediated by positive affect, such as mutual liking and trust. This explanation was based on the idea that the sharing of intimate self-information may convey to the

disclosure recipient that one feels positively about him/her. This message may consequently encourage the disclosure recipient to disclose comparable levels of information about him/herself in return to reassure the initial discloser that their positive feelings were well-placed and reciprocated (Brewer & Mittelman 1980; Rubin, 1975). Given these competing hypotheses, studies have been conducted to test the functional mechanisms underlying the reciprocity effect. A study by Rubin (1975), for example, examined whether participants' self-disclosure levels varied as a function of the normative level of disclosure, or positive affect conveyed by the first discloser (the experimenter). The results from this study reveal that self-disclosure levels (in terms of the number of words disclosed) were primarily influenced by the norms of (appropriate) disclosure, and that positive affect (i.e. Liking) did not play a significant role in determining participants' decisions about how much to disclose. These finding may, thus, have significant implications for the current thesis question.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis, in-group trust in strangers was proposed to function via three possible avenues, namely a sense of depersonalized trust (in in-group others), greater adherence to an "in-group trust" norm, and comparatively favourable evaluations of in-group strangers. Given my decision to measure trust in the form of people's willingness to self-disclose within this thesis, the findings from the study by Rubin (1975) may indicate that people's willingness to trust and self-disclose to in-group and out-group strangers can be influenced more by the social norms within the interaction situation, rather than any positive evaluations they may have of their fellow in-group members.

Factors Influencing Self-Disclosure

Gender

Having looked at some of the reasons why people choose to self-disclose, I will now outline a few factors that have been suggested to impact upon the self-disclosure process. Within the self-disclosure literature, gender differences are a major issue that has been extensively investigated in numerous theoretical and empirical papers (Dindia, 2002; Dindia & Allen, 1992; Hill & Stull, 1987; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Shaffer, Pegalis, & Cornell, 1992). According to Dindia (2002), more studies have been conducted which looked at the role of sex and gender differences than on any other issue that may impact upon the self-disclosure process. While some of the earlier research in this area appear to support the idea that women self-disclose more than men (Himelstein & Lubin, 1965 ; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958; Jourard & Richman, 1963; Pederson & Breglio, 1968), the relationship between gender and self-disclosure patterns remains less than clear, with a number of studies reporting no differences in self-disclosure as a function of gender (Shapiro & Swensen, 1977; Vondracek & Marshall, 1971; Weigel, Weigel, & Chadwick, 1969). Specifically, even though gender appears to impact upon self-disclosing behaviours, the effect appears to be less straightforward than initially theorised.

Gender, therefore, seems to affect self-disclosure through a number of situational factors, such as the nature of the relationship (between the discloser and the disclosure recipient), as well as the gender of the disclosure target (Hill & Stull, 1987). Some studies, for example, have found that self-disclosure differ for same-sex and opposite-sex interactions, with female-female self-disclosure being the highest, male-male self-disclosure the lowest, and opposite-sex self-disclosure in between (Hill & Stull, 1987). According to Rubin, Hill, Peplau and Dunkel-Schetter (1980), these smaller differences in self-disclosure between opposite-sex relationships could be a

result of men being encouraged by their female partners to disclose more, and females being discouraged from disclosing more by their male partners. Furthermore, women disclose at higher levels in same-sex relationships, and men disclose at lower levels in same-sex relationships, thus, resulting in the highest levels of self-disclosure in all-female relationships, intermediate levels of disclosure in opposite-sex relationships, and lowest levels of disclosure in all-male relationships. Despite these findings, however, a meta-analysis of 205 studies by Dindia and Allen (1992) reveal that while gender differences in opposite-sex relationships were smaller than in same-sex relationships, female-to-female self-disclosure was not greater than male-to-male self-disclosure. Furthermore, findings from Dindia and Allen (1992) also indicated that relationship to target did not, in itself, moderate the relationship between gender and self-disclosure. Gender differences in self-disclosure to strangers, for example, were not significantly different from gender differences in self-disclosure to friends (Dindia & Allen, 1992).

Given the inconsistencies in the existing literature regarding the impact of gender on self-disclosure, I argue that the role of gender may be better understood as a variable situational construct. Instead of viewing gender as an invariable personal factor that is inherent in each individual, we can choose to understand it as just another social categorization that people may invoke to make sense of their social environment. In this way, gender may only impact upon people's self-disclosure patterns when their identities as males or females have been rendered salient. If within a particular social situation, an alternative social categorization has been made salient (i.e. Nationality, age group), then there may be no basis upon which to expect that people's behaviours will be influenced by their gender categories. In other words, there is no reason to view gender as being any more influential than other social categories in terms of predicting people's self-disclosing behaviours.

Anonymity

Apart from gender, another factor that has been found to influence the self-disclosure process is the anonymity of the discloser (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002; Burnett & Illingworth, 2008; Christopherson, 2007; Joinson, 2001). Anonymity, which has been conceived as the inability of others to identify an individual, or for others to identify oneself (Christopherson, 2007; Hayne & Rice, 1997), has been found to facilitate people's willingness to self-disclose. As discussed in previous sections of this chapter, there are many reasons why people would be inclined to self-disclose (i.e. Stress relief, relationship development). Despite these perceived benefits or motivators, however, there are also factors which function to inhibit people's willingness to disclose. In other words, there are situations where self-disclosure really does not pay off and people risk being misunderstood, criticized, or even exploited, because by self-disclosing, people expose their weaknesses to others and subject themselves to potentially negative responses (Matsushima & Shiomi, 2001). A number of researchers, for example, have pointed out that the type of thoughts and feelings that people feel most compelled to share may actually be those that they are most reluctant to disclose for fear of being rejected or ridiculed (Harber & Pennebaker, 1992; Regan & Hill, 1992). Specifically, studies have demonstrated that the reason why gays and lesbians tend to hide their sexual orientation from others was primarily due to their concerns with the reactions of others, as well as their fear of rejection (Franke & Leary, 1991).

Recent research, however, has suggested that communication channels which provide disclosers with an environment of anonymity may be helpful in overcoming many of these obstacles, and consequently facilitate greater levels of self-disclosure to others. Specifically, it has been argued that under conditions of anonymity, individuals may be liberated from social pressures and concerns, thus allowing them to express

what they truly feel and experience through higher levels of self-disclosure (Bargh et al., 2002; Mallen, Day, & Green, 2003; McKenna et al., 2000). Research in the area of computer-mediated communication (CMC), for example, has demonstrated that visual anonymity between interaction partners under CMC leads to greater self-disclosure than in traditional face-to-face (FtF) interaction (Antheunis, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2007; Joinson, 2001; Tidwell & Walther, 2002). Anonymity, therefore, can be seen as providing people with a relatively safer and more secure avenue of sharing information and knowledge without the added burden of accountability (Scott & Rains, 2005).

Trust

In addition to gender and anonymity, another factor that has been found to facilitate the self-disclosure process is the presence of trust. This factor is, therefore, of importance to the discussions in this thesis as both trust and self-disclosure are central components of the current research. The relationship between trust and self-disclosure was first explicated by Jourard (1971), who stated that “a person will permit himself to be known when he believes his audience is a man of goodwill. Self-disclosure follows an attitude of love and trust” (p. 5). Conceptualized this way, trust can be seen as an antecedent or precondition of self-disclosure. From this view, people’s abilities or willingness to be transparent in revealing aspects of themselves presupposes a certain degree of trust in the disclosure recipient (Jourard, 1964). As pointed out in Wheeler (1978), varying degrees of self-disclosure can be related to varying degrees in perceptions of trustworthiness. A study by Steel (1991), for example, revealed a positive correlation between interpersonal trust and self-disclosure, indicating that people disclose more when they have higher levels of trust in the disclosure recipient.

Apart from the positive correlation between trust and self-disclosure discussed above, there are further parallels that can be drawn between these two constructs, which

provides the basis for my decision to measure trust in the form of people's willingness to self-disclose. Akin to trust, self-disclosure is a process which entails a certain amount of risk (Harris, Dersch, & Mittal, 1999; Wheelless & Grotz, 1977). The disclosure of personal information to others provides opportunities to those who dislike us to use that information against us. Disclosers could also find themselves shunned by those whom they care about after having shared negative or embarrassing information about themselves (Derlega et al., 1993). Furthermore, it has also been suggested that the act of revealing one's own weaknesses may lead the recipient to infer that one possesses weaknesses in many other areas, a phenomenon termed the "reverse halo effect" by Wenberg and Wilmot (1973). The decision to self-disclose, therefore, can be seen as a behaviour which entails a certain amount of risk, just like the decision to trust.

Another similarity that can be drawn between trust and self-disclosure is that both concepts are seen as facilitative to the development and maintenance of social relationships. As pointed out by Derlega et al. (1993), the act of revealing something truly personal about ourselves conveys a message beyond the self-disclosure content. It tells the self-disclosure recipient that he/she is valued, and it also tells them that the discloser believes that they would respond appropriately to the revealed information. Self-disclosure, therefore, has been conceptualized by some as being synonymous with a close relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Jourard, 1971). This effect is, thus similar to that of trust, which has also been found to facilitate the development of social relationships (Kipnis, 1996; Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985; Rotter, 1980; Seligman, 2000). Also, as with trust in strangers, despite being somewhat counter-intuitive, people do in fact choose to self-disclose to complete strangers. The 'stranger on the train effect' (Rubin, 1975), for example, refers to instances of intimate self-disclosures to previously unacquainted persons.

Based upon the above reasoning, I conclude that trust and self-disclosure are two intimately related constructs and that my decision to measure group-based trust in the form of people's willingness to self-disclose is a well-founded one. As previously highlighted in Chapter 3, past empirical examinations in this area of group-based trust in strangers have predominantly utilised prisoner-dilemma games or other forms of monetary-distribution tasks. It would be interesting, therefore, to see if predictions based on the same theoretical principles of group-based trust and identity salience would apply to a more emotionally involving component of human behaviour, such as self-disclosure. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 3, the pros and cons of each trust decision, as operationalised in social dilemma games, are always known *prior* to any decision being made. In this way, current measures of trust (utilizing social dilemma games) may be incapable of capturing the full range of concerns that people may have regarding each trust decision. I, therefore, argued that the various uncertainties associated with the decision to self-disclose (or not), better captures the full-range of concerns involved in a trust decision-making process. Having considered the factors core to the process of in-group trust and self-disclosure to strangers, I will, in the next chapter, examine a variable that could potentially moderate the relationship between identity salience and group-based trust. Specifically, I will examine the role of mutual recognition of the salient social group membership in influencing trust-formation processes between in-group and out-group members.

CHAPTER 5

EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUST, IN-GROUP FAVOURITISM, AND THE RECIPROCITY HEURISTIC MODEL

Introduction

As previously outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, two of the three key functioning mechanisms of group-based trust that will be examined in this thesis are a) comparatively favourable perceptions of in-group members within social interaction situations, and b) expectations of favourable treatment from in-group members as a result of perceived shared interests and goals. Building upon this recognition, factors which have been shown to influence in-group favouring attitudes and behaviours, as well as facilitate in-group co-operation and trust, were considered when developing the theoretical reasoning and designs of the empirical studies. In this current chapter, I will outline a few approaches that I believe may contribute towards the understanding and predicting of group-based trust processes, and subsequently use these existing theoretical concepts to formulate new hypotheses relevant to the current research questions.

In-group Favouritism

Based upon the idea that in-group trust may partly be founded upon comparatively favourable evaluations of in-group to out-group members, particularly when people's social identities have been rendered salient, the issue of in-group favouritism appears pertinent to the current thesis. In-group favouritism is a term frequently employed to describe the general tendency to evaluate or perceive one's own in-group and its members more favourably, compared to a relevant out-group and/or its

members (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2006). In the social psychology literature, this phenomenon can be understood as both the tendency to over-evaluate one's own in-group, and/or to under-evaluate or derogate a relevant out-group (Brewer, 1999; Hewstone et al., 2002; Scheepers et al., 2006). As previously discussed in Chapter 2, in-group favouritism, as conceptualized from a social identity perspective, is driven primarily by the need to establish the self positively (as a group-member) in relation to a comparison out-group, when one's social identity is salient. Specifically, when people self-categorize as members of a salient social in-group, the value of the in-group identity is established through social comparisons with a relevant out-group on valued dimensions. How the in-group is seen, therefore, largely depends on the comparisons in context that people make between the in-group and out-group on these valued dimensions (Commins & Lockwood, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

In short, the positivity or negativity of the social in-group is essentially relational in nature. In this way, findings from previous experiments, which consistently demonstrated in-group favouring tendencies on resource distribution tasks following categorization processes, can be understood to be the result of people's attempts to achieve positive distinctiveness for their salient social in-group (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971; Turner, 1975). People may, therefore, discriminate or compete against out-group others, not because of any realistic conflict of interests, but rather to distinguish themselves from the out-group and maintain a positive in-group identity (Turner, 1975). A study by Turner and Spriggs (1981), for example, which showed that both intergroup and interpersonal competition were equally effective in increasing participants' self-esteem suggests that the value of people's social group-

memberships was just as important in influencing their attitudes and behaviours, as is the value of their identity as unique individuals.

The social identity perspective on in-group favouritism, however, has been questioned and disputed by theorists who adopt a social interdependence perspective (Gaertner & Insko, 2000; Rabbie, 1993; Rabbie, Schot, & Visser, 1989). Specifically, these researchers have consistently argued that in-group favouring allocations are primarily motivated by material self-interest and a desire to ensure maximum monetary gain (Gaertner & Insko, 2000; Rabbie, 1993; Rabbie & Lodewijkx, 1994; Rabbie et al., 1989). It has been suggested that even though participants in most minimal group paradigm studies cannot allocate money directly to themselves, nor could they ensure direct reciprocity from the in-group member whom they allocated money to, there appears to be an underlying expectation among participants that their in-group favouring allocation would be reciprocated (Karp, Jin, Yamagishi, & Shinotsuka, 1993, reported in Yamagishi, Jin, & Kiyonari, 1999). A study by Jin, Yamagishi and Kiyonari (1996), for example, demonstrated that participants who engaged in-group favouring allocations were those who harboured the belief that the favours they showed towards fellow in-group members would somehow be reciprocated (Jin et al., 1996, reported in Yamagishi et al., 1999). Rabbie et al. (1989, 1994) also demonstrated that participants actually exhibited *out-group* favouritism when they were told that their personal reward depended on out-group, rather than in-group members.

It should be noted, however, that according to Rabbie et al.'s (1989) own definition of what constitutes the basis of a social group- namely the perception of a “common fate” or “interdependence of fate”- out-group members as operationalized in their experiment can indeed be re-conceptualised as *in-group* members. Specifically, highlighting the fact that one's own personal outcome was dependent upon these “out-

group” others may be sufficient in creating a sense of shared in-group identity, subsequently prompting the re-categorization of these out-group others as in-group members. Furthermore, studies by Tajfel (1970), also found that participants were most interested, not in maximizing profit for the in-group, but rather maximizing the *difference* in profit between the in-group and the out-group during an intergroup point-distribution exercise. These results, thus, indicate that it is not material gain per se, but rather the difference between in-group and out-group gain that motivates people’s in-group favouring behaviours in these experimental settings.

Reciprocity Heuristic Model

Having considered the social identity perspective on in-group favouritism, I will now go on to discuss an alternative approach towards this issue. Based upon a social interdependence framework, Yamagishi and colleagues (Yamagishi, Mifune, Liu, & Pauling, 2008; Yamagishi, Foddy, Makimura, Matsuda, Kiyonari, & Platow, 2005; Yamagishi et al., 1999; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000) developed a model to explain and predict in-group favouring behaviours within social dilemma situations. Within their model, these researchers suggest that in-group favouring behaviour in social dilemma situations (i.e. greater co-operation between in-group members) are not based upon the attribution of more favourable characteristics to in-group than out-group members under depersonalized conditions (Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000; Yamagishi, et al., 1999). Specifically, it was suggested that rather than relatively positive evaluations of in-group members, in-group favouritism during intergroup interaction situations were driven by people’s implicit expectations that their fellow in-group members would be more likely to reciprocate those favours, compared to out-group members.

In order to test this hypothesis, the researchers first conducted a study in which they manipulated the availability of subjects’ own group membership to the interaction

partner in a prisoner's dilemma game (Jin & Yamagishi, 1997, reported in Yamagishi et al., 1999). Apart from the two standard conditions in which participants were either informed that the interaction partner was an in-group or out-group member, the study had two additional conditions in which participants were explicitly told that either the in-group or out-group partner would *not* be aware of participants' own group membership. The researchers went on to predict that if increased cooperation with in-group members was due to shared group membership per se, whether the in-group partner was aware of participants' group memberships should not affect cooperation rates in these dilemma situations. Findings from the study, however, indicated that participants were only more likely to cooperate with an in-group partner over an out-group partner when the in-group partner was *also* aware of the shared group membership. More importantly, cooperation rates between in-group and out-group partners were *non-significantly* different when there was no shared knowledge of group membership (Jin & Yamagishi, 1997, reported in Yamagishi et al., 1999). In fact, increased levels of cooperation were only found for participants in the in-group partner/shared knowledge condition.

Based on the above findings, the researchers concluded that in-group favouritism or higher levels of in-group cooperation in social dilemma situations were likely a result of people having greater expectations that in-group members will reciprocate those favours, compared to out-group members. Moreover, reciprocation of any favours given to a particular in-group member is expected to come from other in-group members *in general*, rather than directly from that particular member (Yamagishi et al., 1999). Yamagishi et al. (1999) first put forward the idea of a 'generalized exchange system' in their 'naive theory of groups' - a theory which was put forward to explain and predict in-group cooperation or other in-group favouring behaviours in

intergroup interaction situations. According to these researchers, generalized exchange is a system of help-sharing and cooperation in which people provide help or cooperation without expecting direct repayment from the specific help/cooperation recipient. This type of system is thus based on the understanding that people who provide benefits to others will in turn receive benefits from others within the same system, even in the absence of direct reciprocation. Blood donation, for example, can be seen as functioning via a generalized exchange system. Under this system, blood donors may not receive blood directly from the person whom their blood went to, but they can expect to receive blood from someone else (Yamagishi et al., 2008).

One important point to note, however, is that people can only expect to receive favours from others insofar as they also grant favours to others. Such a situation will, thus, lead to the development of an expectation of 'generalized reciprocity', where people expect to receive favours, but not necessarily from the specific people to whom they themselves provided favours. This expectation of a generalized reciprocity, therefore, was seen to be the source of in-group favouritism and in-group cooperation in social dilemma situations (Yamagishi et al., 1999). The presence of a salient in-group is seen to activate a 'group heuristic', under which the generalized exchange system becomes the default strategy to be adopted by those within an intergroup interaction situation.

The group heuristic model was initially tested using minimal groups in Japan, and even the researchers themselves initially doubted the applicability of the model in explaining and predicting in-group favouritism among real-life groups and non-Japanese participants (Yamagishi et al., 1999; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). The researchers suspected that it was only in the absence of any other 'contaminating' features often associated with enduring groups outside the laboratory, that information

about people's group memberships become important in determining in-group favouritism in minimal group settings (Yamagishi, et al., 2005). Within these minimal groups, people's social group memberships may be the only relevant and salient information that participants possess. It is, therefore, easier to expect that the group heuristic will be activated for participants, as well as their (imaginary) interaction partners within these minimal group settings and that they can subsequently expect better treatment from fellow in-group members. In real-life groups, however, other characteristics of the in-group or out-group stereotype may form the basis of people's decisions to trust or cooperate (Yamagishi et al., 2005). The researchers further suspected that a more enduring group identity that is central to a person's self-concept may override the effects of mutual knowledge of group membership in the in-group favouring process (Yamagishi et al., 2005). Specifically, norms of behaviours related to specific social identities that may have accumulated through past experiences and interactions may be more influential in influencing people's attitudes and behaviours, compared to experimentally manipulated variables, especially if that particular identity was central to an individual's self-concept.

A study by Yamagishi et al. (2005), thus, attempted to replicate the findings from previous experiments on the generalized exchange and reciprocity heuristic model among real-life social groups, choosing to utilise nationality, rather than minimal groups. The study was conducted using a cross-national sample of Australian and Japanese university students in a Prisoner's Dilemma game situation. For the Japanese participants, Japanese were the in-group and Australians the out-group while the converse was true for the Australian participants. Participants each played the Prisoner's Dilemma game five times, with each game corresponding to one of the five within-subject experimental conditions (in-group/mutual knowledge, in-group/unilateral

knowledge, out-group/mutual knowledge, out-group unilateral knowledge, control). The researchers predicted that in-group favouritism, as evidenced by higher levels of cooperation with in-group members, would be higher in the in-group/mutual knowledge condition, compared to the in-group/unilateral knowledge condition. In the former, knowledge regarding the shared group membership between the participant and the in-group interaction partner was mutually available. In the latter, however, only the participant was aware of the shared group membership. Similarly, participants in the out-group/mutual knowledge condition were told that the interaction partner would be aware of participant's own group membership. In the out-group/unilateral knowledge condition, however, participant's own group membership would be unknown to the out-group partner. No difference in cooperation rates was expected between the out-group/mutual and out-group/unilateral knowledge conditions given that a system of generalized exchange does not extend across groups. Findings from this study supported the researchers' predictions, and this was true for both the Japanese and Australian participants, thus suggesting that the group heuristic is not a phenomenon unique to Japanese nationals (Yamagishi et al., 2005). This study, therefore, appears to offer preliminary support for the notion that the group heuristic model may be generalizable to more enduring social groups outside the laboratory, as well as to non-Japanese participants.

The applicability of the group heuristic model and the idea of a generalized exchange system among non-Japanese nationals were further put to test in a study by Yamagishi et al. (2008). Specifically, the study set out to test two divergent arguments which had very different implications regarding the generalizability of the group heuristic argument beyond East Asian cultures. Based on the idea that a group-bounded generalized exchange system may function in conjunction with a collectivistic (rather

than an individualistic) view of society, two contrasting hypotheses were generated. Firstly, Yamagishi and colleagues argued that generalized exchanges may be more prevalent in collectivistic (East Asian) than individualistic (Western) societies (Yamagishi, 1988; Yamagishi, Hashimoto, & Schug, 2008). The cost of failing to cooperate with in-group members in collectivistic societies is generally higher and could potentially result in more severe and negative outcomes (i.e. risk being ostracised or expelled from the group). These researchers, therefore, suggested that adherence to a generalized exchange system may be more adaptive in collectivistic than individualistic societies (Yamagishi et al., 2008). If this were the case, greater levels of in-group favouritism may be found for participants in the mutual knowledge conditions, but only among those who are members of collectivist societies (Yamagishi et al., 2008).

On the other hand, Yuki and colleagues (Yuki, 2003; Yuki, Maddux, Brewer, & Takemura, 2005) put forward an alternative argument, contradicting the predictions of Yamagishi et al. (2008). According to Yuki and colleagues, shared category memberships are central to Western perceptions of group-ness; perceptions of group-ness among East Asians, however, are based on the interpersonal relationships among members of one's social network groups. In this way, other individuals may be categorized as members of one's social in-group, in so far as they are seen to share some form of personal relationship with oneself, or with those known to oneself. Given the lack of prior interaction and/or personal connections between members of experimental and/or minimal groups, East Asians may be less likely (compared to Westerners), to perceive the shared category membership with members of an experimentally manipulated in-group. In an experimentally manipulated intergroup setting, therefore, the group heuristic and its ensuing effects may be triggered *less* among East Asians. Exhibitions of in-group favouritism as a result of mutual knowledge

of shared group membership may consequently be more pronounced amongst Western than East Asian participants. Results from the studies of Yuki and colleagues (Yuki, 2003; Yuki et al., 2005) were supportive of this latter hypothesis. While in-group favouritism was found to be significantly higher in the mutual than unilateral knowledge conditions for both the Japanese and New Zealander participants, this effect was significantly stronger among New Zealanders than Japanese participants. These findings, thus, indicate that the group heuristic model may in fact be more applicable among Westerners. Moreover, the study appeared to provide further support for the generalizability of the group heuristic approach to trust and cooperation *beyond* Japanese nationals.

Following the extension of the group heuristic approach beyond Japanese participants, the applicability of the generalized exchange system beyond intergroup cooperation behaviours have been further examined. A study by Foddy et al. (2009), for example, looked at how the valence of in-group and out-group stereotypes influenced peoples' trusting decisions. Firstly, a pilot study indicated that the stereotypes of the in-group of psychology students were more positive than those of economics students, but were more negative than stereotypes of nursing students. While the evaluations of nursing students as being more positive than the in-group of psychology students may initially appear to contradict claims that people have the tendency to evaluate their in-group more favourably during intergroup comparison situations, it should be noted that these evaluations merely represent the *overall* valence of stereotypes associated with each group. Specifically, it remains unclear as to whether participants attributed more significance to any one evaluation dimension than others, and how this would impact upon their perception of the overall positivity and negativity of the in-group and comparison out-groups. For example, psychology students may have placed greater

value upon the ability to critically evaluate information, and rated the in-group more highly on that dimension than on other attributes. Whether or not the mean valence of the in-group was higher than the comparison out-groups, therefore, may be less important than being more positive on one specific comparison dimension.

In the experiment of Foddy et al. (2009), the researchers manipulated a situation in which participants had to make a decision in terms of accepting a pre-allocated amount of money from either (1) a nursing student (positive out-group) or an economics student (negative out-group), or (2) a psychology student (in-group). Apart from their group memberships, participants were also told whether or not the (in-group and out-group) allocators were aware (mutual knowledge) or not (unilateral knowledge) of their own group memberships. Results from this study indicated that when there was mutual knowledge of group membership, the majority of participants showed greater in-group trust by choosing the allocation made by the in-group psychology student, and this was the case in both the nursing (76% in-group choosing) and economics (89% in-group choosing) out-group conditions. When there was unilateral knowledge of group membership, however, participants demonstrated significantly more in-group trust, but only when the out-group was an economics (80% in-group choosing) student. When the out-group was a nursing student, however, in-group trust was significantly diminished (40% in-group choosing).

The findings of Foddy et al. (2009), thus, imply that the ability of in-group others to recognize the self as a member of a shared social category is important in influencing our trust decisions. Given that in-group trust was primarily observed under conditions of mutual knowledge, it may be the case that, akin to in-group favouring distributions in social dilemma situations, participants' in-group trust decisions were informed by their expectations of favourable treatment from fellow in-group members.

When there was no shared knowledge of group membership, participants drew upon alternative sources of information, such as the stereotype content of each group to inform their trust choices. When faced with a negatively stereotyped out-group, participants were more inclined to trust in-group members whom they perceived as having relatively more positive stereotypes. When the out-group was more positively stereotyped, however, participants were less likely to trust in-group compared to out-group members. Results from this study by Foddy et al. (2009) are important in that they imply that the functioning principles of the group heuristic model may be applicable beyond resource distribution systems, and may serve to influence other forms of behaviours, such as trust, which is the research topic of interest in this thesis.

Adapting Group Heuristic Principles to the Current Research

The review presented in previous sections of this chapter suggests that group heuristic principles may apply to in-group trust situations. Based upon this recognition, the current research aims to examine the effects of shared or un-shared knowledge of mutual group-membership in influencing people's decisions to trust and self-disclose to in-group and out-group strangers. While acknowledging the importance of the group heuristic principles within intergroup interaction situations, the current thesis differs in its conceptualization of the functioning mechanisms within a generalized exchange system. According to Yamagishi et al. (1999), the group heuristic is a set of beliefs or rules of thumb that people revert to by default when encountering a group situation. In practice, therefore, the use of a heuristic is spontaneous and people tend not to be consciously aware of the reasons behind their decisions, unless carefully prodded (Yamagishi et al., 1999; Yamagishi et al., 2008). These researchers have further suggested that the employment of group heuristics or heuristics in general, is ecologically rational and adaptive (Gigerenzer, 2000; Yamagishi et al., 2008).

Specifically, based on the idea that resource sharing is a critical component in human survival, the researchers argued that the group heuristic is adaptive in that it induces behaviours that minimize the risk of a person's exclusion from generalized exchange systems within his/her social community (Yamagishi et al., 2008). Assuming the existence of a generalized exchange system by default when facing a group situation will, therefore, motivate people to cooperate more with in-group members and, thus reduce the likelihood that one will be labelled a free-rider or risk being ostracized and excluded from the in-group (Yamagishi et al., 2008).

Instead of a heuristic, however, I propose that the idea of a generalized exchange system as conceptualized by Yamagishi and colleagues can alternatively be understood as a form of injunctive norm (Cialdini, Kallgren & Reno, 1991), which serves as a guide for socially acceptable behaviours that people are expected to engage in, as group members. In this way, "rules of thumb" as outlined by Yamagishi et al (1999), which people revert to by default in a group situation, may, in fact, be injunctive norms pertaining to a specific social group membership within particular social contexts. People's behaviours within various social dilemma situations may, thus, be guided by group-normative beliefs regarding reciprocity and trust. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, therefore, group-based trust as defined by Brewer (1981) can be understood as advocating for a norm of "in-group trust" where people can expect to engage in trusting behaviours with in-group members without the need to acquire, beforehand, additional information about them. Similar to how people's trusting behaviours can be informed by norms of interpersonal trust under personal identity salient conditions (Cohen, Wildschut, & Insko, 2010; Jeffries & Becker, 2008), trust in in-group members may be facilitated by in-group norms of trust and reciprocity under conditions of social identity salience.

People's adherence to in-group norms under various social interaction situations is a topic that has been extensively researched within the social psychological discipline (Abrams & Hogg, 2001; Armitage & Connor, 2001; Cialdini et al., 1991; Fishbein & Azjen, 1975; Terry & Hogg, 1996). A particular approach towards group-normative behaviours relevant to the current research question, as well as the mutual knowledge of group-membership variable examined in the reciprocity heuristic model, is the Social Identity model of Deindividuation Effects (or SIDE). The SIDE model (Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995; Spears & Lea, 1994), which was initially developed to explain and predict people's intentions and behaviours within social situations where one's personal identity may be subsumed or rendered anonymous (i.e. online communities, crowds), contributes to our understanding of group-based trust processes. As previously highlighted in Chapter 2, empirical research on the SIDE model has demonstrated that adherence to in-group norms appears to be strengthened under conditions of depersonalisation, which is when people increasingly perceive the self and others primarily as group-members rather than idiosyncratic individuals (Reicher et al., 1995; Spears & Lea, 1994). When individuating information is scarce, for example, people's abilities to form impressions of others as unique individuals are reduced. This, compounded with the availability of relevant social identities that are salient in specific interaction contexts will result in the accentuated perception of others as in-, or out-group members. In short, the anonymity of one's personal identity coupled with the identifiability of one's social identity is likely to facilitate depersonalization processes. These conditions, which facilitate depersonalization processes, therefore, correspond with Yamagishi et al.'s manipulation of shared knowledge of group membership, where people's social identities were available, but not their personal identities. Endorsement of an in-group trust norm under conditions of mutual knowledge may, thus, be

facilitated by the depersonalization process, subsequently resulting in greater intentions to engage in in-group trust behaviours.

Apart from in-group trust processes being facilitated by depersonalization processes within mutual knowledge conditions, I propose that conditions of unilateral knowledge of group membership as operationalized in studies by Yamagishi et al (1999, 2000), may also function to *decrease* people's tendencies to engage in in-group trust. Specifically, the salience of participants' social identities may be attenuated under conditions where their social group-memberships are unknown to the in-group or out-group partner, consequently inhibiting depersonalization processes. Researchers have argued, for example, that the salience of particular social identities, as well as people's abilities to sustain the importance of those identities, is related to their ability to express, and have people react to the content of those identities (Emler & Reicher, 1995; Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007; Haslam & Reicher, 2007). Under conditions where one's own group membership cannot be socially validated or recognized by both in-group and/or out-group others, the salience and significance of that particular group membership may be attenuated, and consequently be less likely to impact upon one's thoughts and behaviours. Anonymity of one's social identity under conditions of unilateral knowledge may thus inhibit depersonalization processes and reduce tendencies to perceive in-group members as interchangeable representations of the self, and/or possessing comparatively positive qualities than out-group members. Willingness to engage in group-based trust processes with in-group members over out-group members may, consequently, be significantly lowered under these unilateral knowledge of group membership conditions.

Summarizing from the literature reviewed above, one major hypothesis that I seek to examine in this current thesis is whether the manipulation of the availability (or

not) of people's social group memberships to the interaction partner will have an effect on their willingness to trust and self-disclose to strangers. Specifically, I want to find out if greater adherence to an in-group trust norm under conditions of mutual knowledge of shared group-membership will similarly apply to more emotionally involving behaviours, such as self-disclosure. Furthermore, I want to test if people's willingness to engage in depersonalized group-based trust under mutual knowledge conditions may be enhanced when their social (rather than personal) identities have been rendered salient. In other words, are people in fact more likely to trust and self-disclose to their own in-group members, but only when they think of themselves as group members? In the previous studies by Yamagishi and colleagues, social identity salience, as a construct, has largely been taken for granted as a natural by-product of intergroup interaction situations, but has never been independently manipulated. In this thesis, therefore, I will proceed to examine the salience of the interaction context by manipulating the salience of people's identities, either as group members, or as unique individuals. I believe that this will pave the way for a better understanding of the underlying psychological processes involved in depersonalized group-based trust among strangers, and allow for meaningful implications to be drawn.

CHAPTER 6

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL EXAMINATIONS OF TRUST AND PROPOSITIONS OF THE CURRENT THESIS

Introduction

The purpose of the current chapter is to clearly outline the approach of the current thesis in light of past theoretical and empirical research. In so doing, I will revisit some of the arguments and empirical evidence reviewed in previous chapters and re-state in a concise manner a number of propositions that I set out to test in this thesis.

Theoretical and Empirical Examinations of Trust

As detailed in Chapters 2 through to 5, the current thesis adopts a group-based approach towards the issues of trust and self-disclosure to strangers. Following on from the social identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), it was suggested that under conditions of social identity salience, people's perception of the self, as well as their understanding of the social environment, will be guided (more so) by their self-perception as members of the salient social group, rather than as a unique individual. I, therefore, went on to suggest three possible mechanisms through which trust in in-group strangers could be heightened as a result of people's self-categorization as group-members. Specifically, I suggested that processes of depersonalization brought upon by people self-categorizing themselves as group-members may result in a) perceptions of interchangeability between the self and in-group others, and consequently the overlapping of self-other interests, b) greater adherence to an 'in-group trust norm', and c) attribution of comparatively favourable

attributes to in-group than out-group others. All of the above three processes may, therefore, contribute to greater levels of trust in in-group members under conditions of social identity salience. While research in the area of group-based trust has primarily examined people's trusting behaviours using prisoner's dilemma games, the current thesis sought to extend this research to a situation in which the pros and cons of trusting are not available upfront. This thesis, therefore, measured trust in the form of people's willingness to self-disclose.

A brief review of the in-group favouritism and reciprocity heuristic literatures in Chapter 5 led me to conclude that the availability (or not) of people's social group-memberships to an interaction partner within a social situation could be an important factor in influencing willingness to trust strangers. Whilst recognizing the importance of mutual knowledge of shared group-membership in the trust process, I suggest that the underlying mechanisms of group-based trust development differ from those put forward by Yamagishi and colleagues (Yamagishi, Jin, Kiyonari, 1999; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). Specifically, I argued, in line with the social identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987) and the SIDE model (Reicher, Spears & Postmes, 1995) that the absence of individuating information about an interaction partner, as well as the availability of people's social group-memberships, facilitates the onset of depersonalization processes. Moreover, I proposed that these conditions of personal identity anonymity and social identity identifiability, which closely map onto the 'mutual knowledge' conditions in Yamagishi et al.'s studies, increases the salience of group norms and values, consequently resulting in greater adherence to an "in-group trust" norm (Brewer, 1981). In addition, conditions of unilateral knowledge of shared group membership, as operationalized in the studies of Yamagishi et al. (1999, 2000), may also reduce the salience of participants' social identities. Under these

circumstances, the influence of people's social group memberships upon their thoughts and behaviours may be significantly attenuated, thus, negatively impacting upon the development of in-group trust processes.

General Assumptions and Hypotheses

In this section, I will proceed to outline several assumptions and propositions that form the basis of the current research program. These assumptions are not directly tested as part of the empirical work, but are assumed to be true based on empirical work presented in previous literature. These assumptions are as follows:

A1: People's social group-memberships are as important as their own personal identity in influencing their attitudes and behaviours.

A2: A group-based approach is, thus, as appropriate as an interpersonal approach in the study of trust and self-disclosure.

A3: Self-disclosure is an appropriate measure of trust. Willingness to self-disclose to a stranger, for example, should indicate a certain level of trust in the particular stranger.

In addition to the above assumptions, three central hypotheses form the basis of our empirical investigations. These hypotheses are derived from previous theoretical and empirical work discussed in previous chapters and follow from the above assumptions. These hypotheses are as follows:

H1: When there is limited information about a potential trust recipient within a social interaction situation, people's willingness (or not) to enter a trust relationship may be inferred from the stranger's social group membership. Specifically, people may be more likely to trust strangers with whom they perceive themselves to share a social

group membership, compared to someone whom they do not share a social category membership with.

H2: Tendencies to trust in-group strangers over out-group strangers may be especially heightened under conditions where people’s identities as group members have been made salient.

H3: When people’s social identities have been made salient, their willingness to engage in in-group trust will be higher under conditions where knowledge about their own social group memberships was available than unavailable to the interaction partner.

CHAPTER 7.

STUDY 1: TRUSTING AND DISCLOSING TO STRANGERS

Context Statement

This thesis proposes that group-based processes may be key to establishing trust in a stranger interaction situation. In this first empirical study, I set out to test the three core hypotheses in the current thesis (H1, H2, and H3 as outlined in Chapter 6), namely whether or not people will be more willing to trust in-group members under conditions of mutual, rather than unilateral knowledge of shared group membership, especially when their social identities have been made salient. As outlined in Chapter 3, trust in the current thesis will be measured in the form of self-disclosure. In Study 1, participants' self-reported willingness to self-disclose was treated as a proxy of their willingness to trust. Apart from the key variables highlighted in Chapters 2, 3, and 5 (social identity salience and social group-membership, shared or unshared knowledge of group membership), this first empirical study also seeks to examine other factors that may serve to influence the trust development process. Specifically, I looked at how the nature of the self-disclosure topic (group *vs.* personal), as well as the nature of the risk relevant to participants (group *vs.* personal), could impact upon their willingness to trust and self-disclose. In order to be able to address some of the research questions set out in this thesis, additional measures and hypotheses have been included in this Chapter, which were absent from the paper I submitted for publication.

Abstract

Previous theoretical and empirical work has outlined processes underlying group-based trust in strangers within social dilemma situations, through the distribution of valued resources. Specifically, it has been shown that decisions to trust or distrust a stranger can be formed on the basis of whether people share the same category membership with that stranger. This previous work has also highlighted an important moderating variable: whether the trustor believed that the stranger (the trustee) was also aware of the shared or unshared group membership. Thus, participants trust an in-group stranger over an out-group stranger, but only when they believe that the stranger is *also* aware of the shared group membership. I currently extend this analysis of group-based trust in strangers to the domain of *self-disclosure*. I report a study in which I measure people's willingness to disclose personally threatening and group threatening information to either an in-group or an out-group stranger, under personal or social identity salience. The study was conducted with Malaysian and Singaporean students living in Australia, with international students being the salient in-group, and domestic (Australian) students being the representative out-group. The results broadly confirm the importance of the mutual knowledge of shared group membership in decisions to self-disclose to in-group and out-group strangers.

Introduction

In recent decades, interest in the area of trust has increased dramatically, with research being conducted across various disciplines, including psychology, politics and economics (Hardin, 2001; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, Camerer, 1998; Rotter, 1967; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). This interest can be seen as arising from the general view that trust is an essential component of social life, and that trusting behaviour is something positive that should be encouraged (Kipnis, 1996; Rotter, 1980). Despite the breadth and depth of trust research, however, a consensual definition remains elusive, and questions regarding the bases of trust remain under debate (Kramer, 1999; McAllister, 1995; Tyler, 2003). For example, trust has been varyingly defined as “a generalized expectancy held by an individual that the word, promise, oral or written statement of another individual or group can be relied on” (Rotter, 1980, p. 1); “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectations that the other party will perform a particular action important to the trustor” (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995, p. 712); and as “confidence that one will find what is desired, rather than what is feared” (Deutsch, 1973, p. 148). For my current analysis, as previously outlined in Chapter 3, I see the common thread across theoretical and operational definitions of trust as *the willingness to place one’s (unknown) fate in the hands of another with the expectation that the other will, at least, not harm oneself, despite believing that the other could act to one’s detriment.*

Trust in Strangers

Whilst research in the area of trust has been wide ranging, a more recent focus is on trust in strangers (Foddy, Platow, & Yamagishi, 2009; Kramer, 1999; Tyler, 2003). Trust in strangers represents a unique situation whereby cognitive representations of a strangers’ trustworthiness, or predictions about their motives or intentions, cannot be

based upon past interactions with them, nor third-party recommendations and reputations. Under these circumstances, the avenues people frequently employ to inform trust decisions are unavailable given the lack of information about the stranger. Given the amount of risk and uncertainty, it is therefore unsurprising that some people may shun or avoid developing new relationships with strangers, and choose to remain in secure and established relationships (Macy & Skovertz, 1998; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1996).

Trust in strangers, however, is not uncommon, and not all strangers are dishonest and untrustworthy (Macy & Skovertz, 1998). In fact, plenty of people are willing to venture outside familiar environments and relationships to interact with strangers (Macy & Skovertz, 1998). The most relevant question for psychologists, therefore, is not “*will* people trust strangers?” but rather, “*when* and *why* will people choose to trust strangers?” In the current research, therefore, I attempt to explore different factors that could influence people’s willingness to trust strangers.

Trust and Self-Disclosure

Most trust research to date, and especially trust research in strangers, has been conducted with social dilemma situations (Maddux & Brewer, 2005; Riegelsberger, Sasse, & McCarthy, 2003; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). Although providing valuable insight into trust processes, certain limitations inherent in these experimental situations may restrict our understanding of the full range of trust behaviours. Specifically, in social dilemma situations, the risk and benefits associated with each option are clearly known *before* the trust decision needs to be made. Trust, however, is not always restricted to situations where exact knowledge regarding the pros and cons of each decision are available. In fact, the decision to trust is probably the hardest when the consequences of trusting, especially the potentially *negative* consequences of

mistrusting, are difficult to estimate beforehand. It is trust in these situations, whereby the consequences of trusting are ambiguous, that I wish to examine currently.

Trust in the current experiment was thus examined in the form of self-disclosure. Unlike prisoner dilemma games, the potentially negative consequences from self-disclosure cannot be quantified in exact terms. People cannot know, for example, exactly what the disclosure recipient will do with any information they choose to share with him/her. Will the recipient tell one or more people what is shared with them? Will the disclosure recipient ridicule the discloser and, if so, to what extent? I contend that uncertainties such as these that are associated with the decision to self-disclose (or not) better captures the full-range of concerns involved in a trust decision-making process encountered in life outside the laboratory.

Group-Based Trust

In identifying factors that would predict trust in strangers, an emerging view of trust, which conceptualized it as a product of shared group membership with the trustee, appears appropriate in furthering our understanding in this area (Haslam, 2004; Kramer, 1999; Tyler, 2003; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). According to researchers in this area, shared membership in a salient social category “serves as a rule for defining the boundaries of low-risk interpersonal trust that by passes the need for personal knowledge and the costs of negotiating reciprocity” (Brewer, 1981 p. 356). Heightened awareness of a shared social group membership, thus, reduces perceptions of risk and provides the basis for trust in in-group members.

This conceptualization of trust, which stresses the importance of a shared group membership, places less emphasis on prior knowledge and interactions. At the same time, it appears important in understanding and predicting trust in strangers (Brewer, 1981, 2008; Kramer, 1999; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). Research has found, for

example, that people are more willing to trust and take risks when an interaction stranger is an in-group rather than an out-group member (Maddux & Brewer, 2005). In this current paper, I further suggest that in-group trust in strangers may also be contingent upon people's social identities being made salient. Specifically, people may be more inclined to trust in-group members over out-group members when their social identities are salient. When people's personal identities are salient, however, their social group memberships may become less important to their self-perceptions (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). Shared group membership with the stranger, therefore, may not function to increase trust in in-group strangers under personal identity salience.

Mutual Knowledge of Shared Group Membership

Whilst the notion of group-based trust in strangers has received a certain amount of empirical support (Foddy et al., 2009; Maddux & Brewer, 2005; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000), a consensus regarding the functioning mechanisms of group-based trust is yet to be reached. Some researchers, for example, have suggested that group-based trust is based upon the tendency to attribute more positive characteristics to in-group than out-group members (i.e., perceiving in-group members as being nicer, more trustworthy, and fairer than out-group members; Brewer & Silver, 1978; Doise, Csepeti, Dann, Gouge, Larsen & Ostell, 1972; McAllister, 1995). Others, on the other hand, have argued that perceptions of interchangeability between the self and other group members under social identity salience increases the perceived overlap between one's own goals and interests and those of one's in-group members, thereby increasing instances of pro-social behaviours, such as trust (Brewer, 2008; Dovidio, Gaertner, Validzic, Matoka, Johnson, & Frazier, 1997; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Maddux & Brewer, 2005). In contrast to the above positions, which emphasized the

interchangeability between the self and in-group others, as well as its positive outcomes, some researchers have proposed a more pragmatic approach, arguing that in-group trust is based upon positive expectations of favourable treatment by in-group others (Foddy et al., 2009; Tanis & Postmes, 2005; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000; Yamagishi, Jin, & Kiyonari, 1999).

As previously described in Chapter 5, a study by Yamagishi and Kiyonari (2000) found that in-group trust only occurred when the trustor knew that the potential trust recipient was *also* aware of the shared group membership. The researchers, therefore, suggested that in-group trust is, in fact, a form of reciprocity heuristic, from which people expected in-group members to reciprocate their trust (Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). From this reciprocity heuristic model, in-group trust is unrelated to any positive feelings or beliefs individuals may hold towards in-group members, but rather relies upon the recognition that in-group members should act in kind when trusted (Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000; Yamagishi et al., 1999). This generalized reciprocity, however, is strongly dependent upon the knowledge of shared group membership being available to both the trustor *and* the trustee because people *may not* expect to be treated favourably by in-group members who *do not* recognized them as being in-group members (Foddy et al., 2009; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 5, research in the area of the Social Identity model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) has demonstrated that adherence to in-group norms appears to be strengthened when people perceive the self and others primarily as group-members (Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995; Spears & Lea, 1994), a phenomenon which may be enhanced under conditions of mutual knowledge, and inhibited under conditions of unilateral knowledge. Endorsement of an in-group trust norm may, thus, be heightened under conditions of mutual knowledge, resulting in greater intentions to engage in in-group trust behaviours

under these circumstances. In the current study, therefore, I wanted to examine the role of mutual recognition of shared group membership in influencing trust in in-group strangers.

Risk

Most trust researchers tend to agree that a central component of the trust process is risk (Deutsch, 1958; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Rosseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998; Schlenker, Helm, & Tedeschi, 1973; Viklund, 2003). Certainly, it is a component of my current definition. Given this prominent role of risk, I propose that the *nature* of the risk involved in a given situation could also impact upon people's decision to trust and self-disclose. Specifically, I suggest that whether the risk associated with trusting involves one's *personal self* or a valued *in-group* could influence people's trusting intentions.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, when people's social identities are salient, the welfare of the salient in-group, as well as that of the self, as a group member, will be of primary significance, compared to the welfare of the self as an individual (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984). If the decision to trust a stranger entailed a risk to the self as a group member, and people's social identities were salient, they may be less willing to trust and self-disclose than when risk is directed towards the self as an individual. On the other hand, if people's personal identities were made salient, a risk directed towards their personal selves may be more likely to deter trusting behaviours. The role of "group risk" versus "personal risk" was thus another variable examined in the current experiment.

Topic of Self-Disclosure

Trust in the current study was examined in the form of willingness to self-disclose. Factors that could influence self-disclosure were, thus, included in the experimental design. Following past research that has demonstrated the impact of the

disclosure topic on people's willingness to disclose (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993; Dolgin, Meyer, & Schwartz, 1991; Goodpaster & Hewitt, 1992; Hill & Stull, 1987), I suggest that willingness to self-disclose in the current experiment could be similarly influenced by the disclosure topic. Given that self-disclosure can be motivated by the desire to establish connections with similar others (Dovidio, et al., 1997), I suggest that trust and self-disclosure on group-related topics may be higher to in-group than out-group members, as people may expect more validation and social support from in-group others (Derlega et al., 1993). As previously suggested, this effect may be especially evident under conditions of social identity salience.

Experimental Hypotheses

Currently, I set out to test three main hypotheses. First, I expected an interaction between: (1) the intergroup versus intragroup nature of the disclosure context, (2) the mutual versus unilateral knowledge of shared or unshared group membership between the participant and the stranger, and (3) the salience of participants' personal or social identities. Firstly, I hypothesized that willingness to disclose to in-group members should be greater than that to out-group members when knowledge regarding their social group memberships was mutually available rather than unilateral; this mean difference, however, was expected to occur only among participants whose social (rather than personal) identities had been made salient (H1a). From the SIDE model, I further hypothesized that willingness to disclose to an in-group member should be higher under conditions of mutual than unilateral knowledge, but only for participants whose social identities were salient (H1b).

Secondly, I predicted an interaction between: (1) the personal versus group nature of the risk involved, and (2) the nature of the identity rendered salient. Specifically, I hypothesized that willingness to trust and self-disclose under conditions of group risk

would be lower than that under personal risk for participants whose social identities were made salient. Willingness to disclose under conditions of personal risk, in contrast, would be lower for participants whose personal, rather than social identities, were made salient (H2).

Finally, I expected an interaction between: (1) the intergroup versus intragroup nature of the disclosure situation, (2) the group versus personal nature of the disclosure topic, and (3) the salience of participants' personal or social identities. I predicted that while participants may be more willing to self-disclose on a group topic to an in-group than an out-group member, willingness to disclose on a personal topic should not vary significantly between in-group and out-group strangers. This interaction, however, should only occur for participants in the social identity salient condition (H3).

Method

Participants and Design

Fifty-four international students (31 females & 23 males) at the Australian National University (ANU) took part in this experiment. The sample consisted of 32 Malaysians and 22 Singaporeans, with ages ranging from 18 to 28 years ($M=21.57$ years, $SD=2.38$). Participants were residents of four residential colleges on campus who received \$5 for their participation. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of two between-participants identity-salience conditions: personal identity salient vs. social identity salient. Four additional within-participants variables were independently manipulated in a 2 (group membership of the stranger: in-group/out-group) x 2 (knowledge of group membership: mutual/unilateral) x 2 (risk: group/personal) x 2 (topic: group/personal) factorial design.

Between-Participants Independent Variable

Social Identity Salience. The identity salience manipulation was presented in the first phase of the experiment. The two identities that were rendered salient in this study were that of a unique individual (personal identity) and an international student (social identity). Participants in the personal identity salient condition received a questionnaire with the heading, “Each Person is a Unique Individual” printed in large, bold letters. This was then followed by a paragraph designed to invoke personal identity salience (Verkuyten & Hagendoorn, 1998). Excerpts from the paragraph included sentences such as, “Each person differs from others in all kinds of ways...one loves music, yet another likes to play sports”. After reading the paragraph, participants then completed a task in which they listed three things that they personally do relatively often, relatively rarely, generally well, and generally badly compared to other individuals (Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds & Turner, 1999). Participants then indicated their agreement with six positively worded statements about themselves as unique individuals, such as, “In general, I have a lot of unique qualities that make me different from other individuals.” These questions were designed to strengthen participants’ identities as unique individuals by making salient positive aspects of their personal identities (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997).

In the social identity salient condition, participants received a questionnaire with the heading, “Each Person is a Member of a Group”. They then read a paragraph designed to invoke their identification with the group of international students. This passage included sentences such as, “Each person is a member of a group...in this way, each person is similar to others in all kinds of ways....” Participants then responded to a

“three-things” task similar to that above, but this time with respect to the group “international students.” This was immediately followed by a linguistic framing task, again similar to that above, but asking participants things about themselves as international students (e.g., “In general, we international students share lots of unique qualities that make us different from Australian students.”). Again, these latter questions were intended to strengthen participants’ identities as international students by highlighting positive aspects of their group identity.

Within-Participants Independent Variables and Measurement of Willingness to Disclose.

In manipulating the within-participant variables, I created 16 different context descriptions corresponding to each of the 16 experimental conditions. Each description was written on a separate index card. Participants were presented with all 16 context descriptions simultaneously, and asked to place each context description along a scale from 1 (“definitely not disclose”) to 16 (“definitely disclose”). Participants were told that they could: (1) have multiple cards on each point of the scale, (2) have one card on each point of the scale, or (3) have all cards on a single point of the scale. Participants were instructed to imagine that they were really going to self-disclose information to the stranger.

Manipulation of Group Membership. In the in-group member condition, the stranger to whom participants were asked to imagine themselves disclosing to was a fellow international student. In the out-group member condition, this stranger was described as a “non-international student.”

Manipulation of Knowledge. Under mutual knowledge, participants were told that the stranger would know their nationality (implying that the stranger would know that

the participant was a *non-Australian* international student). In the unilateral knowledge condition, participants were told that the stranger would *not* know their nationality. Participants were further assured that their *personal* identity would remain anonymous across all conditions.

Manipulation of Risk. In the group-risk condition, participants were told that there would be a risk that all international students could suffer some embarrassment as a result of their disclosure. In the personal risk condition, participants were told that they *personally* could suffer some embarrassment as a result of their disclosure.

Manipulation of Topic. A pilot study that examined peoples' perceptions towards 14 different discussion topics (seven group related topics and seven personal topics) was conducted prior to the main experiment. In the pilot study, participants were asked to rate each topic on five separate dimensions: (1) how group oriented it was, (2) how personally oriented it was, (3) how emotionally engaging it was, (4) the amount of discomfort experienced when discussing it, and (5) the need to trust a stranger when discussing it. The purpose of the pilot test was to ascertain that the two discussion topics eventually selected would differ only in terms of their group or personal orientation, and were similar on other dimensions. Based on the results, two topics were selected: "Things about yourself that you would like to change" (personal topic) and "Racism towards international students" (group topic).

Additional Dependent Variables

In addition to participants' self-reported willingness to self-disclose, which was the main dependant variable of the current study, several other dependant measures were also included. After completing the card-sorting task, participants were given 16 questionnaires. On each questionnaire was a replica of one of the 16 different context

situations which corresponded with one of the 16 within-participants experimental conditions. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with a number of statements with reference to each context situation, using a scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 16 (strongly agree). The order in which these 16 questionnaires were presented was counterbalanced.

Perceived Stranger Trustworthiness. Perceived trustworthiness of the stranger, which is potentially a mediator between the manipulated variables and the main dependant variable of willingness to self-disclose, was measured with a single question: 'I feel that the stranger in this conversation situation is a trustworthy person'.

Perceived Situation Trustworthiness. In recognition of the fact that participants' perceptions of trustworthiness, which may function to influence their willingness to self-disclose, could be affected by situational factors, (i.e. topic of self-disclosure), a measure of perceived situation trustworthiness was included: 'I feel that the current disclosure situation is a trustworthy one'.

Perceived Similarity with Stranger. In order to test the idea that participants' willingness to trust and self-disclose to an in-group stranger may be based upon their perceived interchangeability with in-group others, a single-item, which assessed participants' perceived similarity between themselves and the stranger, was incorporated into the current questionnaire : 'I see myself as being similar to the stranger in the above conversation situation'.

Expectations of Reciprocity. A direct test of the reciprocity heuristic pathway, which would predict greater in-group trust (as a result of expectations of in-group reciprocity), but only when there is mutual recognition of shared group-membership,

was also included: ‘The stranger in the above conversation situation is likely to reciprocate my trust’.

Manipulation Checks

Participants answered a set of manipulation-check questions for each of the 16 self-disclosing situations. Specifically, participants were asked to tick a box indicating whether they thought: (1) the stranger was an international student or non-international student, (2) whether the topic would be racism experienced by international students or things about themselves that they wish to change, (3) whether the stranger would know their nationality or not; and (4) whether the potential embarrassment from their disclosure would be for all international students or themselves personally.

Manipulation checks for the identity salience manipulation were presented in the final part of the experiment. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statements: “While completing the [previous] tasks, I was responding as an international student”, and “While completing the [previous] tasks, I was responding as a unique individual” (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree). Participants in the social identity salient conditions were expected to agree more with the first statement, and participants in the personal identity salient conditions were expected to agree more with the second statement. Finally, participants filled-in some demographic information about themselves.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Given the relatively large number of manipulation check questions that evaluated participants’ attentiveness to the within-participant manipulations (total of 64), I decided to only exclude participants who had more than 5% (3 questions) of incorrect

responses from our analyses. Results indicated that 12 participants had incorrect answers on more than 5% of the manipulation checks. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) test for random attrition (Weiss, 1999) revealed that these 12 participants were randomly distributed across the personal and social identity salient conditions; and they were thus excluded from subsequent analyses.

Consistent with my predictions, responses on the social identity salience manipulation check indicated that participants in the social-identity salient conditions agreed more that they were responding as international students ($M=4.84$, $SD=1.08$) than those in the personal-identity salient condition ($M=3.90$, $SD=1.37$), $t(40)=2.50$, $p<.05$. Responses on the personal-identity salience manipulation check, in contrast, did not differ significantly across the two identity salience conditions, $t(40)=0.13$. I did not, however, exclude participants from further analyses on the basis of their responses on the personal-identity salience manipulation check. I consider the implications of this decision in the Discussion section. The final sample thus consisted of 42 participants.

Willingness to Disclose

A preliminary inspection of this measure of willingness to disclose, which was measured through a card-sorting task, revealed that of the 42 participants included in the analyses, none had approached the task by placing one card on each point of the 16-point scale, hence indicating that these participants had not treated this measure as a ranking exercise. Data was subsequently analysed using a five-way mixed ANOVA, with identity salience as the between-subjects variable and group-membership, knowledge, risk and topic as the within-subjects variables. Results revealed, first, that the main effect for group membership was significant, $F(1, 40) = 8.54$, $p<.01$, partial $\eta^2=.18$. Participants reported greater willingness, overall, to disclose to in-group

($M=7.76$, $SD=0.53$) than out-group members ($M=6.53$, $SD=0.58$). This main effect, however, was qualified by two higher-order interactions. Firstly, we observed a three-way interaction between group-membership, knowledge, and identity salience, $F(1, 40) = 5.21$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .12$. To clarify the nature of this interaction, separate simple effects analyses were conducted on participants' willingness to disclose under the social identity and personal identity salient conditions.

Under social identity salience, the two-way interaction between group membership and knowledge was non-significant, $F(1, 21) = 2.82$, $p > .05$. However, consistent with H1a, results indicated that participants were significantly more willing to disclose to an in-group ($M=7.73$, $SD=0.80$) than an out-group stranger ($M=6.25$, $SD=0.83$) under mutual knowledge, $t(40) = 2.56$, $p < .05$ (see Figure 1a). Willingness to disclose under unilateral knowledge, on the other hand, did not differ significantly between the in-group ($M=7.5$, $SD=0.78$) and out-group stranger conditions ($M=6.81$, $SD=0.81$), $t(40) = 1.20$. Planned mean comparisons between willingness to disclose to an in-group member under the mutual and unilateral knowledge, however, were NOT consistent with H1b. Specifically, results indicated that participants were no more willing to disclose to an in-group member under the mutual ($M=7.73$, $SD=0.80$) than unilateral knowledge ($M=7.5$, $SD=0.78$) conditions, $t(40) = 0.40$.

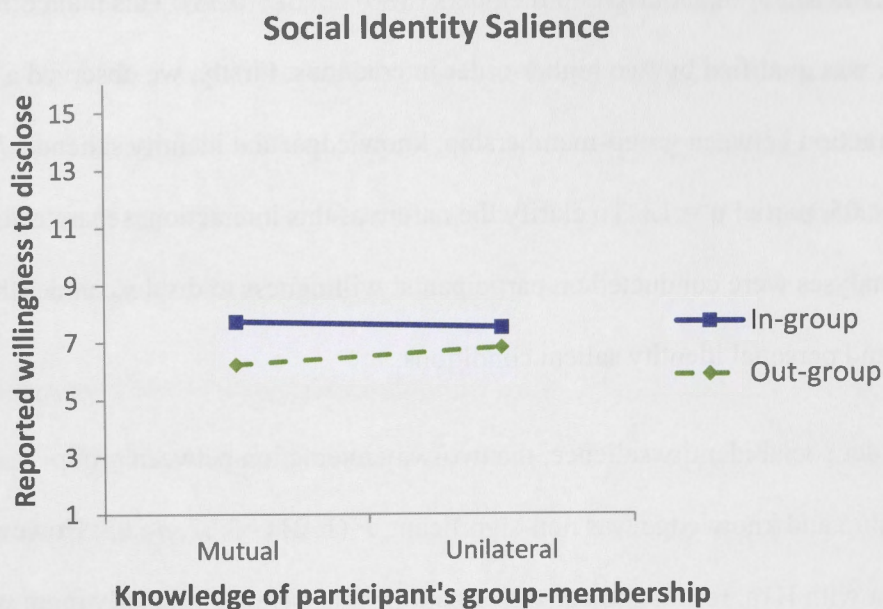


Figure 1a. Group-membership by knowledge interaction on participants' reported willingness to disclose under social identity salience.

Under personal identity salience, the two-way interaction between group membership and knowledge was also non-significant, $F(1, 19) = 2.66, p = .>.05$. Pair-wise comparisons, however, indicated that, when there was unilateral knowledge of group membership, participants were significantly more willing to disclose to in-group ($M = 8.38, SD = 0.92$) than out-group strangers ($M = 6.96, SD = 0.84$), $t(40) = 2.75, p < .05$ (see Figure 1b). Willingness to disclose to in-group ($M = 7.45, SD = 0.90$) and out-group strangers ($M = 6.35, SD = 0.82$) under mutual knowledge, on the other hand, did not significantly differ, $t(40) = 1.82$.

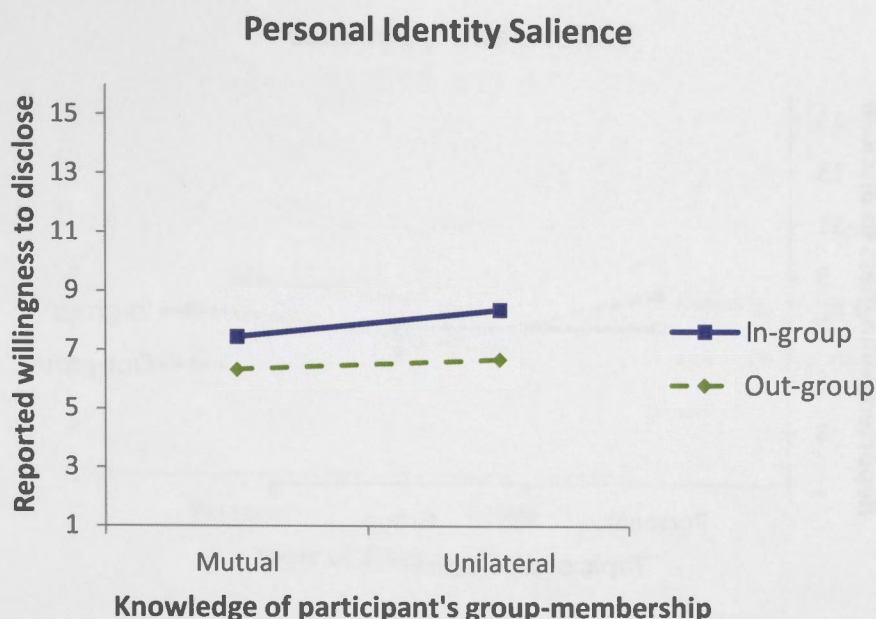


Figure 1b. Group-membership by knowledge interaction on participants' reported willingness to disclose under personal identity salience.

Consistent with H3, a three-way interaction between group-membership, topic, and identity salience was observed, $F(1, 40) = 4.15, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$. As before, separate simple effects analyses were conducted for the social and personal identity salient conditions. Results indicated that the two-way interaction between group-membership and topic was significant under the social identity salient conditions [$F(1, 21) = 4.98, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .19$], but not the personal identity salient conditions [$F(1, 19) = 0.13, p > .05$]. However, instead of a greater willingness to disclose to in-group members on a group than personal topic under social identity salience (as predicted in H3), it was found that participants' willingness to disclose to out-group members, was significantly higher on a personal ($M = 8.24, SD = 0.93$) than a group topic ($M = 6.08, SD = 1.02$), $t(40) = 2.57, p < .05$ (see Figure 2a). Willingness to disclose to in-group members, on the other hand, did not differ between a personal ($M = 6.99, SD = 0.82$) and a group topic ($M = 6.98, SD = 0.85$), $t(40) = .01, p > .05$.

Social Identity Salience

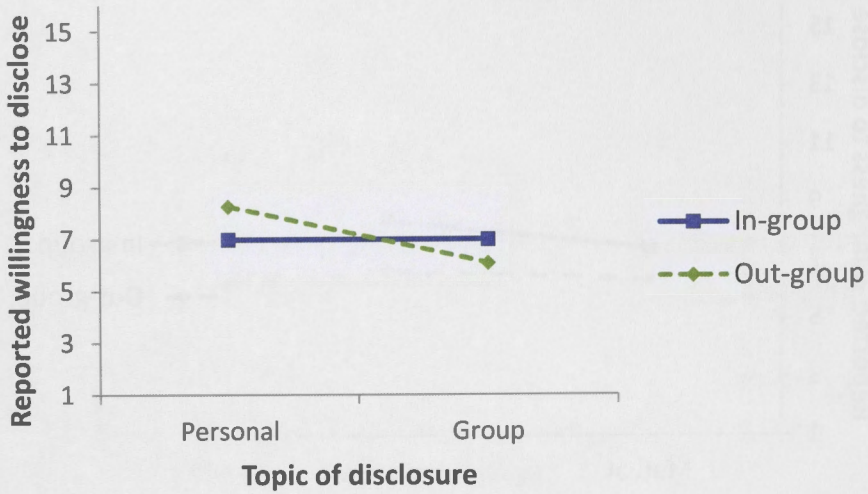


Figure 2a. Group-membership by topic interaction on participants' reported willingness to disclose under social identity salience.

Under conditions of personal identity salience, only a group-membership main effect was observed (see Figure 2b), with participants indicating a greater overall willingness to self-disclose to out-group than in-group members, [$F(1, 19) = 6.43$, $p < .05$].

Personal Identity Salience

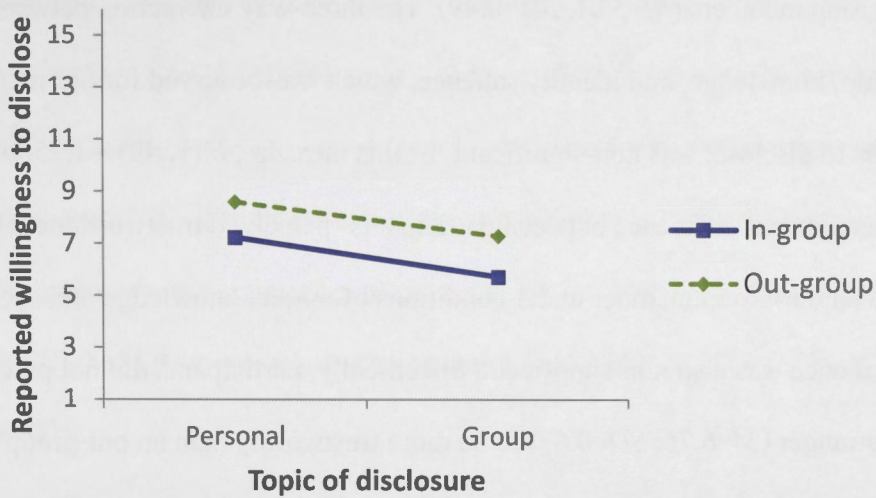


Figure 2b. Group-membership main effect on participants' reported willingness to disclose under personal identity salience.

Finally, a significant two-way interaction between risk and identity salience was observed, $F(1, 21) = 4.80, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .11$. Consistent with H2, participants in the social identity salient conditions were more willing to disclose under personal risk ($M = 7.59, SE = .80$) than group risk conditions ($M = 6.55, SE = .77$). Participants in the personal identity salient conditions, however, were more willing to disclose under conditions of group risk ($M = 7.77, SE = .81$) than personal risk ($M = 6.68, SE = .84$). The above mean differences, however, were non-significant for both the social and personal identity salient conditions.

Additional Measures

Perceived Stranger Trustworthiness

Results from a 5-way mixed ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for group-membership, $F(1, 40) = 19.04, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .32$, indicating that participants

perceived in-group members ($M=6.93$, $SD=0.47$) to be significantly more trustworthy than out-group members ($M=5.61$, $SD=0.49$). The three-way interaction between group-membership, knowledge, and identity salience, which was observed for our measure of willingness to disclose, was non-significant for this measure, $F(1, 40) = 1.95$, $p > .05$.

The predicted mean difference between participants' perceived trustworthiness of an in-group and an out-group member under conditions of mutual knowledge and social identity salience was also non-significant. Specifically, participants did not perceive an in-group stranger ($M=6.76$, $SD=0.67$) to be more trustworthy than an out-group stranger ($M=5.57$, $SD=0.71$) under the mutual knowledge conditions, when their social identities were salient $t(40) = 2.14$, $p > .05$.

Perceived Situation Trustworthiness

Consistent with the findings for my measure of perceived stranger trustworthiness, a significant main effect for group-membership was also detected for my measure of perceived situation trustworthiness, $F(1, 40) = 25.56$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .39$. Specifically, participants perceived the situation to be more trustworthy, overall, when the interaction partner was an in-group ($M=7.66$, $SD=0.51$) than an out-group stranger ($M=5.93$, $SD=0.52$). This main effect was qualified by a three-way interaction between group-membership, knowledge, and identity salience, $F(1, 40) = 5.21$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .17$. To clarify the nature of this interaction, separate simple effects analyses were conducted on participants' perceived trustworthiness of the situation under the social identity and personal identity salient conditions.

Under social identity salience, the two-way interaction between group membership and knowledge was non-significant, $F(1, 21) = 2.59$, $p > .05$. Consistent with results obtained for our measure of willingness to self-disclose, however,

participants in the mutual knowledge conditions perceived the situation as significantly more trustworthy when the stranger was an in-group ($M=7.60$, $SD=0.77$) than an out-group member ($M=5.67$, $SD=0.76$), $t(21)=3.95$, $p<.005$. Perceptions of situation trustworthiness under unilateral knowledge, on the other hand, did not correspond with participants' reported willingness to disclose under the same experimental conditions, with participants reporting greater perceptions of trustworthiness in the in-group ($M=8.56$, $SD=0.68$) than out-group stranger conditions ($M=6.01$, $SD=0.70$), $t(21)=5.09$, $p<.001$.

Under personal identity salience, the two-way interaction between group membership and knowledge was significant, $F(1, 19)=5.60$, $p<.05$. Pair-wise comparisons indicated that when there was unilateral knowledge of group membership, participants perceived no significant differences in situation trustworthiness between the in-group ($M=7.01$, $SD=0.71$) and out-group stranger conditions ($M=6.24$, $SD=0.74$), $t(19)=1.38$, $p>.05$. When there was mutual knowledge of group membership, however, participants perceived the situation to be significantly more trustworthy when the stranger was an in-group ($M=7.46$, $SD=0.80$) than an out-group member ($M=5.75$, $SD=0.88$), $t(19)=3.05$, $p<.05$.

Perceived Similarity with Stranger

Overall, results from a 5-way mixed ANOVA indicated that participants perceived themselves to be more similar to in-group ($M=8.20$, $SD=0.54$) than out-group strangers ($M=5.02$, $SD=0.50$), $F(1, 40)=8.15$, $p<.01$, partial $\eta^2=.47$. Planned mean comparisons further indicated that participants in the social identity salient conditions perceived in-group strangers ($M=8.40$, $SD=0.75$) to be more similar to themselves than out-group strangers ($M=4.51$, $SD=0.70$), under the mutual knowledge conditions $t(40)$

=7.16, $p < .001$. This mean difference, however, was also significant under the unilateral knowledge conditions $t(40) = 6.83$, $p < .001$, where in-group strangers ($M = 8.19$, $SD = 0.75$) were seen as being more similar to the self than out-group strangers ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.70$). These results, therefore, indicate a significant main effect of stranger group-membership for participants in the social identity salient conditions, with greater perceptions of similarity between the self and in-group strangers, rather than out-group strangers. This perception of similarity, however, did not vary as a function of whether the knowledge of participants' group membership was mutually available or not.

Expectations of Reciprocity

A 5-way mixed ANOVA also revealed a significant main effect for group-membership on my measure of expected reciprocity, $F(1, 40) = 4.14$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .09$, with participants expecting greater levels of reciprocity from in-group ($M = 10.23$, $SD = 0.55$) than out-group strangers ($M = 9.44$, $SD = 0.65$). Planned mean comparisons for participants in the social identity salient conditions revealed that consistent with the reciprocity-heuristic model, expectations of reciprocity did not differ significantly between in-group ($M = 11.00$, $SD = 0.72$) and out-group strangers ($M = 9.71$, $SD = 0.91$) under the unilateral knowledge conditions $t(40) = 2.11$, $p > .05$. Expectations of reciprocity, however, also did not differ significantly between in-group ($M = 10.16$, $SD = 0.82$) and out-group strangers ($M = 9.55$, $SD = 0.91$) under the mutual knowledge conditions $t(40) = 1.00$. Again, these results reflect greater expectations of reciprocity from in-group than out-group members overall, irrespective of whether there was mutual or unilateral knowledge of group-membership.

Discussion

The aim of this first study was to identify different factors that were important in influencing trust in strangers. Specifically, I examined the roles of group membership, mutual knowledge, identity salience, risk, and topic of self-disclosure, in willingness to self-disclose to strangers. Trust was measured via participants' reported willingness to self-disclose. The results were generally supportive of my hypotheses. As predicted, participants reported significantly greater willingness to disclose to in-group than out-group strangers, but only when there was mutual knowledge of group membership. This finding is thus consistent with previous research showing that people trust in-group strangers over out-group strangers only when there is mutual recognition of shared group membership between fellow in-group members (Foddy et al., 2009; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000; Yamagishi et al., 1999). Also consistent with H1a, the difference between willingness to disclose to in-group and out-group strangers under mutual knowledge was significant for participants in the *social*, but *not* the personal identity salient condition. Thus, expectations of more favourable treatment from in-group than out-group others under mutual knowledge may be greater among participants who were thinking of themselves as group members, rather than unique individuals. These results, therefore, provide preliminary support for the three core hypotheses of this thesis as previously outlined in Chapter 6.

Results from this first study also supported H2, with participants indicating less willingness to disclose under conditions of group risk than personal risk when their social identities were salient. When participants' personal identities had been rendered salient, however, they were more willing to disclose when there was a threat directed towards the group, rather than the personal self. This finding thus supports the argument that when people were thinking of themselves as group members, a threat to the self as a

group member is more likely to deter trusting behaviour than a threat directed towards the self as a unique individual.

While findings from the current experiment were broadly consistent with H3, some important differences did emerge. Specifically, even though the predicted three-way interaction between identity salience, group-membership, and topic of disclosure was observed, the mean differences were not in the direction consistent with my predictions. The current findings indicated that participants whose social identities were salient expressed greater willingness to disclose to out-group strangers on personal-related than group-related topics, while willingness to disclose to in-group strangers did not vary as a function of topic orientation. This finding, therefore, may imply that the nature of the disclosure topic is more important in determining self-disclosure to *out-group* than in-group members, and that trust in out-group others may be especially hard to come by on group-related matters where category differentiations can be highlighted.

Interestingly, despite obtaining results broadly supportive of the hypotheses I set out to test, findings on some of the mediating variables were less conclusive. Based upon previous research in the area of group-based trust in strangers, it was initially theorised that people's willingness to self-disclose may be mediated by greater perceptions of trustworthiness (in the stranger), and that this may in turn be influenced by people's expectations of reciprocity from (Yamagishi et al., 2000), or perceptions of interchangeability with (Brewer, 2008; Dovidio et al., 1997), the stranger whom they were interacting with. Current experimental findings on these potential mediators, however, do not appear to offer unequivocal support for one theory over the other. People's perceptions of trustworthiness in the stranger, for example, did not correspond with their own reported willingness to self-disclose. While participants in the social identity salient conditions reported greater willingness to self-disclose to in-group than

out-group strangers under the mutual knowledge conditions, they did not perceive the in-group stranger to be more trustworthy than the out-group stranger under these same conditions. On the other hand, while there was no preference to self-disclose to an in-group stranger over an out-group stranger under the unilateral knowledge conditions for participants' whose social identities were salient, significantly higher levels of perceived trustworthiness in the interaction situation was detected for participants in the in-group/unilateral than out-group/unilateral conditions. These results, thus, imply a potential disparity between people's self-reported willingness to disclose and their perceptions of trustworthiness.

Furthermore, results obtained for some of the other dependent variables also did not appear to offer a clear explanation for some of the findings on my main dependent variable of willingness to self-disclose. Specifically, if participants' willingness to trust and self-disclose to in-group strangers were mediated by their perceptions of similarity and interchangeability with these in-group others, then I would have expected participants in the social identity salient conditions to perceive greater levels of similarity with in-group than out-group strangers under the mutual knowledge conditions, a result which would mirror the findings on participants' willingness to disclose measures. While the current empirical results do indicate greater perceptions of similarity with in-group than out-group strangers, this perception did not vary as a function of my manipulation of knowledge of stranger group-membership, a finding inconsistent with the results obtained for my measures of willingness to disclose.

Based upon research on the reciprocity heuristic model, I included in the current study a measure of participants' expectations regarding the stranger's likelihood of reciprocating their trust. If participants' willingness to trust and self-disclose were in fact mediated by their beliefs of in-group reciprocity, then higher expectations of

reciprocity by in-group than out-group strangers under the mutual knowledge conditions should be observed for participants in the social identity salient conditions. The results, however, only provided support for a group-membership main effect on this measure of expected reciprocity. Specifically, participants in the social identity salient conditions expected greater levels of reciprocity from in-group than out-group strangers, irrespective of whether these strangers were aware of their group-membership or not.

In terms of the broader research question being addressed in the current thesis, results from this first study offer only weak empirical support for the three pathways of trust development previously outlined in Chapter 2. Specifically, it was suggested that trust in in-group members under conditions of social identity salience may occur as a result of either (1) a sense of depersonalized trust (based upon shared goals and values, (2) greater adherence to an “in-group trust” norm, or (3) the attribution of more favourable characteristics to in-group members. From the current experimental results, it appears that even though participants whose social identities were salient exhibited greater trusting intentions towards in-group than out-group strangers under the mutual than unilateral knowledge conditions, they did not in fact perceive these in-group strangers more favourably (i.e. more trustworthy) than out-group strangers. Greater trust in in-group than out-group strangers as a result of shared goals and values under these same conditions also did not appear to account for people’s trusting intentions as measured by their reported willingness to disclose, given that in-group strangers were generally perceived as being more similar to the self than out-group strangers, regardless of whether there was mutual or unilateral knowledge of group-membership. The other proposed pathway of greater norm endorsement under conditions of social identity salience also did not receive much empirical support. I predicted greater adherence to an in-group trust norm under the mutual than unilateral knowledge

conditions for participants in the social identity salient conditions, a prediction I outlined in H1b. H1b, however, did not receive any statistical support in this current study. Results indicated that participants whose social identities were salient were no more willing to self-disclose to an in-group stranger under the mutual than unilateral knowledge conditions. While recognizing that the pattern of results observed in this experiment may not be supportive of some of the underlying psychological processes theorised, it should be noted that the mediators I tested in this study were operationalised through single-item measures, and may not be the most robust of measures. Further examination in this area may, thus, be needed before a stronger conclusion can be drawn.

In addition, some caution also needs to be expressed regarding the generalizability of the current findings, given that the manipulation check for personal identity salience did not show the predicted differences across the two identity salience conditions. Although participants in the social identity salient conditions reported that they were responding as international students more so than those in the personal identity salient conditions, participants in the personal identity salient conditions did not appear to be responding as unique individuals, more so than to those in the social identity salient conditions. One potential explanation for the above result could be that participants had misinterpreted the manipulation-check question. Specifically, participants may have taken the question “While completing this study, I was responding as a unique individual” to mean “Did you discuss your responses in this study with someone else?” Given that all participants completed the experiment individually, it is unsurprising that they would strongly agree with the statement if it had indeed been misinterpreted. Non-significant differences on this manipulation check questions between participants in the social and personal identity salient conditions, therefore, may be due to an ambiguity of

the manipulation checks, but not necessarily the effectiveness of the manipulations per se. Furthermore, the psychological processes that I am interested in, and the main hypotheses that I set out to test, pertained to the social identity salient conditions, which appeared to have been successfully operationalized. The empirical findings on the primary dependent variable of willingness to disclose were also in line with the major hypotheses.

The current study has identified several variables that appear influential in determining people's willingness to trust and self-disclose to strangers. While the results have been highly informative, some ambiguity exists regarding the underlying psychological processes. Findings on some of the potential mediator variables did not provide clear support for the dominance of one process over others. Specifically, there was no clear indication that participants' reported willingness to self-disclose were influenced by perceptions of interchangeability with, or expectations of reciprocity from the stranger in the hypothetical interaction situations. More importantly, there was also no clear indication that participants' reported willingness to disclose reflected their perceptions of trust, either in the stranger or interaction situation. The aim for future studies, therefore, would be to develop a more focused approach to the current research question. For example, I will aim to establish an empirical link between willingness to self-disclose, perceptions of trustworthiness, perceptions of interchangeability, and/or expectations of favourable treatment. Being able to ascertain a clear pathway for the trust processes examined in the current experiment will significantly enhance understandings of trust in strangers. Overall, findings from this study indicate that when people view themselves as group members, they are more willing to disclose to in-group than out-group strangers, particularly when there is mutual recognition of this shared group membership.

CHAPTER 8.

STUDY 2: TRUST AND SELF-DISCLOSURE TO STRANGERS: A GROUP-BASED PERSPECTIVE

Context Statement

While the first empirical chapter as outlined in Chapter 7 provided partial support for some of the core hypotheses that I set out to test, some unexpected findings did emerge from this first study. While a three-way interaction between the manipulated variables of group membership of stranger, knowledge of group membership, and identity salience was detected for the main dependent variable of willingness to self-disclose, follow-up pair-wise contrasts revealed that the mean difference between willingness to disclose to in-group members under the mutual and unilateral knowledge conditions were non-significant. Instead of exhibiting greater willingness to trust and self-disclose to in-group members under mutual rather than unilateral knowledge conditions, participants were in fact behaving in a manner which suggests greater *distrust* in out-group members under conditions where knowledge of group membership was mutually available. Results from Study 1 also did not offer clear support for any of the three predicted pathways of in-group trust development under conditions of social identity salience. Study 2, therefore, aimed to replicate the findings from Study 1, as well as to develop a clearer understanding of the underlying psychological processes. In this second study, I manipulated the same five independent variables as in Study 1. As in Study 1, I measured participant's self-reported willingness to self-disclose, as well as

their perceptions of trustworthiness in the situation. In this second study, I also included a measure of perceived risk in engaging in the hypothetical self-disclosing situation.

Results from Study 2 were broadly consistent with those of Study 1. More importantly, however, the findings from this study provided support for an alternative theoretical framework which may better explain the current pattern of results.

Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify factors that influence the development of trust in strangers. Based on the theoretical framework of group-based trust, I attempt to demonstrate that decisions to trust or distrust a stranger can be formed on the basis of whether or not people share the same category membership with the stranger. Trust in this study was measured in the form of willingness to self-disclose. Other variables examined in the study were: identity salience, topic of self-disclosure, whether or not there is knowledge of shared social group membership between the stranger and the participant, as well as whether or not the risk involved in self-disclosing was high or low. Results indicated that participants whose social identities were salient were more willing to self-disclose to in-group than out-group strangers on a high risk/group topic. Participants in the social identity salient condition also reported significantly greater fear for in-group embarrassment when they imagined themselves disclosing on a high risk/group topic to an out-group than an in-group stranger. Implications of these results will be further discussed with relation to social identity and impression management theories.

Introduction

In recent decades, interest in the area of trust has increased dramatically, with research being conducted across various disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, politics and economics (Hardin, 2001; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, Camerer, 1998; Rotter, 1967; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). Despite this breadth of research, however, a consensual definition of trust remains elusive and questions regarding the bases of trust have been constantly debated (Kramer, 1999; McAllister, 1995; Tyler, 2003). Trust, for example, has been conceptualized by personality psychologists as a person's overall propensity to trust others based upon trust-related experiences accumulated throughout the person's lifetime (Gurtman, 1992; Rotter, 1967; Sorrentino, Holmes, Hanna, & Sharp, 1995). Rational choice theorists, on the other hand, argue that trusting behaviours stem from conscious evaluations of the pros and cons in a particular trust situation (Hardin, 1991; Williamson, 1993). Finally, trust has been conceptualized by social psychologists as being a product of social interactions and positive expectations of favourable treatment (Brewer, 1981; Lewicki & Bunker, Wang & Yamagishi, 2005).

Trust researchers, however, tend to agree that a central component of the trust process is risk (Deutsch, 1958; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Rosseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998; Schlenker, Helm, & Tedeschi, 1971). In fact, the constant debate surrounding the definitions and antecedents of trust can be understood as researchers' attempts at identifying different factors to explain or predict people's willingness to take risks and hence trust. Trust as a result of positive expectations derived from previous interactions (Boon & Holmes, 1991; Boyle & Bonacich, 1970; Linskold, 1978), recommendations from third-parties (Burt & Knez, 1996), or even personal dispositions

(Rotter, 1980), therefore, can all be seen as attempts at identifying risk-reducing information that paves the way for trusting perceptions and behaviours.

Trust in Strangers

Trust in strangers represents a unique situation whereby cognitive representations of a strangers' trustworthiness or predictions about their motives or intentions cannot be based upon past interactions with them, nor third-party recommendations and reputations. The avenues people frequently employ to inform their trust decisions are unavailable due to the lack of information about the stranger. Given this high degree of risk and uncertainty, it is therefore unsurprising that some people may shun or avoid developing new relationships with strangers, and choose to remain in secure and established relationships (Macy & Skovertz, 1998; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1996). Trust in strangers however, is not uncommon and not all strangers are dishonest and untrustworthy. In fact, plenty of people are willing to venture outside familiar environments and relationships to interact with strangers (Macy & Skovertz, 1998). In this current study, therefore, I attempt to explore different factors that could influence people's willingness to trust strangers.

In identifying factors that would predict trust in strangers, an emerging view of trust, which conceptualized it as a product of shared group membership with the trustee, appears appropriate in furthering our understanding in this area (Brewer, 2008; Haslam, 2004; Kramer, 1999; Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Tyler, 2003). According to researchers in this area, shared membership in a salient social category "serves as a rule for defining the boundaries of low-risk interpersonal trust that by passes the need for personal knowledge and the costs of negotiating reciprocity" (Brewer, 1981, pp. 356). Heightened awareness of a shared social group membership thus reduces perceptions of

risk and provides the basis for trust in in-group members (Brewer, 1981). This conceptualization of trust, which stresses the importance of a shared group membership, thus, places less emphasis on prior knowledge and interactions, and may well be influential in understanding and predicting trust in strangers (Brewer, 1981; Kramer, 1999; Tyler, 2001).

Research has found, for example, that people were more willing to take risks and trust, when the interaction stranger was an in-group rather than an out-group member (Maddux & Brewer, 2005). In this current paper, I further suggest that in-group trust in strangers may also be contingent upon people's social identity being made salient. Specifically, a shift from a personal to a group level of self-perception may result in increased perceptions of similarities between the self and other in-group members (Turner, 1987). This heightened perception of intra-group similarities may result in the attribution of more positive characteristics to in-group others (Brewer & Silver, 1978). Trust in in-group members over out-group members may, thus, only occur when people's social identities are salient. When people's personal identities have been made salient, their social group memberships become less important to their self-perception. Shared group membership with the stranger, therefore, may not function to increase trust in in-group strangers under personal identity salience.

Mechanisms Underlying Group-based Trust

In-group Favouritism

Whilst the notion of group-based trust in strangers has received a certain amount of empirical support (Foddy, Platow & Yamagishi, 2009; Maddux & Brewer, 2005; Wang & Yamagishi, 2005; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000), a consensus regarding the functional mechanisms of group-based trust is yet to be reached. One potential

explanation that has been put forward suggests that group-based trust results from the attribution of more positive characteristics to in-group than out-group members. From social identity theory, self-perception in terms of a salient social category can result in the attribution of more positive qualities and characteristics to in-group others, who are seen as being interchangeable with the self (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Past research, for example, has demonstrated that people tend to perceive in-group members as being nicer, more trustworthy, and fairer than out-group members (Brewer & Silver, 1978; Doise, Csepe, Dann, Gouge, Larsen & Ostell, 1972; McAllister, 1995; Platow, McClintock & Liebrand, 1990). Tendencies to trust in-group members, therefore, may be based upon our beliefs that in-group members possess more positive qualities in comparison to out-group members (Brewer, 1981).

Mutual Knowledge of Shared Group Membership

In contrast, some researchers have suggested that trust in in-group strangers may be based upon expectations that in-group members should respond in kind when trusted (Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). Proponents of this view tend to dispute the notion that favourable perceptions of, or expectations of positive treatment from in-group members, are due to an inherent and unconditional liking of in-group others (Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000; Yamagishi, Jin, & Kiyonari, 1999). Specifically, it has been argued that classification of individuals into the same social group makes salient the expectation that in-group members should help further each other's interest. This recognition thereby increases expectations that in-group members will demonstrate favourable and benevolent treatment towards fellow group members (Williams, 2001; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). Put this way, in-group trust is not due to a greater liking of in-group members per se, but rather a consequence of having greater expectations of better

treatment, and lower perceptions of risk when interacting with in-group than out-group members (Foddy et al., 2009). This generalized expectation of favourable treatment, however, is strongly dependent upon the knowledge of shared group membership being available to both the trustor *and* the potential trust recipient because people *may not* expect to be treated favourably by in-group members who *do not* recognize them as being in-group members (Foddy et al., 2009; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). One of the aims of the current paper was, therefore, to test these different hypotheses. Is it favourable perceptions or expectations of better treatment that is the better determinant of in-group trust in strangers?

Trust and Self-Disclosure

Most of the trust research to date, and especially trust research in strangers, has been conducted with social dilemma situations in which the amount of risk and benefits can be clearly quantified (Maddux & Brewer, 2005; Riegelsberger, Sasse, & McCarthy, 2003; Wang & Yamagishi, 2005; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000). Trust in everyday life, however, often involves situations where exact knowledge regarding the pros and cons of trusting are unavailable. An additional aim of this experiment congruent with the current thesis, therefore, was to attempt to gain a better understanding of people's trusting intentions under conditions of high ambiguity. Toward this end, I examined the above two trust processes in the context of a self-disclosure paradigm.

Whilst self-disclosure has traditionally been understood as the process whereby one person intentionally shares information about him or herself with another (Cozby, 1973; Joinson, 2001; Wheelless & Grotz, 1977), the *operationalization* of self-disclosure in most empirical work often depicts it as the act of sharing, or revealing, potentially *negative* information about oneself to others (McKenna & Bargh, 1998; Pennebaker,

Zech, & Rime, 2001). Most people, however, are motivated to project and maintain a positive impression of themselves, and this could make the self-disclosing of negative self-information difficult (Gardner & Martinko, 1988). Specifically, the potentially upsetting consequences of self-disclosing intimate or negative information, such as rejection, negative judgements, or even ridicule makes it unsurprising that most people may find it extremely difficult to talk about sensitive issues with others (Derlega, Metts, Peronio, & Margulis, 1993; Pennebaker, 1990). Self-disclosure, therefore, is a process which entails a certain amount of risk (Wheeless & Grotz, 1977).

More importantly for the current study, the potentially negative consequences from self-disclosure, unlike those in prisoner dilemma games, cannot be quantified in exact terms. People, for example, cannot know exactly what the disclosure recipient will do with any information they choose to share with him/her. I, therefore, contend that all the uncertainties associated with the decision to self-disclose (or not), it better captures the full-range of concerns involved in a trust decision-making process encountered in everyday life. Trust, in the current study, will thus be examined in the form of self-disclosure.

Risk and Topic of Self-Disclosure

Given the prominent role of risk in both the trust and self-disclosure literature, I currently seek to further understand the role it plays in both of these processes. In this study, therefore, I manipulated the nature, as well as the degree of risk in a trust and self-disclosing situation. Specifically, risk in the current study was operationalized as a form of reputation or image threat. Recent research has shown that people are motivated to engage in actions that defend or promote the positive image of the in-group (Hopkins, Reicher, Harrison, Cassidy, Bull & Levine, 2007; Klein & Azzi, 2001). Results from a

series of studies demonstrated that people who believed that the out-group held negative attitudes towards the in-group were more willing to engage in actions to dispute those views (Hopkins et al., 2007; Klein & Azzi, 2001). Vorauer, Main and O'Connell (1998) similarly demonstrated that people care about how the out-group views the in-group, and that people are motivated to portray a positive image of the in-group to the out-group. These and other researchers went on to propose that people care the *most* about the out-group's opinion of the in-group when the out-group has the potential to *evaluate* the in-group, as opposed to having mere contact with an out-group member (Klein & Azzi, 2001; Vorauer, Hunter, Main & Roy, 2000).

In reference to the disclosing of negative or potentially embarrassing information, therefore, the risk of being negatively evaluated through ones' own self-disclosure content may impact upon people's decisions to trust and self-disclose. Specifically, I suggest that when people's social identities are salient, concerns with negatively portraying the in-group to out-group members may *reduce* people's willingness to trust and self-disclose to out-group members, especially on disclosure topics which entail a certain degree of risk to the relevant in-group. This above effect, however, is expected to be attenuated when the risk inherent in the disclosure topic is relevant to the self as a unique individual (but not as a member of the salient social in-group).

I made this above prediction based on the idea that the nature of the risk, whether it involves the self, or the valued in-group, could have an impact on people's trusting intentions. For example, if people perceived themselves primarily as group members, the welfare of the group should be afforded greater importance, compared to that of the self (Kramer & Brewer, 1984). If the decision to trust a stranger entailed a

risk to the self as a group-member, people may be less willing to trust and self-disclose, compared to if the risk was directed towards the self as an individual. On the other hand, if people were primarily thinking of themselves as unique individuals, a potential risk towards their individual selves would be more likely to deter trusting behaviour than a risk directed towards the self as a group-member.

Overview of Hypotheses

In summary, I had three main hypotheses. I first propose two competing hypothesis, each based on one of the two perspectives regarding the mechanisms of group-based trust. From Yamagishi et al.'s (1999) model, I expected an interaction between the intergroup vs. intragroup nature of the disclosure context and the mutual versus non-mutual knowledge of shared or unshared group membership between the potential discloser and the disclosure recipient. Specifically, I hypothesized that willingness to disclose to in-group members should be greater under conditions of mutual than non-mutual knowledge. Given that generalized expectations of favourable treatment is a concept relevant to in-group but *not* out-group members, willingness to disclose to out-group members is not predicted to vary across the mutual and non-mutual knowledge conditions. I further predicted that this interaction may only apply when participants' social (rather than personal) identities had been made salient (H1).

Simple in-group favouritism, on the other hand, led me to predict a two-way interaction between the intergroup vs. intragroup nature of the disclosure context and the social versus personal nature of the identity rendered salient. Specifically, I hypothesized that willingness to trust and self-disclose under conditions of social identity salience would be higher among in-group than out-group members. This difference, however, was expected to attenuate under personal identity salience (H2).

Finally, for participants in the social identity salient conditions, I expected a significant mean difference between willingness to disclose to in-group and out-group members on high-risk group topics under conditions of mutual knowledge. Specifically, I predicted that participants in the social identity salient conditions would be less willing to disclose on a highly negative group topic to out-group than in-group members, especially when their social identities were known (H3).

Study 2

Method

Participants and Design

A total of 151 students (105 female and 46 male) at the Australian National University took part in this study. Participants were 1st year Psychology students with an age range of 16-43 ($M=19.2$, $SD=3.01$). Participants were recruited from the 1st year research pool and received either course credit or \$5 for their participation. Participants were randomly assigned to one condition of a 2 (group membership of the partner: in-group /out-group) x 2 (knowledge: mutual /unilateral) x 2 (identity salience: personal /social) between participants design. In addition, two other within-participants variables were independently manipulated in a 2 (topic of disclosure: group /personal) x 2 (risk: high /low) factorial design.

Procedure

Participants first read and signed a statement of informed consent before completing a one-page questionnaire designed to make salient either their identity as a unique individual, or a group member. Participants were under the impression that the study was interested in looking at peoples' reactions to various hypothetical situations. Specifically, participants were told to imagine themselves in a situation in which they

would have a *non*-face-to-face conversation (i.e. phone conversation, on-line chat) with a stranger. Participants were then presented with four different discussion topics that they would discuss with the stranger under this hypothetical situation, and asked a series of questions pertaining to each topic. Finally, participants completed a two-page questionnaire which contained manipulation checks and some demographic questions.

Materials

Manipulation of Identity Salience. The identity salience manipulation was incorporated into the one-page questionnaire that participants completed right at the beginning of the study. The two identities that were rendered salient in this study were that of a “unique individual” (personal identity) and an “Australian” (social identity). Firstly, participants in the personal and social identity salient conditions received a questionnaire titled “Each Person is a Unique Individual”, and “Each Person is a Member of a Group”, respectively. Participants then read a paragraph modelled after Verkuyten and Hagendoorn’s (1998) self-esteem manipulation. In the personal identity salient condition, the paragraph stated that, “Each person is a unique individual. In this way, each person differs from others in all kinds of ways and each individual can compare him or herself to other individuals...” In the social identity salient condition, participants read a paragraph stating that, “Each person is a member of a group, such as sports clubs and political parties ... In this way, each person is similar to others in all kinds of ways, and groups of people can compare themselves collectively to other groups....”

Participants subsequently proceeded to answer nine positively-worded questions based on the linguistic framing manipulation of Jetten, Spears, and Manstead (1997). These questions were designed to increase the salience of participants’ personal (e.g.

“Overall, I feel good about myself as a unique individual”) or social identities (e.g. “Overall, I feel good about myself as an Australian”) by highlighting positive aspects of their social or personal self. Participants responded to each statement by ticking “yes,” or “no” boxes.

Manipulation of Group membership. In the in-group condition, the stranger that participants imagined themselves having a non-face-to-face conversation with was an Australian; while in the out-group condition, participants were told to imagine that the stranger would be a *non*-Australian.

Manipulation of Knowledge. In the mutual knowledge condition, participants were informed that the stranger they would be having a conversation with was aware of their nationality. In the unilateral knowledge condition, however, participants were told that the stranger would not know their nationality. Participants were further assured that their *personal* identity would always remain anonymous.

Manipulation of Topic and Risk. Manipulations of the topic and risk variables were operationalized through the four different topics that participants imagined themselves discussing with the stranger. A pilot study (N=25), which examined people’s perceptions towards 14 different discussion topics, was conducted prior to the actual study. Participants in the pilot study were asked to rate each topic on four different dimensions: 1) how group oriented it was, 2) how personal oriented it was, 3) how embarrassing it would be to talk about it, and 4) how risky it would be to discuss it with someone. The purpose of the pilot study was to select two group topics (one low risk and one high risk) as well as two personal topics (one low risk and one high risk), that were equally relevant to participants as (1) Australians, and (2) as unique individuals, but differed in their perceived risk levels.

Based on the results, four discussion topics were chosen: 1) low risk/group topic, “Your thoughts, feelings and attitudes towards the statement ‘The typical Australian is a bogan and an alcoholic’”, 2) high risk/group topic, “Racist acts or attitudes exhibited by some Australians to members of other ethnic or nationality groups”, 3) low risk/personal topic, “Things about yourself that you wish you could change”, and 4) high risk/personal topic, “Things that you have lied to your partner (boyfriend / girlfriend) about”.

Dependent Variables

Willingness to Disclose. The primary dependent variable in this study was participants’ self-reported willingness to disclose to the stranger; this was measured with the question “I am willing to disclose on this topic under the circumstances described above” (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Participants answered this question four times, once for each of the four discussion topics, and this was the case for the remaining dependent measures as well.

Perceptions of Trustworthiness, and Fear for In-group Embarrassment.

Consistent with Study 1, I included a measure of perceived trustworthiness in the current study: “In this situation, I feel like I can trust the stranger”. An additional process question, designed to provide a better understanding of the psychological processes underlying participants’ willingness to trust and self-disclose was also included: “I am worried that all Australians will look bad as a result of my disclosure”. These questions were all measured on 7-point likert scales, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Perceptions of Stranger. In order to test the prediction that trust in in-group members may be influenced by people's overall tendency to attribute more favourable qualities to in-group members whom they perceive as being interchangeable with themselves, I measured several aspects of participants' perceptions of the stranger. Specifically, I asked participants to indicate their agreement with the following statements: "In general, the stranger is a trustworthy person", "I believe the stranger is a good person", and "I have a lot in common with the stranger" (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

Covariates. The potential impact of individual differences in generalized trust tendencies, and how it would affect the interpretation of our empirical findings was accounted for in the current study by including measures of participants' generalized trust in others. This measure of generalized trust ($\alpha=.85$) was a six-item scale extracted from Yamagishi and Kiyonari (2000), which consisted of items like "Most people are generally honest" (1=strongly agree, 7=strongly disagree).

Manipulation checks. Manipulation check questions for the group membership and knowledge variable were presented after the hypothetical self-disclosure situation had been explained to participants, but *before* they were presented with the four different discussion topics. These were: "The stranger in this conversation situation is an Australian" (group membership of partner check), and "The stranger in this conversation situation will know my nationality" (knowledge check). Participants were asked to tick a box, indicating whether they thought the two statements were: (1) correct or (2) incorrect.

Manipulation Checks

Four participants who incorrectly answered the group membership manipulation check and four participants who incorrectly answered the knowledge manipulation check were excluded from the main analysis. The final sample thus consisted of 143 participants.

Willingness to Disclose

The willingness to disclose responses were first analysed using a five-way mixed ANCOVA, with group membership, knowledge, and identity salience as the between participants variables, nature of disclosure topic and risk as the within participants variable, and generalized trust as the covariate. Results revealed, first, that the covariate was non-significant, $F(1, 135) = 3.0$. There was, however, a significant two-way interaction between group membership and knowledge, $F(1, 135) = 4.45$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.03$. Follow-up pair-wise comparisons revealed that participants were more willing to disclose to an in-group stranger under conditions of mutual ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 0.97$) than unilateral knowledge ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.97$). This difference, however, was non-statistically significant, $t(135) = .55$, $p > .05$. Willingness to disclose to out-group strangers under the mutual ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.98$) and unilateral knowledge ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 0.97$) conditions also did not differ significantly, $t(135) = .96$, $p > .05$ ¹. The predicted three-way interaction between group membership, knowledge, and identity salience (H1) was not statistically significant, $F(1, 135) = 0.35$. The two-way interaction

¹ Additional pair-wise comparisons further revealed that participants' reported willingness to disclose also did not differ significantly between the out-group unilateral and in-group unilateral conditions, $t(135) = 1.06$, $p > .05$, as well as the in-group mutual and out-group mutual conditions, $t(135) = 0.44$, $p > .05$.

predicted by my alternative hypothesis (H2) between group membership and identity salience was also non-significant, $F(1,135) = 0.07, p > .05$.

Planned mean comparisons, however, revealed that consistent with H3, participants in the social identity salient conditions were significantly less willing to disclose to an out-group ($M = 5.18, SD = 1.36$) than an in-group member ($M = 5.75, SD = 1.35$) on a high-risk/ group topic under conditions of mutual knowledge, $t(135) = 3.13, p < .005$. In contrast, willingness to disclose on a high-risk/personal topic did not vary significantly between in-group ($M = 2.75, SD = 1.8$) and out-group members ($M = 3.18, SD = 1.8$) under the mutual knowledge conditions, $t(135) = 2.24, p > .05$.

Perceptions of Trustworthiness, and Fear for In-group Embarrassment

A five-way mixed ANCOVA was similarly conducted for the measures of trust perceptions and fear for in-group embarrassment. The covariate of generalized trust was non-significant both these dependent measures. For the measure of fear for in-group embarrassment, a group main effect was detected, $F(1,135) = 8.76, p < .005$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.06$, with participants reporting greater fear for in-group embarrassment when interacting with an out-group ($M = 2.46, SD = 0.87$) than an in-group stranger ($M = 2.04, SD = 0.87$). This main effect was further qualified by a two-way interaction between group membership and knowledge, $F(1,135) = 5.28, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.04$. Pair-wise contrasts revealed that while participants reported greater fear for in-group embarrassment under the out-group/mutual knowledge ($M = 2.54, SD = 0.88$) than in-group/mutual knowledge ($M = 1.81, SD = 0.86$) conditions, this difference was not significantly different, $t(135) = 1.80, p > .05$. Fear for in-group embarrassment was also non-significantly different between the in-group/unilateral knowledge ($M = 2.27, SD =$

0.87) and out-group/unilateral knowledge ($M= 2.40$, $SD= 0.86$) conditions, $t(135) = .31, p > .05$.

Also consistent with their own self-reported willingness to disclose, participants in the social identity salient conditions reported significantly greater fear for in-group embarrassment when asked to disclose on a high-risk/group topic to an out-group ($M= 3.96$, $SD= 1.7$) than an in-group stranger ($M= 1.94$, $SD= 1.7$) under conditions of mutual knowledge, $t(135) = 3.55, p < .005$. Fear for in-group embarrassment, however, did not differ significantly between in-group ($M= 1.25$, $SD= 0.88$) and out-group strangers ($M= 2.27$, $SD= 0.88$) when asked to disclose on a high-risk/*personal* topic under conditions of mutual knowledge, $t(135) = 1.80, p > .05$. From these findings, a correlational analysis was conducted between the measures of willingness to self-disclose and fear for in-group embarrassment. Results indicated a significant negative correlation between participants' willingness to disclose and fear for in-group embarrassment on both the low-risk and high-risk group topics, $r = -.20, p < .05$, and $r = -.31, p < .0001$, respectively. Participants' willingness to self-disclose and fear for in-group embarrassment, however, were not correlated for both the low-risk ($r = -.004$) and high-risk ($r = -.03, p > .05$) personal topics.

No significant main or interaction effects were observed for my measure of perceived trustworthiness. Pair-wise comparisons further indicated that for participants' whose social identities had been made salient, perceptions of trustworthiness did not differ significantly between the in-group ($M= 3.56$, $SD= 1.48$) and out-group stranger ($M= 3.36$, $SD= 1.47$) conditions when asked to disclose on a high-risk/group topic under mutual knowledge, $t(135) = 0.28, p > .05$.

Separate three-way ANOVAs, with group membership, knowledge, and identity salience as the independent variables were conducted on our three measures of perceived characteristics of the stranger. Results revealed no significant main or interaction effects for our measures of perceived trustworthiness and perceived “niceness” of the stranger. My measure of perceived commonality, on the other hand, revealed a marginally significant group membership main effect, $F(1,135) = 3.00$, $p > .05$, with participants indicating slightly higher levels of perceived commonality with in-group ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.25$) than out-group strangers ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.20$).

Discussion

Overall, results from this second study appear to provide only partial support for the reciprocity heuristic models’ prediction on group-based trust in strangers. Whilst inclusion of the knowledge variable in the current experimental design had a significant effect on participants’ self-reported willingness to trust and self-disclose, the predicted three-way interaction between group membership, knowledge, and identity salience was non-significant. Furthermore, even though a two-way interaction between group membership and knowledge was detected, an inspection of the means revealed that participants’ self-reported willingness to disclose to in-group members was *not* significantly greater under conditions of mutual than unilateral knowledge. The idea that people will trust and expect in-group members to look out for ones’ own interest under conditions of mutual knowledge, therefore, did not appear to be supported.

The current findings also did not appear to support the alternative hypothesis of in-group favouritism. Specifically, there was no evidence that participants in the social identity salient conditions were more willing, overall, to disclose to in-group than out-

group members. In addition, participants also did not appear to perceive in-group strangers as possessing more positive characteristics, compared to out-group strangers. Participants' self-reported willingness to disclose, therefore, does not appear to be attributable to in-group favouring tendencies under social identity salience. However, it may be prudent to exercise some caution in making the claim that willingness to disclose is unrelated to positive perceptions of in-group members, seeing as attribution of positive characteristics was measured using a single-item measure. On the other hand, this practice is in line with previous research on group-based trust which has also examined mediation processes using single-item measures. Tanis et al. (2005), for example, demonstrated how expectations of reciprocity (measured using a single-item question) mediated the relationship between identity cues and trusting behaviours.

Findings from the current study also indicated that the predicted mean difference (H3) between willingness to disclose to in-group and out-group members on high-risk, group-related topics under conditions of mutual knowledge was supported for participants in the social identity salient conditions. When asked to disclose on topics that could negatively impact upon the positive image of the salient in-group, participants were significantly *less* willing to disclose to an out-group than an in-group member when their social group memberships were known. Consistent with this point, participants whose social identities had been made salient also reported greater fear for embarrassing the in-group when asked to self-disclose on a high-risk group topic to an out-group than an in-group stranger under mutual knowledge. Correlational analysis also indicated that participants' willingness to disclose on group-related topics was negatively correlated with their fear for embarrassing the in-group.

These findings, thus, provide support for the idea that when people's group memberships are known to an out-group member, concerns about negatively portraying the in-group to an out-group member are heightened. Perceptions of risk inherent in the self-disclosure context under these circumstances where one's social group membership was known to the out-group member may, thus, attenuate tendencies to trust and self-disclose. When there was unilateral knowledge of participants' group membership, however, strategic minimization of self-disclosure on negative, group-related topics to out-group members was unnecessary as the disclosure content cannot reflect badly upon the in-group.

It is important to note, however, that while these results offered valuable insight into the intergroup interaction process, the mechanisms of group-based trust, which I set out to examine, remains elusive. While appearing to reflect participants' strategic concerns in terms of interacting with out-group members, the pattern of results does not appear to offer support for the notion of in-group trust. Specifically, the findings do not support the idea that participants were more inclined, overall, to trust and self-disclose to in-group than out-group strangers under social identity salience. In addition, participants also did not appear to attribute more positive qualities to in-group than out-group strangers. More importantly, however, peoples' self-reported willingness to disclose did *not* appear to be related to their trust perceptions of the stranger.

In sum, the current findings indicate that willingness to disclose can be influenced by various factors, such as the disclosure recipients' group-membership, (un) shared-knowledge of group-membership between the discloser and the disclosure recipient, the salience of the disclosers' personal or social identity, as well as the nature and risk inherent in the disclosure topic. There is also evidence to support the idea that

participants' strategic concerns about negatively portraying the in-group to out-group others may have resulted in their differential levels of willingness to disclose under conditions of mutual knowledge and (high) group risk.

While I initially set out to further my understanding of group-based trust in strangers through the self-disclosure process, the current pattern of findings appear to better reflect impression management concerns, rather than in-group trust. In fact, participants' willingness to disclose in this current experiment appeared to be unrelated to their degree of trust in the stranger. It is, therefore, unsurprising that the mechanisms of group-based trust that I set out to test, namely the reciprocity heuristic model and in-group favouritism, do not appear to be fully supported. The current findings, however, do pave the way for an interesting path of research. Given that self-disclosure has traditionally been examined as an interpersonal phenomenon, and seen to be governed (to some extent) by personal predispositions (Jourard, 1971), it is potentially interesting to further examine how this process can be influenced by group-based variables and concerns.

CHAPTER 9.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL EXAMINATIONS OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Chapter Overview

In this Chapter, I will first consider the tenability of my theoretical approach to the study of trust and self-disclosure, and suggest the need for an alternative theoretical explanation for the empirical findings obtained in Studies 1 and 2. I will then go on to provide a definition of impression management and then move on to a targeted review of theoretical and empirical research in this area. Apart from looking at factors which motivate impression management, I will also look at the types of impression management strategies that people engage in, as well as a few key conceptual distinctions that have been put forward by impression management researchers. I will then go on to propose an alternative conceptual framework that enables a more integrated understanding of impression management and how it relates to research examined in this thesis.

Re-examining the Current Theoretical Position

While empirical findings on the main dependent variable of willingness to self-disclose obtained in Studies 1 and 2 were broadly consistent with the hypotheses that I set out to test, little to no support was obtained for the predicted underlying psychological processes. Specifically, there was no support for the three pathways of trust development, which I proposed in Chapter 2. Participants' reported willingness to self-disclose did not appear to be influenced by a sense of depersonalized trust in the

stranger that they were interacting with, the attribution of more favorable qualities to in-group than out-group strangers, nor greater adherence to in-group norms under depersonalized conditions. In addition, the hypothesis derived from the reciprocity heuristic model, which predicted an increase in in-group trust, but only under conditions of mutual knowledge of group-membership, was also only partially supported. These results, thus, prompted a re-examination of my theoretical perspective. Given that a major difference between the current research and that of previous studies in this area of group-based trust is my decision to measure trust in the form of self-disclosure, I started off by re-considering the differences between these two methodological approaches.

From a re-examination of the self-disclosure literature, I detected a psychological process largely absent in the trust interaction situations invoked through monetary exchanges. Specifically, from the self-disclosure literature, I concluded that a major consequence of any self-disclosure process is the formation of social impressions in the eyes of others, through people's self-disclosure content (Cozby, 1973; Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Joinson, 2001; Jourard, 1971; Wheelless & Grotz, 1977). This impression formation process, which is absent or would be occurring at a much lower degree in monetary exchange situations, could be a confounding variable introduced into our studies as a result of measuring participants' willingness to disclose as a proxy of trust. If this were the case, the lack of any significant findings on the mediating variable of perceived trustworthiness of the stranger could be an indication that the effects obtained for my main dependent variable of willingness to self-disclose, were not actually the result of a trust development process, but rather the result of impression management strategies.

Consistent with past empirical work on self-disclosure (McKenna & Bargh, 1998; Pennebaker, Zech, & Rime, 2001), the *operationalization* of self-disclosure in Studies 1 and 2 involved the hypothetical sharing of potentially *negative* self-information with others. Findings from my studies, which showed significantly less willingness to self-disclose information to out-group than in-group members under conditions where one's own group membership is known (mutual knowledge) instead of anonymous (unilateral knowledge), may be a result of participants being more reticent about portraying a negative image of the salient in-group to out-group others. When participants' social group memberships were anonymous, however, there may be less concern over the influence of one's own disclosure content, and how that may impact upon people's impressions of the in-group. With this idea in mind, I will now go on to review aspects of the impression management literature and examine its relation to the empirical findings in Studies 1 and 2.

Impression Management Defined

There is little dispute, both among experts and lay persons alike, that people are generally interested in how others perceive and evaluate them. During political campaigns, the carefully constructed images of politicians are often as important, if not *more* important in influencing people's voting behaviours as the policies they lay out. In the 2008 American presidential elections for example, most people may know that then presidential candidate Barack Obama was advocating for change in America and the world. What those changes *actually were*, however, people may not be as clear about and, in fact, may be secondary to President Obama being eventually elected into office (Chomsky, 2010). Appearing competent in front of one's superior whilst being funny when hanging out with friends are also examples of how people strive to project

different primary impressions in front of different audiences in order to foster the types of relationships that they desire.

Social psychological research in the area of impression management, therefore, is motivated by the very idea that people are aware that the impressions they project of themselves can impact upon how others come to view them, and that those views may consequently influence the treatments and evaluations of themselves by others. As suggested by Schlenker and Weigold (1992), interpersonal communications have the ability to influence the ideas and behaviours of others in ways that may substantially impact upon the wellbeing of the self, as well as the nature of the interpersonal relationships. One of the implications that arises from this notion that what we say or do affects how we are perceived and treated, is that people are likely to strategically control the amount, as well as the nature of the information they share about themselves to others (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). Self-presentations or impression management, therefore, may not be optional exercises, but may in fact be the “inevitable consequence of social perception” (Snyder, 1987, p.90).

The act of impression management, therefore, has been defined by many as the process through which individuals attempt to control or manipulate the images that others may form of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). An underlying assumption of this definition is that, depending on the particular social situation, certain self-presentations are likely to result in desirable reactions, while others may result in undesirable reactions (Leary, Robertson, Barnes, & Miller, 1986). This idea, as denoted in Goffman (1959), suggests that when in the presence of others, an individual will “mobilize his activity so that it will convey an impression to others which is in his interests to convey” (p.4). It is important to note, however, that

impressions deemed desirable under specific conditions and which people aim to portray, are not necessarily intentionally deceptive (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Indeed, the images people try to project are often consistent with how they view themselves (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Schlenker, 1980). For example, people may selectively present aspects of their self-image which they believe to be true, but which they recognize to be congruent with the audience's values. Despite this selective presentation to gain the approval of a valued audience, however, people are more likely to omit or emphasize certain self-information rather than lie to the audience in order to achieve this aim.

Why do People Engage in Impression Management?

While there appears to be widespread recognition that impression management processes can impact upon human social interactions (Baumeister, 1982; Goffman, 1959; Jones & Pitman, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi, 1981; Tetlock & Manstead, 1985), there remains disagreement in the emphasis that researchers place upon the factors which motivate impression management strategies. Specifically, researchers have had different ideas about the most influential factors in motivating impression management, and why they may be important in the first place. In this current section, I will outline some factors that have previously been identified in both theoretical and empirical research as being potential motivators of impression management processes.

Self-Esteem Maintenance and Enhancement

The idea that people often behave in ways which may serve to maintain or enhance their own self-esteem is a longstanding one (Heider, 1959; Snyder, Stephan & Rosenfield, 1978; Zuckerman, 1979) and has been put forward as being a key

motivator of people's self-presentation efforts (Brown & Gallagher, 1992; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Tedeschi & Linskold, 1976; Bradley, 1978). The tendency for people to attribute successful ventures to their own internal characteristics and their failures to external circumstances, for example, has been suggested to be a result of people using differential attribution processes to manage or create positive impressions of themselves in order to maintain a positive level of self-esteem (Reiss, Rosenfeld, Melburg & Tedeschi, 1981; Bradley, 1978). A study by Arkin, Gleason and Johnston (1976), for example, required participants to engage in an attempt to induce change in a purportedly phobic person. Results from this study demonstrated that successful influence attempts, which supposedly reduced phobia levels in the confederate, were more readily attributed to participants' own efforts, compared to conditions where influence attempts failed.

From a self-presentational viewpoint, therefore, participants' tendencies to attribute positive outcomes or success to their own personal efforts and characteristics may be motivated by a desire to promote a desirable public image that may contribute to the maintenance or enhancement of a positive self-identity (Reiss et al., 1981; Tedeschi & Linskold, 1976; Bradley, 1978; Weary, 1979). Indeed, research by Jones, Berglas, Rhodewalt and Skelton (1981) demonstrated that subjects who engaged in self-enhancing behaviours subsequently showed elevated levels of self-esteem, while subjects instructed to engage in self-deprecating behaviours subsequently showed lower levels of self-esteem.

Empirical studies by Baumgardner, Kaufman and Levy (1989) have also looked at how self-presentational efforts may serve to facilitate a more positive sense of self. This series of studies examined how participants responded to negative or positive

personal feedback, depending on their initial self-esteem levels and whether their responses were made public or private. At the beginning of each of these studies, participants were divided into two categories of low and high self-esteem subjects based on their responses on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (1965). Participants then went on to complete a bogus personality test and were subsequently given false feedback regarding their performance on the test. Findings from these studies revealed that participants were more inclined to discredit the validity of negative, compared to positive test-feedback, especially if they were able to express these views publicly rather than privately. Interestingly, these findings were only found for participants in the low self-esteem conditions, but not the high self-esteem conditions. The researchers, thus, suggested that for people low in self-esteem whose positive self-perception was already under threat, public derogation of any sources of negative personal feedback can provide an opportunity to ameliorate negative self-perceptions and eliminate threats to a positive self-image (Baumgardner et al., 1989). Results from these studies also indicated that public derogations of sources of negative personal feedback led to higher levels of self-esteem following these derogation efforts. In addition, disassociating oneself from negative outcomes and attributing them to external variables may also contribute towards the preservation of one's positive identity, as well as the avoidance of social disapproval and/or public embarrassment. Public presentations of positive self-characteristics can, therefore, be seen as a way to manage the impressions that one projects upon others, as well as to preserve a positive sense of self (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992).

Within the field of impression management research, the above idea that maintaining a positive sense of self is important to people has given rise to the question

of whether or not these positive impressions that people strive to portray, actually reflect what people believe about themselves. Is there in fact a perceptual bias which leads people to perceive positive outcomes as more indicative of stable internal characteristics and negative outcomes as being more attributable to external factors? or are people simply distorting the facts *knowingly* in order to present a desirable impression of themselves to others?

A study by Reiss et al. (1981) appears to provide some potential answers to this above question. In this study, participants were provided with false feedback regarding their performance on a social intelligence test. Participants' subsequent reactions to these test results were purportedly assessed on a device which was either described as an infallible lie detector, a fallible lie detector, or an assessment device which did not possess any lie-detecting abilities. Findings from this study indicated that even when participants were explicitly told that conscious misrepresentations of the test results on their part would be detected, they still, overall, made more internal attributions for positive outcomes and external attributions for negative outcomes. Participants did, however, make significantly more external attributions for negative outcomes under the unreliable than reliable lie detector condition. The researchers, therefore, suggested that *both* biases in private perceptions and distortions in public descriptions may account for differential attribution biases following valence outcomes (Reiss et al., 1981). Summarizing from the theoretical and empirical information outlined above, it would appear that private cognitions, as well as public presentations, contribute towards the enhancement of one's own self-esteem and that both of these concerns should be equally important in driving impression management strategies.

Based upon the above idea that internal cognitions, as well as public presentations, are equally important in maintaining a positive sense of self, the concept of self-construction has been put forward as another motivator for impression management efforts. Given that self-presentational activities and the content of these self-presentations are heavily based upon an idealized inner self, or preferred “possible self” (Baumeister, 1982; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989), it has been suggested that people are generally motivated to work towards an idealized image of themselves, the ‘ideal self’ (Baumeister, 1982; Cohen, 1959; Rogers & Dymond, 1954). These internalized ideas of one's ideal self, therefore, serve as a guide, motivating behaviours which are consistent, as well as discouraging behaviours which are *inconsistent*, with one's ideal self. Furthermore, the desire to become one's ideal self is thought to be translated into efforts to convince others that one is indeed like one's ideal self. Perceptions of discrepancies between one's ideal self and others' perceived impressions of the self, therefore, is thought to result in unpleasant affects which will lead to both cognitive and behavioural efforts to reduce those discrepancies (Baumeister, 1982; Baumeister & Tice, 1986). Essentially, it is desirable for people to be perceived in ways which are congruent with their ideal selves (Baumeister, 1982).

In this way, if people believe others to have a negative impression of themselves, which is inconsistent with their positive self-views, they may subsequently engage in efforts to modify those negative perceptions of themselves to be more in-line with their own ideal self-images. A study by Baumeister and Jones (1978), for example, which manipulated participants' beliefs about whether or not an interaction partner possessed negative information about them, is a case in point. In this study, participants, who were led to believe that an interaction partner had previously been given negative

information about the participants' own personalities, compensated by portraying themselves more favourably on dimensions which the partner had no information on. On the other hand, participants who were exposed to the same (bogus) negative self-information but were assured that the interaction partner would *not* have access to that negative information, showed no signs of compensatory self-descriptions on alternative dimensions (Baumeister & Jones, 1978). Based on these findings, the researchers suggested that conscious efforts to portray the self favourably on dimensions previously unknown to an interaction partner may be motivated by the desire to enhance the overall positivity of participants' self-images, as well as to erode the credibility of the previously received negative information. Consistent with the above suggestion is the view that impression management strategies aimed at bolstering one's public opinion may, at the same time, function to restore one's private identity that may have been challenged by external sources (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Social and Material Gains

In contrast to the positions reviewed above, which stressed the combined importance of internal cognitions and external motivators in influencing impression management efforts, some researchers have gone on to propose that impression management is primarily motivated by tangible material rewards (Godfrey, Jones & Lord, 1986; Jellison & Gentry, 1978; Schlenker 1980; Tedeschi, 1981). According to proponents of this viewpoint, people engage in self-presentation efforts to obtain social approval, not because approval itself is inherently valuable, but rather that material gains are usually contingent upon social approval (Jellison & Gentry, 1978; Jones & Pittman, 1990; Schlenker, 1980). In this way, the seeking of approval and the avoidance of disapproval is ultimately aimed at securing material gains within the external environment. Another important distinction between this behaviouristic

conceptualization of impression management and more traditional approaches is the temporal locus of the external motivator. Jellison's (1978) behaviouristic model of self-presentation, for example, suggests that the cause of impression management efforts is located in the contemporary situation, rather than based upon events or experiences which may have been internalized and are enduring parts of an individual's self-concept. These types of audience-pleasing, positive self-presentations are, thus, based upon the standards and values of the reward-dispensing audience (in a particular situation), rather than an individual's pre-existing norms and values (Baumeister, 1982; Jones & Wortman, 1973). Conveying the 'right' impression to a particular audience increases the likelihood that one will obtain desired outcomes, such as social approval and expansion of one's social networks, which, may eventually result in material gains.

A study by Stires and Jones (1969), for example, demonstrated that in a simulated job environment, participants selectively used ingratiation (rather than modesty) to influence their supervisor's decision to assign them to their preferred rather than their non-preferred task. It should be noted, however, that the very idea that presenting the 'right' type of impression in a particular situation will facilitate the attainment of social and material gains is a concept that is entrenched in the broader context of contemporary societies. It is a type of learned behaviour obtained through one's previous interactions with others, as well as an awareness of a general societal norm, which recognizes and rewards those who exhibit values and characteristics congruent with the norms and expectations within a particular social context. The claim that self-presentations are mainly influenced by factors in the immediate social context and completely unrelated to one's internalized norms and values, therefore, appears overstated.

Given these potentially controversial implications, several studies have been conducted to test the validity of this idea that impression management serves, primarily, as a mean to achieve material gains. Some studies have approached this question by suggesting that if impression management was motivated by a desire for social approval, in and of itself, and *not* material gains, there should be no circumstances under which people would choose to *deliberately* portray themselves in a normatively negative fashion. On the other hand, if positive self-presentations were primarily employed to garner material gains, and social approval was merely playing a mediating role, then positive self-presentations are likely to be reversed if material benefits were to be rewarded to individuals who engage in normatively undesirable behaviours (Jellison, 1981; Jellison & Gentry, 1978; Kowalski & Leary, 1990). In short, if material rewards were contingent upon the disapproval of an external audience, individuals may intentionally engage in behaviours which they believe would incur the wrath of the reward-dispensing audience. A study conducted by Jellison and Gentry (1978), looked at how participants' behaviours in a simulated job selection environment varied, depending on their beliefs about the hiring system. In this study, participants in one condition were told that the personnel manager was likely to hire someone whom he liked, while participants in another condition were told that the manager would hire someone whom he *disliked*. Results from this study indicated that subjects who believed that an unlikable person would be selected for the job, responded to a set of employment questions in a way that would likely engender disapproval from the personnel manager. When subjects believed that a likable person would be employed, however, they responded to the employment questions in ways which were congruent with the personnel manager's likes and dislikes. The researchers, therefore, went on to conclude that social approval in and of itself was immaterial to

the process of self-presentation. Moreover, when material gains were contingent upon social *disapproval*, people would engage in impression management tactics to seek the disapproval of the award-dispensing audience.

While the study by Jellison and Gentry (1978) focused on how negative self-presentations can facilitate the achievement of desirable outcomes, a study by Kowalski and Leary (1990) looked at the use of negative self-presentations to *avoid* aversive events. In this particular study, which was set in a simulated work environment, the researchers found that subjects who were told that their supervisor would select the most well-adjusted worker to perform an undesirable task (negative valued-image condition), subsequently described themselves in more negative terms. On the other hand, subjects who were told that a mal-adjusted worker would perform the undesirable task (positive valued-image condition) tended to describe themselves in more positive terms. Interestingly, this above effect was only observed when the work supervisor was portrayed as having high power and had complete control over which worker would perform the undesirable task. When the supervisor had less power, however, no differences in self-descriptions were observed between the negative and positive valued-image conditions. The researchers, thus, suggested that incentives in the direct external environment impacted upon participants' self-presentation strategies (Kowalski & Leary, 1990).

While providing some interesting insights into aspects of impression management behaviour, I would like to suggest that results from the two studies described above should be interpreted with caution. Specifically, it is important to bear in mind that desires for social and material gains should not be seen as ends in themselves. Obtaining material rewards or successfully dodging dreaded tasks could be

highly rewarding to a person's self-perception and that desire for positive affect, in and of itself, could have contributed to people's impression management efforts in the above experiments. Given that these studies did not attempt to disentangle the effects of potential cognitive motivations and external material rewards, it may be premature to suggest that material rewards are solely responsible in influencing participants' self-presentation efforts. In Kowalski and Leary's (1990) study, for example, concerns about one's self-image if he or she were to engage in a highly undesirable task (singing a song), may have outweighed participants' concerns about negative perceptions following negative self-descriptions. In this way, the externally imposed punishment (of singing) cannot be completely divorced from one's own internal motivations (avoid looking bad in front of others), and both processes may have played a part in triggering impression management efforts.

Impression Management Strategies

Theoretical and empirical research reviewed above looked at some explanations for why people engage in impression management. While some perspectives stress the importance of internal motivations, and some perspectives emphasize the crucial role of external incentives, others have propose that it is the combination of internal as well as external factors which determine impression management efforts. I will elaborate more on this point later on in this chapter and go on to suggest that attempts to artificially separate internal cognitive motivations from that of external motivators may be an impossible exercise. In the following section, however, I would like to focus on two different strategies of impression management.

Past research has distinguished between two different styles of self-presentation: acquisitive and protective (Arkin, 1981; Arkin & Sheppard, 1990; Tetlock & Manstead, 1985; Wolfe, Lennox & Cutler, 1986). Both of these self-presentational styles are seen to arise via different motivational systems and each is seen to serve different purposes. A protective style of self-presentation, for example, functions to avoid social disapproval and is characterized by defensive behaviours designed to avoid the loss of one's positive self-identity (Arkin, 1981; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Tedeschi & Felson, 1994; Wolfe et al., 1986). Specifically, it has been suggested that people are likely to engage in protective self-presentation when they believe that it is unlikely that they can actively create a favourable impression (Schlenker & Leary, 1982; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). Furthermore, negative affective states, such as embarrassment or anxiety, which may be activated by perceived threats to one's valued social image, are seen to trigger protective self-presentations (Arkin, 1981; Schlenker & Leary, 1982; Tetlock & Manstead, 1985; Wolfe et al., 1986). A study by Weary and Arkin (1981), for example, found that individuals who were high in social anxiety exhibited more modest styles of self-presentation under conditions where they would be socially evaluated because they were unsure about their ability to lay claim to more favourable images. This presentation style, therefore, has been associated with behaviours that limit or reduce one's participation in social encounters, such as talking less or avoiding conversation topics that may reveal one's own ignorance (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). In fact, some studies have demonstrated that a protective style of self-presentation is often employed by people who have comparatively lower levels of self-esteem (Tice, 1991).

This idea that threat to one's social image has the ability to trigger protective self-presentations is consistent with the empirical findings of Studies 1 and 2, previously outlined in Chapters 7 and 8. For example, participants whose social identities were made salient and were asked to self-disclose on a negative topic to an out-group member who *knew* that the participant was an out-group member, may have heightened participants' perceptions of a threat to the valued in-group image. Participants may have subsequently engaged in protective self-presentations by avoiding or decreasing their willingness to self-disclose to out-group members under these situations, in order to maintain a positive image of the in-group.

Acquisitive Self-Presentation

In contrast to a protective style of self-presentation, which is more about passively avoiding social disapproval, acquisitive presentation styles are typically associated with the active seeking of opportunities to gain valued outcomes and social approval (Arkin, 1981; Schlenker, 1982). In other words, the accumulation of social approval garnered via favourable self-presentations is aimed at securing 'undefined favoured treatment in unknown future circumstances' (Arkin, 1981, p.313). Acquisitive self-presentations, therefore, refer to a more involved and proactive style of forging one's desired social image. Instead of defending an established image, therefore, acquisitive impression management serves to *create* a positive social image. Specifically, it has been suggested that an acquisitive style of presentation is employed when people believe that it is likely that they can convincingly portray a desirable impression of themselves to others (Arkin, 1981; Arkin & Sheppard, 1990; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). Acquisitive impression management is usually characterised by more active participation in social interactions, (e.g. initiating conversations) and using the opportunity to present self-flattering qualities (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). This

style is, thus, frequently associated with traits such as low social anxiety, high self-confidence and high levels of self-esteem. A study by Tice (1991), for example, demonstrated that participants with higher levels of self-esteem were more likely to actively engage in behaviours which served to enhance their perceived competence.

Automatic or Conscious Self-Presentation

Whilst the practice of impression management strategies appears to be a prevalent aspect of everyday life, questions persist about whether people are always aware or conscious of how others perceive them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Researchers have, thus, made a distinction between self-presentations which are relatively automatic and habitual, and those which are more deliberate and controlled and may require conscious effort (Cheek & Hogan, 1983; Jones, 1990; Schlenker, 1980). One question which arises from such a distinction is: When will people behave in relatively automatic ways in relation to their self-presentational efforts, and when will they be more considered and controlled? One suggestion is that people may be more likely to engage in deliberate self-presentations when it is important for them to achieve positive outcomes and avoid any negative consequences (Schlenker, 1985). Research on social cognition, for example, has demonstrated that when judgmental mistakes are costly, people will take more time to process information in a more thorough and controlled fashion (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Heightened awareness regarding the importance of making the “right” impression, coupled with a more thorough processing of information may, therefore, result in more conscious presentations of relevant self-aspects aimed at portraying the 'right' impression to a valued audience.

In addition, research which demonstrates that patterns of self-presentation are often learned, habitual and unconscious (Hogan, 1982; Schlenker, 1980) suggest that controlled and deliberate efforts at impression management may occur under unfamiliar situations in which people may feel unsure about the appropriate or normative behaviours pertaining to the particular situation. Most of the time however, people's perception of the social environment and their ensuing self-presentation efforts are most likely processed at a pre-attentive or non-conscious level (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). This is not to say that people are not attuned to environmental stimuli in general, but rather that the scanning and processing of environmental information occurs in a non-conscious manner. For example, research by Schneider and Shiffrin (1977) demonstrated that when people devote conscious attention to one stimulus, they were still able to monitor other stimuli at a pre-attentive level.

Anonymity and Impression Management

One of the crucial factors consistently examined in most impression management research is the anonymity or identifiability of the parties involved in any given social interaction. If impression management is motivated by one's concern for how the self is perceived by others and consequently how one is treated, and if impression management is indeed the act through which people shape and control others' views of themselves, then the underlying assumption would be that the self is identifiable to these external audiences. If one is anonymous, one cannot be judged or evaluated, and presumably one's well-being cannot be affected by any potentially negative or positive impressions that others may form of the self. In short, the more public one's behaviour, the more likely one would be concerned with how it appears to others (Arkin, Appelman, & Berger, 1980; Baumeister, 1982; Bradley, 1978; Leary &

Kowalski, 1990). It has, therefore, been suggested that impression management efforts may be tempered under conditions where one's identity remains anonymous (Linskold & Propst, 1981; Tetlock & Manstead, 1985). This suggestion is, thus, in line with past research which demonstrated that pro-social behaviours, which can contribute towards an individual's positive social image, are more likely to occur under conditions where one's identity was identifiable rather than anonymous. A study by Satow (1975), for example, found that people donate seven times more money when their contributions were made in public compared to when they were made anonymously. In addition, self-disclosure research has also demonstrated that the sharing of negative self-information, which could potentially have a debilitating impact on one's self-image, was more likely to occur under conditions where one's own identity was anonymous rather than identifiable (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002; Christopherson, 2007; Joinson, 2001). The anonymity or identifiability of the interacting parties and their influence on impression management strategies, therefore, appears central to my current examination of self-disclosing behaviours. In fact, the potential influence of the anonymity or identifiability of participants' identities has already been demonstrated in Studies 1 and 2, wherein the mutually or unilaterally available knowledge of participants' social group-memberships was shown to impact upon people's willingness to self-disclose on negative topics to in-group and out-group members. This factor was, thus, further examined in the empirical studies that I will go on to report in Chapters 10 and 11.

Impression Management versus Intra-psychic Explanations

Within the self-presentation literature, one of the most commonly drawn distinctions is the intra-psychic (cognitive) versus impression management dichotomy.

It is important to note upfront that impression management in this dichotomy refers to explanations for behaviours that are motivated by people's desires to portray favourable self-images in front of others (Tetlock & Manstead, 1985). It is, therefore, different from the usage of the term "impression management" thus far in this thesis, which is an overarching category encompassing various behaviours which may be motivated by *both* internal and external factors. This distinction between impression management and intra-psychic (cognitive) motivators can be understood as a differentiation between "appearing desirable to others" versus "appearing desirable to oneself", respectively. This distinction is, thus, similar to the differentiation between internal versus external motivators for self-presentation. Specifically, the distinction between impression management and intra-psychic motivators similarly focuses on the idea that self-presentations are either guided by individuals' internal standards (i.e. One's perception of the appropriateness of his/her own behaviours), or the standards of external audiences (i.e. perceived appropriateness of one's behaviours by external others).

As a result of this conceptual distinction between internal and external motivators, research efforts have been directed at disentangling the effects of these two sources of influence. One such approach is through the manipulation of the anonymity (or identifiability) of people's identities under social situations (Baer, Hinkle, Smith, & Fenton, 1980; Riess & Schlenker, 1977; Tetlock & Manstead, 1985). Specifically, researchers have suggested that if impression management was in fact motivated by internal goals and standards, then removing an external audience or one's identifiability should not discourage the occurrence of impression management activities (Tedeschi & Rosenfeld, 1981; Baer et al., 1980; Baumeister, 1982; Weary & Arkin, 1981). In other words, if the main driving force was to appear desirable in one's own eyes, then

whether or not one is identifiable to an external audience should not impact upon people's intentions to engage in self-presentational activities. Manipulating the anonymity or identifiability of people's identity, however, is only one of the many conceptual frameworks employed to distinguish between intra-psychic and impression management explanations.

Manipulating Audience Beliefs and Values

One other strategy that has been used to distinguish between these two sources of influence is to manipulate the perceived beliefs or values of the audience with whom participants expect to interact. The underlying assumption is that if participants' behaviours were indeed aimed at projecting a favourable impression of themselves to an external audience, self-presentation strategies should then vary as an effect of the audiences' values and beliefs. Intra-psychic theories, on the other hand, may predict that the values and beliefs of an external audience would not impact upon participants' self-presentation efforts. These competing hypotheses have frequently been tested using forced compliance situations where participants are typically pressured to perform certain activities that are against their personal values, such as convincing someone else that a boring task is in fact interesting and exciting (Calder, Ross & Insko, 1973; Goethals & Cooper, 1972; Riess & Schlenker, 1977; Tetlock & Manstead, 1985). Forced compliance situations, therefore, have been associated with unpleasant consequences for its participants, such as feelings of discomfort or distress about having to lie to others. Most researchers tend to agree that these feelings of discomfort may subsequently motivate people to compensate for their anti-normative behaviours by engaging in dissonance reduction activities. The disagreement, however, lies in whether these compensatory actions are motivated by desires to overcome internal cognitive inconsistencies, or a desire to be perceived (by an external audience) in a

positive light. These competing explanations, therefore, represent a test of the intra-psychic versus impression management dichotomy.

For instance, if dissonance arousal is solely an intra-psychic process, invoked by the inconsistency between one's attitudes and a freely chosen but undesirable behaviour, then what an audience thinks about the self should have no impact on whether they engage in dissonance reduction strategies or not. On the other hand, if people were motivated by impression management factors, they should be most likely to outwardly reconcile their cognitions with their anti-normative behaviours (i.e. Justifying their actions by reconceptualizing the tedious task as being enjoyable), when observers perceived them as having freely chosen to lie. If subjects thought that an external audience would see them as being forced into the socially undesirable action (of lying), then no attitude change (towards the tediousness of the tasks) should occur. These impression management hypotheses, which predicted that participants' attitude change would vary as a function of the audience's beliefs, were supported in a study by Riess and Schlenker (1977). Results from this study indicated that participants who lied and supported an anti-normative message (against teeth-brushing) did not change their attitudes to be in-line with the message they were espousing, when they thought the audience believed that they were being coerced into writing the anti-normative message.

Support for intra-psychic explanations of self-presentation, on the other hand, has also been obtained in the area of self-verification research, which demonstrated that people's self-presentation strategies were largely directed at confirming their own pre-existing self-beliefs. Specifically, self-verification theorists have suggested that people may present themselves in certain ways, selectively recall confirmatory

information, and/or interact with people whom they believe will confirm their pre-established self-concepts (Swann, 1987). Underlying this area of research is the idea that people find self-confirmatory information more diagnostic and easy to process (Klayman & Ha, 1987; Snyder & Swann, 1978) and researchers have gone on to suggest that there may exist a fundamental cognitive tendency to prefer information consistent with one's self-concept (Swann & Read, 1981). This preference for self-confirmatory information can be understood as contributing towards a stable self-concept, which is thought to be beneficial towards the organization of one's social environment and may play an important role in guiding people's behaviours across various situations (Epstein, 1973; Swann, 1987). What this body of research suggests, therefore, is that people's cognitions as well as public self-presentation behaviours may be largely guided by their own internal values and a need to achieve internal consistency, a position congruent with intra-psychic explanations of self-presentation.

Indeed, studies by Swann and Read (1981) appear to offer support for this theory. These researchers found that during a social interaction situation, participants' behaviours were primarily guided by their own desire to confirm their pre-existing self-beliefs. For example, participants who held positive self-beliefs succeeded in eliciting positive responses from their interaction partner when they believed that the partner had a negative perception of them. It was argued that the partner's negative perception of the participant posed a threat to his/her pre-existing self-concepts, and that he/she actively sought to eliminate this confounding information by behaving in ways which would elicit self-confirmatory (positive) responses (i.e. Praising the partner). Furthermore, results indicated that participants who held negative self-beliefs elicited the most negative responses from their partners when they thought the partner

perceived them positively. The researchers, therefore, suggested that the desire for self-verification outweighed people's desires to present a positive self-image. These results, thus, appear to contradict impression management explanations which suggest that people are motivated to portray themselves favourably and behave in ways consistent with the audience's values and beliefs.

It is important to note, however, that participants in the studies of Swann and Read (1981) were still influenced to an extent by the values and beliefs of the audience. Even though participants' self-presentational behaviours primarily reflected their desire for self-confirmatory feedback, their actions were not entirely divorced from their perceptions regarding the audiences' beliefs. Even if the motivation was to obtain self-confirmatory responses, participants' behaviours always varied as a function of the audiences' beliefs, which undermines the intra-psychic argument that external views and perceptions do not matter. For instance, if self-consistency was the sole determinant of one's self-presentation efforts, participants who held positive self-beliefs should always be motivated to portray a positive self-image. Experimental results, however, revealed that participants with positive self-views and were told that their partner already saw them in a positive light, did not try as hard to impress their partners as those who were told that the partner saw them negatively. It is evident, therefore, that in addition to intra-psychic motivations, external impression management concerns also have an impact on participants' self-presentational behaviours.

This notion that internal and external motivators are equally important in influencing people's impression management efforts is also supported by ideas derived from the social identity perspective. Specifically, we know from social identity theory

that when one's social identity has been rendered salient, people's social self-concepts will come to the fore, and they will identify themselves primarily as group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Under these circumstances, perceived similarities between the self and other in-group members will be exacerbated while perceived differences will be minimized (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1984). This process of depersonalization will subsequently bring about self-stereotyping cognitions and behaviours, resulting in the perceived interchangeability of oneself and other in-group members on stereotypical dimensions which define the particular group-membership (Turner, 1984). When the self and one's own in-group members are perceived as interchangeable representatives of the salient social category, all members of the salient in-group, including the self, cognitively become one and the same. In other words, under social identity salience, those external others whom we identify with and are able to influence us, are in fact an authentic "self" and "their" views are inseparable from "our" views (Onarato & Turner, 2001). In this way, no differentiation can be made between one's own standards and the standards of other in-group members. Whether one's self-presentational efforts were guided by the norms and values of an external in-group audience or those of the self, therefore, becomes indistinguishable. Pleasing the audience and pleasing the self essentially becomes the same process.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that even with out-group audiences, a clear distinction between self-presentational strategies driven by internal cognitions versus that motivated by an external audience, is also infeasible. The nature and meaning of one's social self-concept is not only derived from being a member of the salient in-group, but is also inherently related to the relevant comparison out-group within a particular social context. As outlined in Tajfel (1978), the characteristics of

one's own in-group achieve much of its significance in relation to perceived differences from other groups. One is only similar to in-group others in so far as one is different from out-group others on the relevant comparative dimensions. The impressions that people seek to project under conditions of social identity salience, whilst being motivated by the values of the salient in-group, is, therefore, conceptually intertwined with the values of the relevant out-group audience.

Summarizing the Implications

Summarizing from the research reviewed in this current section, the question that one must ask is: Is it meaningful to differentiate between intra-psychic and impression management explanations? In line with the conclusions of Tetlock and Manstead (1985), I suggest that this distinction between intra-psychic and impression management explanations of research findings may be arbitrary and need not necessarily contribute towards a better understanding of the phenomenon. In the majority of impression management research, clear distinctions are made between the private and social selves. In contrast to the private self, which may refer to people's private appraisals of their own selves, the social self is defined as public aspects of the self which are presented to others within a social interaction, and may comprise of the reflected appraisals of others. Given the clear distinction between the self and the external audience under this definition, it is unsurprising that the intra-psychic-impression management dichotomy has arisen. From a self-categorization theory perspective, however, the social self may be publicly presented, but it also refers to a private, psychological self which is cognitively represented in the form of social self-categories. The social self, according to this view, is a self, which arises within a social context and this collective level of identity can extend beyond the individual perceiver

to include others who are not the individual perceiver (Onarato & Turner, 2001). The personal self, on the other hand, refers to an individual level of identity which is predominantly personal, and arises when perceived differences between the self and external others are greater than within-person differences (Hogg & Turner, 1987). Understood this way, it is clear that the self cannot be conceptualized independently of the surrounding environment or social context.

As pointed out by Turner (1982), the external environment and one's internal cognitions are heavily intertwined and separating the two into distinct entities may be infeasible. Having one's identity be known or being under public observation, for example, does not only introduce accountability to external audiences, it also changes one's own private self-perception, and this can consequently impact upon one's thoughts and behaviours. Categorizing the self as being similar or different from others under different social contexts, not only changes how others may view the self, but also how one sees oneself (Turner, 1982). Duval and Wicklund (1972), for example, suggested that the presence of external audiences can in fact make one's internal standards and values more salient and this perception will subsequently influence people's private self-evaluations. Furthermore, empirical research has also demonstrated that if others perceive oneself as in possession of a particular trait, this belief can also strengthen the idea that one does indeed possess that trait (E. Jones, 1964). Also, from self-categorization theory, we know that when one sees him or herself as a group member and view other in-group members as interchangeable with the self, the process of appearing desirable to oneself and appearing desirable to one's own in-group members may be entirely congruent and hence indistinguishable.

Understanding Impression Management from a Social Identity Perspective

Summarizing from the literature reviewed above, one fundamental question that impression management research seeks to answer appears to be: What motivates people to engage in impression management processes? Building upon the idea that people's thoughts and behaviours and the desirability of certain traits and impressions depend on the salience of people's identities, I will, in this following section, attempt to build a more comprehensive framework from which to understand the factors motivating impression management processes. Based on an interpretation of the self-concept through a social identity and self-categorization perspective, I put forward alternative conceptualizations of impression management motivations and desired outcomes. This approach follows previous efforts by researchers to combine the insights of self-presentation theory with those of social identity and self-categorization research (Abrams, 1990; Emler & Hopkins, 1990; Reicher & Levine, 1994). Given that the social identity perspective provides insight on both behavioural outcomes and cognitive processes of various psychological phenomena, an interpretation of impression management issues from this viewpoint may provide a more integrated understanding towards research in this area.

What Motivates People to Engage in Impression Management Efforts?

As previously outlined in Chapter 2, the social identity perspective conceptualizes an individual's self-concept as falling along a continuum, ranging from a predominantly individual-based personal identity on one end to a predominantly group-based social identity on the other (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Depending on the salience of either the personal or the social self, human behaviours can broadly be classified as interpersonal or intergroup behaviour, respectively (Tajfel & Turner,

1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Building upon this premise, I suggest that impression management motivations and behaviours can be better understood by taking into account the salience of people's personal, as well as social identities. The notion that people's thoughts and behaviours are strongly influenced by the salience of their identities in a particular social context is certainly not a novel one (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1984), and has been demonstrated across a range of research topics, such as leadership (Haslam & Platow, 2001; Fielding & Hogg, 1997; Turner & Haslam, 2001), pro-social behaviours (Levine, Cassidy, Brazier, & Reicher, 2002; Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins, & Levine, 2006; Sturmer, Snyder, & Omoto, 2005) and stereotyping (McGarty, 2002; McGarty, Haslam, Turner, & Oakes, 1993; Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994). These various social processes, such as leadership and stereotyping, for example, are highly influenced by the ways in which we see ourselves and how others see us, a process fundamental to the practice of impression management strategies. It is, therefore, reasonable to suggest that people's salient identities, which have been shown to affect leadership and stereotyping processes, can also influence people's impression management strategies. If we accept the premise of this argument, a logical question that follows this assertion is: In what way will people's personal (or social) identities influence their self-presentational strategies?

As mentioned above, I propose that factors which motivate impression management processes cannot be distinctly categorized into internal versus external motivators, and that the two will often interact and affect one another. Instead, I argue that impression management efforts will be guided by the concerns, norms and values of one's salient identity. When one's personal identity has been rendered salient, for

example, concerns about one's own self-image as a unique individual will be the primary determinant of his/her impression management efforts. On the other hand, when one's social identity is salient, impression management efforts should be guided by his/her concerns for the salient social group-membership and their thoughts and behaviours will most likely reflect the norms and values of the salient social in-group. Internalization of a social categorization, or the transformation of an externally imposed label into an internal self-definition through the process of self-categorization, therefore, will render one's perceptions and behaviours more in line with stereotypic in-group traits, norms, and characteristics (Hogg & Turner, 1987; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In Chapter 2, I outlined the mechanisms underlying the categorization process, specifying how an interaction between perceiver readiness and (comparative and normative) fit will lead people to either categorize themselves as group-members or unique individuals. This process will therefore, not be elaborated upon here. Instead, I will focus on identifying the factors which motivate people's self-presentational efforts.

Consistent with previous impression management research, which adopted a predominantly interpersonal approach, I propose that people's self-presentation strategies are largely motivated by a desire to portray a positive self-image (Brown & Gallagher, 1991; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Tedeschi & Linskold, 1976; Bradley, 1978), as well as an active desire for positive social self-construction (Baumeister, 1982; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). However, I aim to extend this previous research by seeking to incorporate elements of people's social identities into the current framework. Building upon previous research, which suggests that people's cognitions and behaviours can be better understood by taking into account their social self-concepts, I propose that apart from being motivated to portray a positive image of the self, as an

individual, people are also motivated to portray a positive image of the self, as a group member. As previously outlined in this chapter, people often engage in various activities to project a positive personal image (i.e. Making more internal attributions for success, discrediting sources of negative self-information). If we accept the premise that people's personal and social identities represent equally important components of their self-perception (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1981), then there is no reason to believe that individuals would be any less motivated to protect the positivity of their social self-image, especially when their social identities are salient.

From social identity theory, we know that “no social group is an island” (Tajfel, 1981, p. 258), and that group members are often acutely aware of how members of relevant out-groups may view the salient in-group (Long & Spears, 1997). Provided that a social category membership is important to an individual's self-definition in a particular context, it may be in his/her interest to dispute any negative in-group stereotypes as they could prompt self-doubts and threatened a positive sense of self. Under conditions where people are confronted with the possibility that the out-group may hold negative beliefs about the valued in-group, therefore, they may seek to disconfirm those negative in-group stereotypes in order to preserve a positive sense of self. This would be especially true if the negative characteristics or stereotypes attributed to the in-group were seen as being illegitimate and unfair (Hopkins, Reicher, Cassidy, Bull and Levine, 2007).

Recent studies by Hopkins et al. (2007), for example, demonstrated that within an intergroup interaction context, pro-social behaviours directed at an out-group audience were used to actively disconfirm negative in-group stereotypes perceived to be held by the out-group. In the first part of this study, one half of the participants

(Scottish undergraduate students) were told that the English generally perceived the Scots as being mean, ungenerous, and tight-fisted. This group of participants subsequently indicated that helping out-group members (the English) would be more effective in refuting the image that Scots were mean, compared to helping fellow in-group Scots. Similar results were obtained with actual helping behavioural measures, with participants showing greater willingness to contribute money to an English (out-group) than Scottish (in-group) charity, when they believed that the out-group perceived the in-group to be mean and ungenerous. The researchers, thus, concluded that (out-group) helping behaviour served as a means to disconfirm perceived negative in-group stereotypes held by out-group members. Given that a large proportion of the previous literature on helping suggests that people are more willing to help in-group than out-group others, the results from the studies of Hopkins et al., (2007) were particularly powerful, demonstrating that out-group helping behaviour can serve as a way of responding to specific types of perceived negative in-group stereotypes. The researchers further argued that this type of strategic out-group helping behaviour could be better understood by taking into account the broader social implications, such as how these actions may be motivated by a desire to advance in-group interests.

Just as people seek to project a desirable self-image by confirming positive aspects of their individual selves under personal identity salient conditions, they may similarly seek to project a desirable social self-image by choosing to confirm positive aspects, as well as disconfirming negative aspects of their social selves, when their social identities were salient. Work by Klein and Azzi (2001), for example, showed that when presented with a depiction of the in-group by out-group others, people will confirm positive aspects, while disconfirming the negative aspects of the in-group

stereotype. In this study, the researchers set out to test the idea that depictions of in-group stereotypes can be seen as persuasive attempts motivated by a desire to change the opinions of an out-group audience. Specifically, it was suggested that by expressing aspects of one's in-group stereotypes, people not only translate a fixed representation into words, it also strategically convinces an audience of the validity of that specific representation (Klein & Azzi, 2001; Reicher, Hopkins, & Condor, 1997). The researchers argued that if the selective confirmation of positive in-group stereotypes was in fact an act of persuasion, then it should only occur when one addresses out-group rather than in-group members. Findings from the study of Klein and Azzi (2001) indicated that when a specific set of stereotypes about the in-group were made salient to participants, they confirmed more positive traits and disconfirmed more negative traits to an out-group audience. This effect, however, disappeared altogether when addressing an in-group audience. These findings, thus, suggest that participants were not merely expressing their internal representations of what they thought the in-group was like, but were in fact engaging in an active persuasion exercise to protect the image of the salient in-group (Klein & Azzi, 2001).

Implications for the Current Thesis Question

At the beginning of this chapter, I set out to explore an alternative theoretical approach to my initial thesis question of trust development and willingness to self-disclose to strangers. Based on the empirical findings from Studies 1 and 2, as well as the literature previously reviewed in this chapter, I would like to propose an explanation for participants' self-disclosing behaviours as observed in my first two experiments, which is based upon an understanding of impression management concerns. From the self-disclosure literature, we know that people's self-disclosing

content will lead others to form certain impressions of them, and this impression formation process is especially likely when people's identities are identifiable rather than anonymous. I, therefore, proposed that this impression formation process, present in Studies 1 and 2 via my decision to measure trust in the form of self-disclosure, may have triggered a psychological process different to those examined in previous studies of group-based trust, which measured trust via participants' willingness to co-operate in social dilemma situations.

Specifically, I suggest that under situations where participants' social group memberships have been rendered salient and they were asked to self-disclose on a negative topic to a stranger, their willingness to self-disclose may have been influenced more by impression management concerns, rather than trust processes, as initially hypothesised. For example, when asked to self-disclose on a negative topic to an out-group stranger, who knew that one was an out-group member (as is true of the mutual knowledge conditions operationalized in Studies 1 and 2), participants may have experienced a reduced sense of willingness to self-disclose out of concern that their self-disclosure content may reflect negatively upon the salient in-group. This process would, thus, explain the pattern of results obtained in my first two experiments, which saw lower levels of willingness to self-disclose to out-group than in-group strangers when one's own social identity had been made salient and there was mutual knowledge of group-membership. This explanation would also account for the lack of effects on our measures of trustworthiness, both in the stranger, as well as the interaction situation.

As argued in previous sections of this current chapter, motivations for impression management efforts cannot be clearly delineated into external and internal

factors, and it is important to note that this is also the case for the currently predicted psychological processes. Specifically, the presence of a comparison out-group in the external environment which recognizes one's own out-group membership may further enhance the salience of a particular social group-membership, subsequently triggering concerns for one's own self-image, as a group member. The motivation to maintain a positive image of the in-group in front of an out-group audience would be further driven by an internalized value that one placed upon that specific in-group membership. In addition, efforts to portray the in-group favourably would likely be enacted in ways which are consistent with the norms and values of the salient in-group in that situation. In this way, stimuli in the external environment feed-back to, and inform the meaning of a particular self-identity, which in turn influences one's thoughts and behaviours. It is, therefore, evident that this dynamic psychological process which sets into motion impression management efforts cannot be conveniently compartmentalized into either external or internal motivators of behaviours. Studies 3, 4 and 5 in this current research program, which will be outlined in Chapters 10 and 11, set out to test this alternative theoretical viewpoint, which is based upon a social identity approach to the issue of impression management and self-disclosure.

CHAPTER 10.

STUDIES 3 AND 4: AN INTERGROUP PERSPECTIVE ON SELF-DISCLOSURE

Context Statement

In this chapter, I outline two empirical experiments, which I have designed to test my new theoretical approach towards the study of self-disclosure. In the first experiment described in this chapter (Study 3 in the current empirical program), I attempted to replicate findings from Studies 1 and 2, which showed an increase in willingness to self-disclose to in-group than out-group members for participants whose social identities have been made salient, under conditions where their own social group-memberships were known, rather than anonymous. In order to maintain a degree of consistency with the impression management and self-disclosure literature terminology, the mutual versus unilateral knowledge conditions described in Studies 1 and 2 of the current empirical program, will, henceforth be referred to as the identifiable versus anonymous conditions in these subsequent empirical studies. Results from Study 3 were consistent with previous findings from Studies 1 and 2. The second study described in this current chapter (Study 4), therefore, went on to look at whether this new theoretical approach, grounded in impression management reasoning, could be extended to explain and predict actual self-disclosing behaviour.

Abstract

Self-disclosure in most empirical work is understood as the sharing of negative self-information that could potentially cause embarrassment for the discloser. Previous research suggests that anonymity of the discloser may encourage self-disclosure, although it remains unclear whether it was the anonymity of social or personal identities that enhanced disclosure. In my studies, I sought to disentangle this relationship. In doing so, I proposed that self-disclosure could be influenced by people's desire to project a positive image of their in-group to a relevant out-group. The role of group membership of the disclosure recipient was thus examined in the present studies. Results from the current studies showed that participants' self-disclosing behaviours to in-group and out-group members were moderated by whether the disclosure recipient was aware of participants' social identities or not. When participants' social identities were known, they were significantly more willing to disclose potentially negative information to in-group than out-group members. The implications of these experimental findings are further discussed with reference to identity salience and in-group identification. Overall, I demonstrate the clear role of intergroup impression management strategies affecting group members' disclosure of negative self-relevant information.

Introduction

Traditionally, self-disclosure has been understood as the process whereby one person intentionally shares information about him or herself with another (Cozby, 1973; Joinson, 2001; Wheelless & Grotz, 1977). Interestingly, the *operationalization* of self-disclosure in most empirical work often depicts it as the act of sharing, or revealing, potentially *negative* information about oneself to others (McKenna & Bargh, 1998; Pennebaker, Zech, & Rime, 2001). In fact, the term ‘self-disclosure’, as opposed to ‘telling’ or ‘communicating’, in and of itself, implies the sharing of intimate information that goes beyond superficial descriptions of the self, and/or certain events. Due to the potentially upsetting consequences of self-disclosing intimate or negative information, such as rejection, negative judgements, or even ridicule, it is unsurprising that most people may find it extremely difficult to talk about sensitive issues with others (Derlega, Metts, Peronio, & Margulis, 1993; Pennebaker, 1990). Moreover, people’s desires to project and maintain a positive impression of themselves could also inhibit the disclosing of negative self-information to others (Gardner & Martinko, 1988).

Anonymity and Self-Disclosure

Despite the obstacles associated with the sharing of negative information, most people *are* in fact motivated to self-disclose in order to seek social validation and support, establish a connection with similar others, and relieve their so called “pent-up” emotions (Derlega et al., 1993; Ignatius & Kokkonen, 2007; Pennebaker et al., 2001). One factor that has been identified as facilitating the disclosure of negative information is the *anonymity* of the discloser (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002; Burnett & Illingworth, 2008; Christopherson, 2007; Joinson, 2001). Specifically, it has been argued that, under conditions of anonymity, individuals may be liberated from social pressures, allowing them to express what they truly feel and experience, thus resulting

in greater levels of self-disclosure (Bargh et al., 2002; Mallen, Day, & Green, 2003; McKenna & Bargh, 1998). Research in the area of computer-mediated communication (CMC), for example, has demonstrated that visual anonymity between interaction partners under CMC leads to greater self-disclosure than in traditional face-to-face (FtF) interaction (Antheunis, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2007; Joinson, 2001; Tidwell & Walther, 2002). Although some research has argued for a tendency to disclose *more* under FtF interaction, these trends often do not approach statistical significance (Mallen et al., 2003).

To date, the majority of self-disclosure research that has looked at the role of anonymity has often confounded the anonymity of personal identity with that of social identity (Joinson, 2001; Mallen et al., 2003; Matheson & Zanna, 1988; Reddy, Fleming, Howells, Rabenhorst, Casselman, & Rosenbaum, 2006). In FtF interactions, people's personal identity, as well as aspects of their social identities (e.g., gender, race; Hogg & Turner, 1987; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) are available to their interaction partners. On the other hand, in CMC interactions, for example, people's personal and social identities would both be anonymous. It is thus impossible to ascertain whether it was the anonymity of the *social* or *personal* identity in CMC interactions that promotes self-disclosure, relative to FtF interactions, as both aspects were absent in the former, while being present in the latter. In the current research, I attempted to disentangle this confound by varying the availability of participants' social identities to the disclosure recipient, while keeping their personal identities anonymous across all conditions.

Anonymity of Social Identity: Managing the Out-group's Impression of the In-group.

The anonymity or identifiability of people's social identities has been shown to influence perceptions and behaviours. Platow, Brewer and Eggers (2008), for example,

demonstrated that the relative anonymity of people's social identities to an authority influenced their perceptions of how much respect the authority was showing them in a decision-making context. Foddy, Platow and Yamagishi (2009) have also shown that trust in an in-group stranger comes with participants' own social identities being made available (instead of anonymous) to that stranger. It thus matters to people whether their social identities are known to others. In this manner, I suggest that the relative availability of people's social identities may also influence their willingness to self-disclose. In line with the idea that willingness to disclose could be influenced by the desire to portray a positive image of the self (Gardner & Martinko, 1988), I suggest that when people's social identities are available, their willingness to disclose may be influenced by a desire to project a positive image of the *in-group*.

Recent research, showing that people are motivated to engage in actions that defend or promote the positive image of the in-group speaks to this point (Hopkins, Reicher, Harrison, Cassidy, Bull & Levine, 2007; Klein & Azzi, 2001). Results from a series of studies demonstrated that people who believed that the out-group held negative attitudes towards the in-group were more willing to engage in actions to dispute those views (Hopkins et al., 2007; Klein et al., 2001). This idea is consistent with the findings of Vorauer, Main and O'Connell (1998), which demonstrated that people care about how the out-group views the in-group, and that people are motivated to portray a positive image of the in-group to the out-group. These and other researchers went on to propose that people care the *most* about the out-group's opinion of the in-group when the out-group has the potential to *evaluate* the in-group, as opposed to having mere contact with an out-group member (Klein & Azzi, 2001; Vorauer, Hunter, Main & Roy, 2000).

In reference to the disclosing of negative or potentially embarrassing experiences, the possibility of being negatively evaluated by an out-group member may inhibit people's desires to disclose in order to preserve a positive image of the in-group. This idea is consistent with the viewpoint of Derlega et al. (1993), who conceptualized self-disclosure as a form of social control through which people could selectively present information about themselves in order to create a good impression. I, therefore, suggest that when social identities of both disclosers and recipients are available, concerns with negatively portraying the in-group to out-group members may *reduce* people's willingness to self-disclose to out-group members, but not in-group members, even when disclosers' personal identities are anonymous. When out-group members are unaware of potential disclosers' social group memberships, however, willingness to disclose may not be inhibited as these potential disclosers are unlikely to be seen as representatives of their group, and content of their disclosures should not impact negatively upon the valued in-group.

In contrast to potentially disclosing to an out-group member, people may actually be willing to share their negative experiences with in-group members, in the hope of obtaining social validation and support for their problems (Derlega et al., 1993; McKenna & Bargh, 1998). Apart from that, a desire to establish connections with similar others may also increase people's intentions to disclose to in-group members (Derlega et al., 1993; Dovidio, Gaertner, Validzic, Matoka, Johnson, & Frazier, 1997). As with out-group members, the anonymity or identifiability of social identities may influence people's disclosure to in-group members. It is, therefore, possible that expectations regarding the in-group listener's ability to validate and support a fellow in-

group discloser may be higher when the disclosure recipient is also aware of the shared social group membership.

Based upon these arguments, we expected to obtain a statistical interaction between the intragroup vs. intergroup nature of the disclosure context, and whether the potential discloser's group membership was anonymous or identifiable to the potential disclosure recipient. Specifically, I hypothesized that whereas willingness to disclose will be greater to a fellow in-group than an out-group member when the potential discloser's group membership is identifiable, this difference is expected to attenuate (if not disappear altogether) when the potential discloser's group membership is anonymous.

Study 3

Method

Participants and Design

Seventy-one female self-identified Anglo-Australians, whose first language was English and who were students at the Australian National University, completed this study as part of a routine laboratory course work. Each participant was randomly assigned to one condition of a 2 (anonymity of participant's social identity: anonymous vs. identifiable) x 2 (group membership of partner: in-group vs. out-group) between participants factorial design. Participants' personal identities remained anonymous across all experimental conditions.

Procedure and Materials

Participants were presented with a paper-and-pencil questionnaire that simulated an internet chat-room situation, ostensibly based on an international chat-room for stress

and anxiety issues. Participants were then asked to imagine that they were really in that situation. A chat-room dialogue box similar to those observed in actual chat-rooms was presented to participants. In the dialogue box was a picture, name, as well as the location of the partner with whom they were supposedly having a private chat. Information presented in this dialogue box represented the main manipulations of this experiment.

The out-group member to whom participants would disclose was an Asian girl from Singapore, while the in-group member was an Anglo-Australian girl from Canberra, Australia (the city in which the study was conducted). In this manner, the out-group was non-Australian Asians, and the in-group was Anglo-Australians. This in-group identity was made salient across all experimental conditions by stating that “recent studies have shown that stress and anxiety levels among Australians have been mounting” and that “controversial governmental policies” have negatively impacted “upon Australian international and domestic life”.

Anonymity of Social Identity. In the social identity anonymous conditions, the chat-room partner stated that her computer settings did *not* allow her to see the participants’ picture, hence indicating that participants’ social identities (i.e., Anglo-Australian) was unavailable to the chat-room partner. Participants in the identifiable conditions, however, were told that the partner’s computer settings allowed her to see the participants’ picture.

Group Membership of Partner. Following Lea, Spears and Watt (2007), the visually-cued category group membership in this study was invoked using portrait pictures. In the in-group partner condition, the dialogue box in the simulated chat-room situation showed a picture of a Caucasian female who had a typical Anglo-Australian

name (Laura) and was said to be located in Canberra, Australia. In the out-group partner condition, the dialogue box showed a picture of an Asian female who had a typical Asian name (Chin) and was said to be located in Singapore. Pilot-testing showed no differences in the rated attractiveness of these two female pictures.

Dependent Variable. The main dependent variable in this study was participants' reported willingness to disclose negative information to the chat-room partner; this was measured with the question, "How likely would you to be to disclose stressful or anxiety-related issues to the above chat-room partner" (1= extremely unwilling to disclose; 7= extremely willing to disclose).

Manipulation Checks. After indicating their willingness to disclose, participants responded to two manipulation-check questions: (1) "The stranger described [above] would know my own nationality" (anonymity check), and (2) "The stranger described [above] was an Australian" (group membership of partner check). Responses were made on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Checks

A *t*-test comparing responses on the group membership manipulation check was statistically significant, $t(68) = 6.71, p < .001$ (one participant failed to answer this question). Participants agreed that the in-group partner was Australian ($M = 4.83$) but that the out-group partner was not ($M = 2.71$). A *t*-test comparing responses on the anonymity manipulation check was only marginally significant, $t(69) = 1.46, p = .07$ (one-tailed). Consistent with predictions, however, participants agreed more strongly that the partner would know their nationality in the identifiable condition ($M = 4.00$) than in the anonymous condition ($M = 3.41$).

The willingness to disclose data were analysed using a 2-way analysis of variance, with group membership and anonymity as the independent variables. The main effects for anonymity and group membership were non-significant. Consistent with the hypothesis, however, a significant interaction was found between anonymity and group membership, $F(1, 67) = 4.19, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.06$. As seen in Figure 3, when participants' social identities were anonymous, their willingness to disclose did not vary significantly between an in-group member ($M = 3.71, SD = .32$) and an out-group member ($M = 3.83, SD = .35$), $t(67) = .25, p > .05$. On the other hand, when participants' social identity was identifiable, they were significantly more willing to disclose to an in-group member ($M = 4.21, SD = .39$) over an out-group member ($M = 2.89, SD = .35$), $t(67) = 2.52, p < .05$. Pair-wise comparisons, on the other hand, revealed no significant differences in willingness to disclose between the three other experimental conditions (in-group/identifiable, in-group/anonymous, out-group/anonymous).

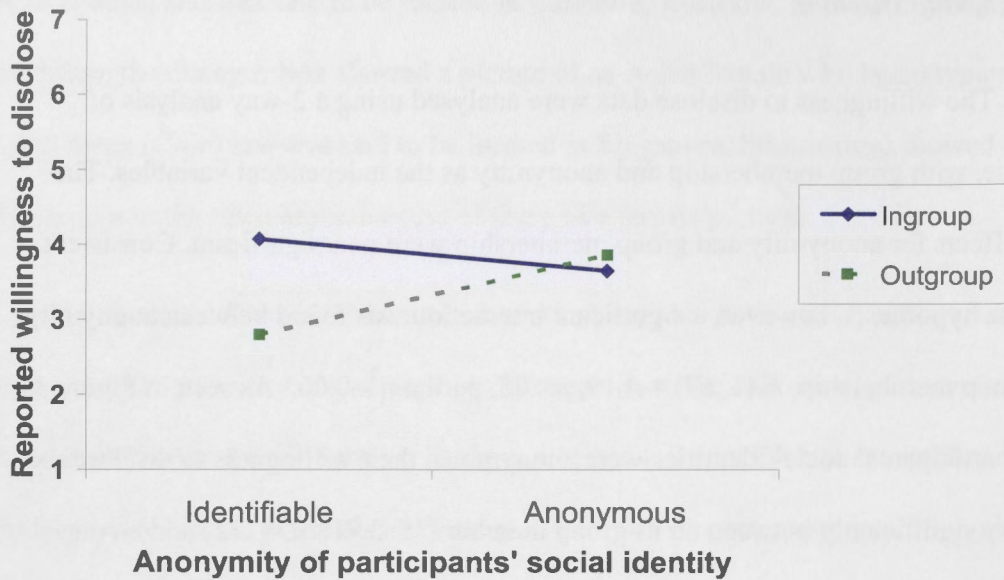


Figure 3. Group membership by anonymity interaction on reported willingness to disclose.

These results thus indicate support for my hypothesis. As predicted, willingness to disclose to out-group members was significantly lower than that to in-group members when participants' social identities were known. The fact that willingness to disclose was inhibited under the out-group/identifiable conditions, despite participants' *personal* identities being anonymous, is consistent with my proposal that it was concerns about negatively portraying the *in-group* that drove this effect. There was, however, no evidence of *increased* willingness to self-disclose to in-group members under the social identity identifiable conditions.

Also consistent with my hypothesis, the mean difference between willingness to disclose to in-group and out-group members under the anonymous conditions was non-significant. The fact that participants were no less willing to disclose to an out-group

member who was *unaware* of their social group membership supports the argument that it is the evaluative component, not mere interaction in the self-disclosure process that hinders disclosure to out-group members when people's social identities were known. Interestingly, overall willingness to disclose did not vary significantly across the identifiable and anonymous conditions. This indicates that anonymity (in this case, the anonymity of social identity), in and of itself, does *not* uniformly increase self-disclosing tendencies, as suggested in most self-disclosure literature (Bargh et al., 2002; Burnett & Illingworth, 2008; Christopherson, 2007; Joinson, 2001).

Study 4

In Study 4, I attempted to address some of the limitations in Study 3, as well as to extend the current investigation in two important ways. One of the limitations in Study 3 was the anonymity manipulation. In Study 3, anonymity of social identity was manipulated by having the (hypothetical) interaction partner state whether or not she could see the participant's picture. Although participants' pictures were never actually shown, the statement may nonetheless have evoked concerns regarding their *personal* anonymity, thus undermining efforts to distinguish between personal and social anonymity. I sought to address this potential anonymity confound in Study 4. Also, in Study 4, I sought to improve upon Study 3 by focusing on one social group membership only (nationality), instead of evoking nationality *and* ethnicity as in Study 3.

In terms of extending the current investigation, a measure of *actual* disclosure was included in Study 4, in addition to participants' self-reported willingness to disclose. Finally, instead of making social identity salient in all conditions (as in Study 3), I manipulated the salience of participants' identities as group members or as a unique individuals. In light of this identity salience manipulation, I proposed that the

original hypothesis set out in Study 3, would apply to participants in the social identity salient conditions, but not participants in the personal identity salient conditions. I did *not* expect participants in the personal identity salient conditions to be as concerned about the image of the in-group, nor be as attentive to the group membership of the disclosure recipient compared to those who saw themselves as group members.

Method

Participants

Study 4 had a 2 (anonymity of participant's social identity: anonymous *vs.* identifiable) x 2 (group membership of partner: in-group *vs.* out-group) x 2 (identity salience: social *vs.* personal) between participants factorial design. One-hundred and sixty four Australians (108 females, 56 males) who had English as a first language took part in this study. I made salient participants' identity as an Australian in the social identity salient condition, and this was the basis for the shared or unshared category membership.

Procedure

Participants, seated in individual cubicles, first completed a one-page questionnaire designed to make salient either their identity as a unique individual or an Australian. They were then told that the experiment would involve them writing an email to a fellow research participant, describing any stressful and anxious events that they may have experienced recently. Participants then proceeded to complete a pre-disclosure questionnaire that consisted of manipulation check questions and their self-reported willingness to disclose, before proceeding to write and send the email. After writing the email, participants completed a post-disclosure questionnaire that included measures of additional dependent variables and demographic questions. It should be

noted that there were no actual recipients of the disclosures in this study, and all of the emails participants sent went to an account set up by the experimenter.

Materials

Manipulation of Identity Salience. Participants' identities, either as Australians or as unique individuals, were made salient at the beginning of the study. The identity salience manipulation consisted of two parts. The first part was modelled after Verkuyten and Hagendoorn's (1998) self-esteem manipulation. Participants in the personal identity salient conditions read a paragraph emphasizing the uniqueness of each individual, stating, "Each person is a unique individual. In this way, each person differs from others in all kinds of ways and each individual can compare him or herself to other individuals..." In contrast, participants in the social identity salient conditions read a paragraph emphasizing similarities between group members, stating, "Each person is a member of a group, such as sports clubs and political parties ... In this way, each person is similar to others in all kinds of ways, and groups of people can compare themselves collectively to other groups..."

After reading the paragraph, participants answered seven questions related to either their personal identity (e.g., "I wish I could have more respect for myself"), or social identity (e.g., "I have a lot in common with other Australians"). These questions were measured on 7-point scales, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The second part of the identity salience manipulation involved participants completing the 'three things' task designed by Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds and Turner (1999), that asked participants to list three things on four different dimensions which they did either as unique individuals or as Australians.

Anonymity of Social Identity. In the identifiable condition, participants were told that the recipient of their email would know their nationality; while in the anonymous condition, they were told that the recipient would be unaware of their nationality. In all conditions, it was emphasized that participants' personal identity would always remain anonymous.

Group Membership of Partner. In the in-group member conditions, the recipient of participants' emails was Australian; in the out-group member conditions, the recipient was *non*-Australian. Participants were told that "People from various nationalities were recruited for this study. For your information, the stranger you will be disclosing to today is _____", and depending on the condition, either "an Australian", or "a non-Australian" would be filled in the blank spot.

Primary Dependent Variables. There were two primary dependent variables in this study: self-reported willingness to disclose, and actual disclosure. Willingness to disclose was measured using the question: "I am willing to disclose stressful and anxious emotions to the stranger" (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The email that participants wrote to the stranger, on the other hand, constituted our measure of their actual disclosure. Using independent raters, the amount of stress and anxiety (as per the requirement of the disclosure topic) revealed in the email was coded using two questions, "On a scale of 1 (Not at all) – 7 (Extremely), how stressed and anxious do you think the participant was?" and "On a scale of 1 (Extremely low) – 7 (Extremely high), what was the level of stress expressed by the participant in his/her disclosure?"

Concerned about Self-disclosing. In order to better understand the processes influencing participants' self-disclosing behaviour, I included the following questions in the current questionnaire: "I was worried that my disclosure would cause all Australians

some embarrassment”, “I would be upset if the stranger revealed the content of my disclosure to someone else”, “My decision to disclose (or not) was mainly based on how well I expected to be treated by the stranger”, “My perceptions of how risky it was to disclose my thoughts and feelings were mainly influenced by how trustworthy I thought the stranger was” and “My perceptions of how risky it was to disclose my thoughts and feelings were mainly influenced by whether or not I expected the stranger to reciprocate my trust”. These questions were measured on a seven-point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). I predicted that when social identity was identifiable, participants would express greater concern with embarrassing the in-group of Australians, as well as greater perceptions of risk, when the disclosure recipient was an out-group, rather than an in-group member. Under the social identity anonymous conditions, however, fear for in-group embarrassment and risk perceptions should not differ significantly between in-group and out-group recipients.

Individual Disclosure Tendencies. In order to rule out individual differences in self-disclosure tendencies as a potential explanation of any effects observed on the dependent variables, I included a seven-item measure of self-disclosure tendencies, taken from the disclosure domain of the Interpersonal Competence Questionnaire ($\alpha = .81$) (Buhrmester, Furman, Wittenberg, & Reis, 1988). Examples of questions in this measure are, “Revealing something intimate about yourself while talking with someone you are just getting to know” and “Telling a close companion how much you appreciate and care for him or her”. These items were presented on the post-disclosure questionnaire, and were measured on a 5-point scale (1= “I’m poor at this and I’d feel very uncomfortable”; 5= “I’m extremely good at this and I’d feel very comfortable”).

Manipulation Checks. Manipulation check questions for the group membership and anonymity variable were presented after the disclosure situation had been explained to the participants, but *before* they completed the email-writing task. These were: “The stranger will be an Australian” (group membership of partner check), and “The stranger will know my nationality” (anonymity check). Participants were asked to tick a box, indicating whether they thought the two statements were: (1) correct or (2) incorrect.

Manipulation checks for the identity salience variable were presented *after* participants completed the email-writing task, and the two items were, “While completing this study, I was responding as an Australian” and “While completing this study, I was responding as a unique individual” (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). I expected participants in the social identity salient conditions to agree more with the first statement, and participants in the personal identity salient conditions to agree more with the second statement.

Results

Manipulation Checks

All participants correctly answered the group membership manipulation check. Two participants who incorrectly answered the anonymity manipulation check were excluded from further analysis. Responses on the two identity salience manipulation checks however, did not differ across the two identity salient conditions, $t(160) = 1.96$, and $t(160) = 1.34$, for the social and personal identity salience manipulation checks respectively. Based on their responses, I excluded 33 participants who were in the social identity salience conditions but indicated that they were *not* responding as an Australian (score of 4 and below on the social identity salience manipulation check question). An examination of the personal identity salience manipulation check question, however,

revealed that responses were skewed, with about 90% of participants recording a score of 6 or above on this measure. No participants, therefore, were excluded on the basis of their responses on the personal identity salience manipulation check. I consider the implications of this decision in the Discussion section. The final sample thus consisted of 129 participants.

Willingness to Disclose

Data were analysed using a 3-way ANCOVA, with anonymity, group membership, and identity salience as the independent variables and individual disclosure tendencies as the covariate. Results revealed, first, that the covariate was non-significant $F(1, 121) = .44, p > .05$. The main effects for anonymity and identity salience were also non-significant. There was, however, a significant group membership main effect $F(1, 121) = 7.75, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$, with participants reporting greater willingness overall to disclose to in-group members ($M=5.42, SD=.17$) than out-group members ($M=4.76, SD=.20$).

The group main effect on willingness to disclose, however, was qualified by a three-way interaction between anonymity, group membership, and identity salience, $F(1, 121) = 6.41, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$. To clarify the nature of this interaction, separate two-way ANOVAs were conducted on participants' willingness to disclose under the social identity and personal identity salient conditions.

When social identity was salient, the two-way interaction between group membership and anonymity was significant, $F(1, 50) = 6.26, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .11^2$. From Figure 4, it can be seen that willingness to disclose to in-group ($M=5.09$, $SD=.38$) and out-group members ($M=5.25$, $SD=.36$) did not differ significantly when participants' own social identities were anonymous, $t(121) = .29, p > .05$. When their group memberships were identifiable, however, participants were significantly *less* willing to disclose to out-group members ($M=3.87$, $SD=.32$) than in-group members ($M=5.44$, $SD=.31$), $t(121) = 3.34, p < .005$. These findings are thus consistent with the hypothesis and interaction effects in Study 3.

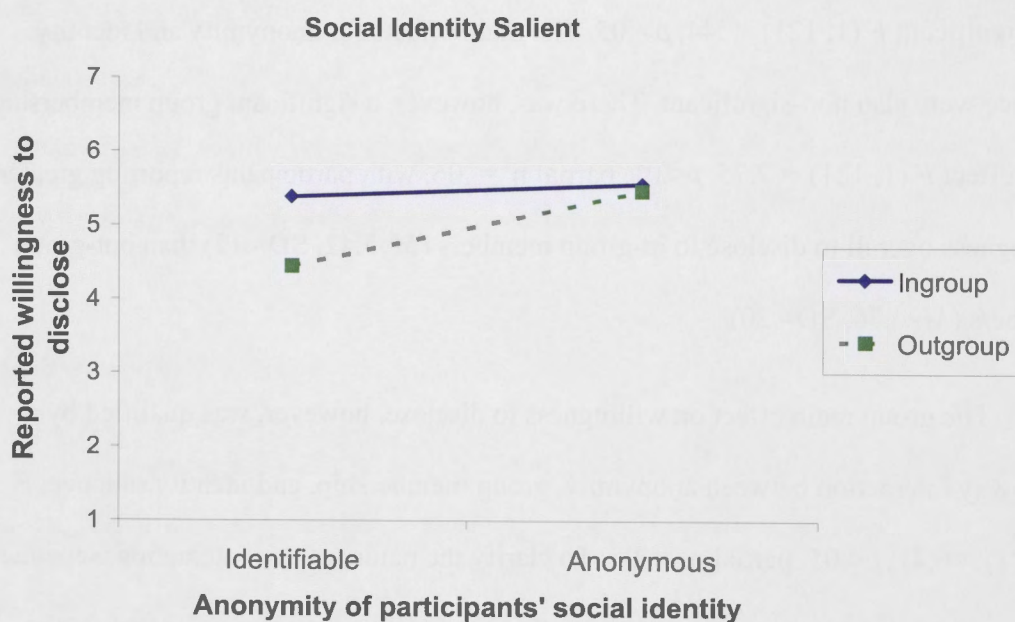


Figure 4. Group membership by anonymity interaction on willingness to disclose under conditions of social identity salience.

² Analyses which includes the 33 participants that were excluded on the basis of their identity salience manipulation checks revealed that the 3-way interaction between anonymity, group membership and identity salience remains significant, $F(1, 154) = 4.28, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. While the 2-way interaction between group membership and anonymity becomes non-significant for participants in the social identity salience conditions, the mean differences between willingness to disclose to in-group ($M=5.36$, $SD=.26$) and out-group members ($M=4.17$, $SD=.25$) under the identifiable conditions remained significant, $t(83) = 3.33, p < .005$.

A different pattern of results emerged under the personal identity salient conditions. The two-way anonymity by group-membership interaction was non-significant, $F(1, 71) = 1.09, p > .05$. Although there was a marginal main effect for group membership, $F(1, 71) = 3.77, p = .06$, with participants reporting greater willingness to disclose to in-group ($M = 5.57, SD = .19$) than out-group members ($M = 4.97, SD = .22$), this difference was only marginally significant. Overall, my hypothesis was supported for participants in the social, but not personal identity salient conditions.

Actual Disclosing Behaviour

A check for inter-rater reliability revealed intra-class correlation coefficient values greater than 0.81 across three independent raters, for both of the items used to measure the amount of stress disclosed. Reliability analyses also revealed excellent internal consistencies between these two items ($\alpha = .91$). Hence the means of the two items measuring stress were calculated to form one single measure of actual disclosure. Correlational analysis revealed significant correlations between our measure of participants' willingness to disclose, and participants' actual disclosing behaviour in all but two of the experimental conditions (see Table 1).

Table 1

Correlations between participants' self-reported willingness to disclose and actual disclosing behaviour.

	Social identity salient		Personal identity salient	
	Identifiable	Anonymous	Identifiable	Anonymous
In-group	.58*	.61**	.39	-.17
Out-group	.52*	.74**	.49*	.64**

** $p < .01$

A 3-way ANCOVA with anonymity, group membership, and identity salience as the independent variables, and individual disclosure tendencies as the covariate was conducted. The covariate was non-significant, $F(1, 121) = .05, p > .05$. As predicted, however, the three-way interaction between anonymity, group membership and identity salience was significant³, $F(1, 121) = 4.52, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. Follow-up two-way ANOVAs were thus conducted on participants' actual disclosure under the social identity and personal identity salient conditions.

Under social identity salience, the two-way interaction between group membership and anonymity was significant (see Figure 5), $F(1, 50) = 12.02, p < .005$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.19$. Consistent with my hypothesis, participants' actual disclosing of stressful information did not differ significantly between in-group ($M = 3.56, SD = .32$) and out-group members ($M = 4.13, SD = .31$) under the social identity anonymous

³This 3-way interaction, however, was no longer significant when I included the 33 participants who had been excluded from further analyses on the basis of their identity salience manipulation checks, $F(1, 154) = 1.07, p > .05$.

conditions, $t(121) = 1.29, p > .05$. When participants' social identities were known, however, they disclosed significantly less to out-group ($M=3.48, SD=.27$) than in-group ($M=4.78, SD=.26$) recipients, $t(121) = 3.42, p < .005$.

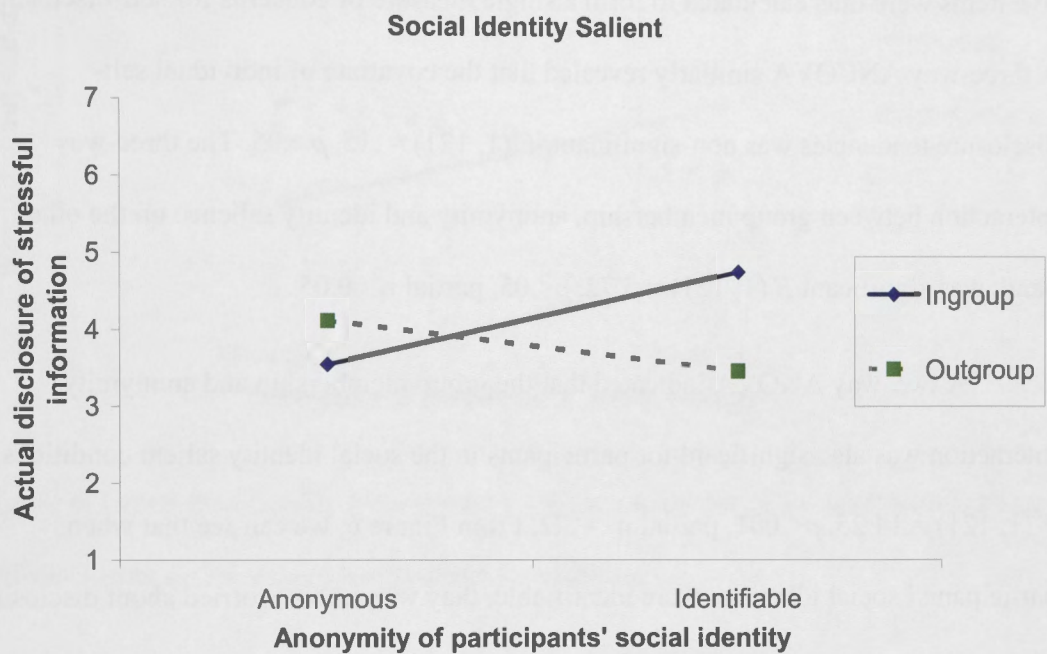


Figure 5. Group membership by anonymity interaction on participants' actual disclosing of stressful information under social identity salience.

The two-way interaction between group-membership and anonymity, however, was non-significant for participants in the personal identity salient condition, $F(1, 71) = .25, p > .05$. No other significant main or interaction effects were detected on this measure for participants in the personal identity salient conditions. Overall, participants' actual disclosing behaviours appeared consistent with their self-reported willingness to disclose.

Reliability analysis indicated that the five items used to measure participants' concerns about self-disclosure had good internal consistency ($\alpha=.80$). The means of the five items were thus calculated to form a single measure of concerns for self-disclosing. A three-way ANCOVA similarly revealed that the covariate of individual self-disclosure tendencies was non-significant, $F(1, 121) = .15, p > .05$. The three-way interaction between group membership, anonymity and identity salience on the other hand, was significant $F(1, 121) = 5.72, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.05$.

A two-way ANOVA indicated that the group membership and anonymity interaction was also significant for participants in the social identity salient conditions, $F(1, 121) = 14.25, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .22$. From Figure 6, we can see that when participants' social identities were identifiable, they were more worried about disclosing to an out-group ($M=3.80, SD=.37$) than an in-group member ($M=2.48, SD=.35$), $t(121) = 2.61, p < .05$; when their social identities were anonymous, they were more worried about disclosing to an in-group ($M=3.76, SD=.37$) than an out-group recipient ($M=2.88, SD=.37$), although this difference was non-significant, $t(121) = 2.03, p > .05$. For participants in the personal identity salient conditions, the group membership by anonymity interaction was non-significant, $F(1, 121) = .04, p > .05$.

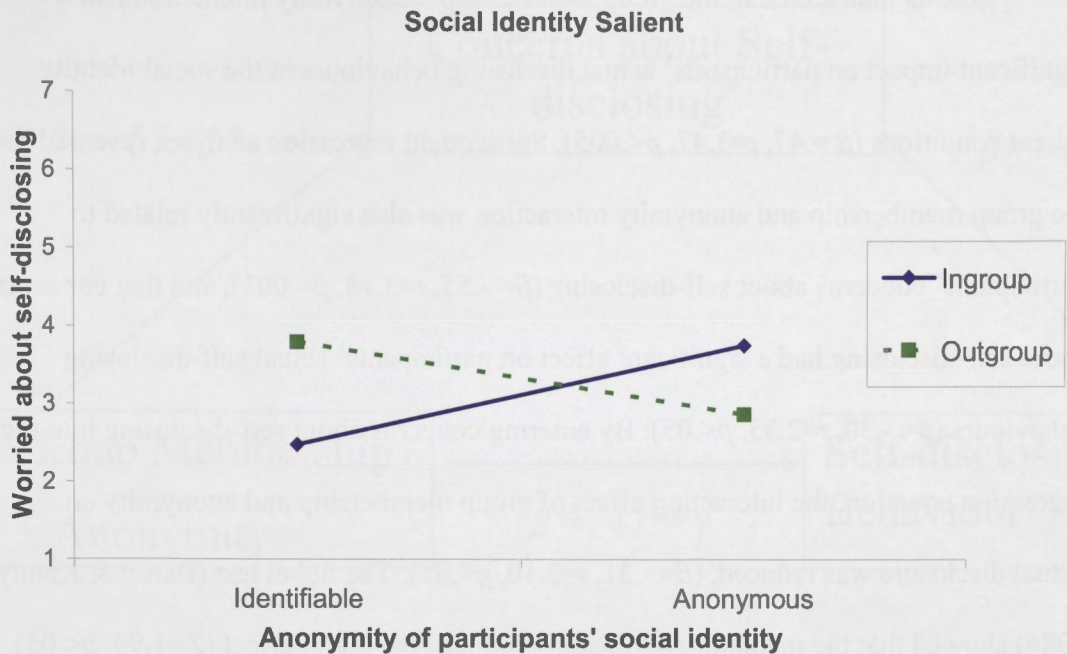


Figure 6. Group membership by anonymity interaction on participants' concerns about self-disclosing under social identity salient conditions.

Concerns about self-disclosing as mediator

A mediation analysis tested whether the effects of group membership and anonymity on self-disclosure for participants in the social identity salient conditions was mediated by how worried they were about self-disclosing. Regression analysis revealed that while the group membership x anonymity x identity salience interaction significantly affected concerns about self-disclosing ($\beta = -.26, t = 2.39, p < .05$), and actual self-disclosure ($\beta = .20, t = 2.13, p < .05$), concerns about self-disclosing did not significantly affect actual self-disclosure ($\beta = -.002, ns$). In light of the experimental findings thus far, however, two separate regression analyses were conducted for the personal and social identity salient conditions.

Results indicated that the group membership x anonymity interaction had a significant impact on participants' actual disclosing behaviours in the social identity salient conditions ($\beta = .47, t = 3.47, p < .005$). Subsequent regression analyses revealed that the group membership and anonymity interaction was also significantly related to participants' concerns about self-disclosing ($\beta = -.55, t = 3.78, p < .001$), and that concerns about self-disclosing had a significant effect on participants' actual self-disclosing behaviours ($\beta = -.30, t = 2.35, p < .05$). By entering concerns about self-disclosing into the regression equation, the interaction effect of group membership and anonymity on actual disclosure was reduced, ($\beta = -.31, t = 2.10, p < .05$). The Sobel test (Baron & Kenny, 1986) showed that the mediator significantly reduced the direct effect ($Z = 1.99, p < .05$), thus indicating that actual disclosure is partially mediated by concerns about self-disclosing (see Figure 7). The group membership and anonymity interaction, however, did not affect actual self-disclosure ($\beta = .06, ns$) or concerns about self-disclosing ($\beta = -.03, ns$) for participants in the personal identity salient conditions.

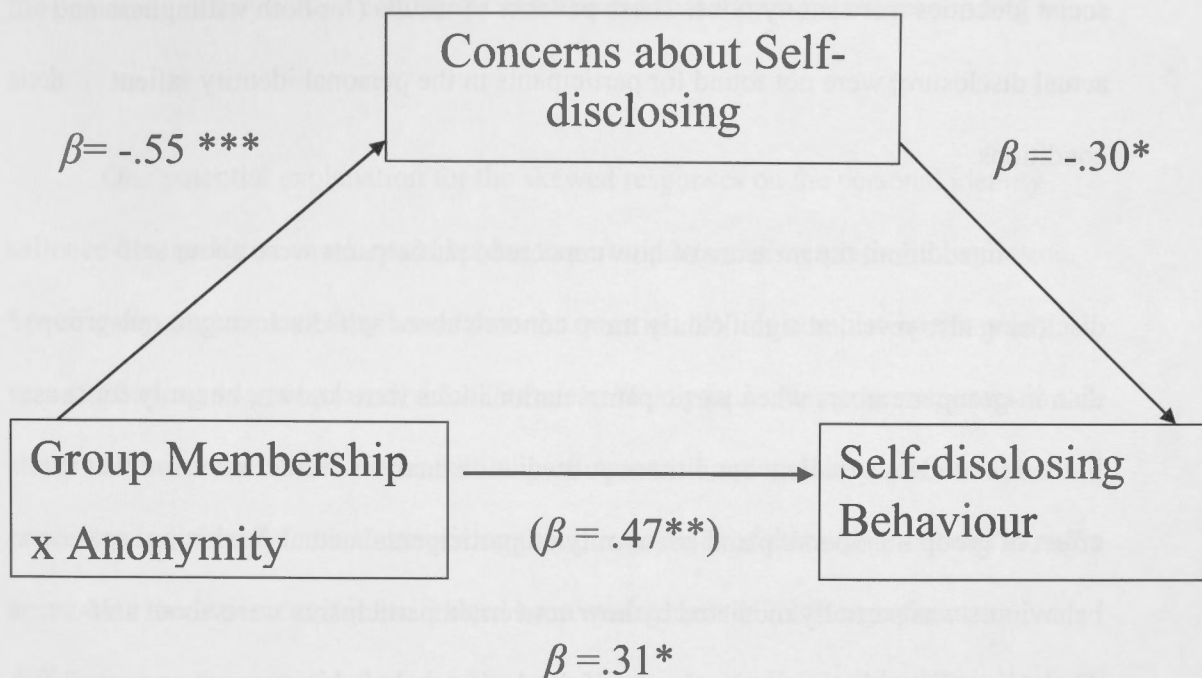


Figure 7. Path model for the effect of the interaction of group membership and anonymity and concerns for self-disclosing on actual disclosing behaviour for participants in the social identity salient conditions. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .005$, * $p < .05$

Discussion

Willingness to disclose results for participants in the social identity salient conditions in Study 4 were consistent with those in Study 3 (where there was high social identity salience across all experimental conditions). More importantly, participants' self-reported willingness to disclose was consistent with their actual disclosing behaviour, with participants in the social identity salient conditions disclosing significantly less to an out-group than an in-group member when their own nationality was identifiable. Willingness to disclose, as well as actual disclosure to in-group and out-group members, however, did not differ significantly when participants'

social identities were anonymous. These patterns of results (for both willingness and actual disclosure) were not found for participants in the personal identity salient conditions.

In addition, the measure of how concerned participants were about self-disclosing also revealed significantly more concern about self-disclosing to out-group than in-group members when participants' nationalities were known, but only for those in the social identity salient conditions. A mediation analysis further revealed that the effect of group membership and anonymity on participants' actual disclosing behaviours was partially mediated by how concerned participants were about self-disclosing. Given that concerns about self-disclosing included items such as fear of embarrassing the in-group, these results appear to support the idea that the evaluative component inherent in negative self-disclosure processes may have inhibited participants' self-disclosure to out-group members under the social identity salient conditions. On the other hand, the lack of any significant effects on the dependent measures for participants in the personal identity salient conditions could be due to the irrelevance of group membership concerns and anonymity (or not) of social identity for these participants.

These results, however, should be interpreted with caution as responses on the identity salience manipulation checks did not show the predicted differences across the personal and social identity salient conditions. Although I excluded from the analyses participants who were in the social identity salient conditions but reported that they were *not* responding as an Australian, skewed responses on the personal identity salience manipulation check rendered it impossible to exclude participants who were in

the personal identity salient conditions but reported that they were not responding as such.

One potential explanation for the skewed responses on the personal identity salience manipulation check could be due to participants misinterpreting the question. Specifically, participants may have taken the question “While completing this study, I was responding as a unique individual” to mean “Did you discuss your responses in this study with someone else?” Given that all participants completed the experimental processes individually, it is unsurprising that the majority of participants would strongly agree with the statement if it had indeed been misinterpreted. Non-significant differences on the manipulation check questions between participants in the social and personal identity salient conditions, therefore, maybe due to an ambiguity of the manipulation checks, but not necessarily the manipulations per se. In addition, the mediation path-way that was presented in Figure 7 was also based on a single-item measure of concerns about self-disclosing. A more robust measure of the proposed mediating factor of concerns about self-disclosing may be needed before a more conclusive interpretation of this pattern of results can be made.

General Discussion

The aim of the current research was to examine the role of group membership and anonymity in the disclosure of negative information to others. Although anonymity has been shown to promote the disclosure of negative information (Bargh et al., 2002; Burnett & Illingworth, 2008; Christopherson, 2007; Joinson, 2001), most of the self-disclosure research to date has often confounded the anonymity of people’s social identities with their personal identities (Joinson, 2001; Mallen et al., 2003; Matheson & Zanna, 1988; Reddy et al., 2006). In that sense, it is unclear whether the increased

disclosure from face-to-face interactions to non-face-to-face interactions was a result of personal or social anonymity. As recent research has demonstrated the importance of the anonymity or identifiability of social identity in affecting people's behaviours, I sought to differentiate between the two in the current studies. To achieve this, I held constant the anonymity of participants' personal identities whilst varying the anonymity of their social identities.

One of my primary predictions was that when people's group memberships were known to out-group members, concerns about negatively portraying the in-group to out-group others would be heightened. Consequently, I expected participants to strategically minimize their disclosure under those circumstances in order to minimize any negative impact upon the in-group's image. When participants' group membership was anonymous, however, there should be no strategic minimization of self-disclosure to out-group members as the disclosure content cannot reflect badly upon the in-group. Results from both Studies 3 and 4 supported this prediction. From Study 4, I also demonstrated that participants' actual disclosures were partially mediated by how worried they were about the self-disclosure process, thus strengthening the argument that self-presentational concerns are the reason behind participants' strategic self-disclosing behaviours. Taken together, these results support the suggestion that mere exposure to an out-group member who does not have the opportunity to evaluate us as out-group members will *not* necessarily inhibit our willingness to disclose to him/her. More importantly, these results also provide preliminary support for my alternative theoretical approach towards self-disclosure, which is based upon an understanding of impression management concerns. From these findings, it appears increasingly likely that participants' willingness to disclose results as demonstrated in Studies 1 and 2 of

the current empirical program (reported in Chapters 7 and 8), may have been driven by their impression management efforts, rather than expressions of trust (or distrust) in the interaction partner.

I would like to point out, however, that whilst it was my aim to manipulate the anonymity of participants' social identities while keeping their personal identities constantly anonymous, this process may have been confounded in the social identity identifiable conditions in Study 3. Specifically, participants were told that the stranger whom they were interacting with could see their picture in the hypothetical chat-room situation. While this was intended to convey to participants that the stranger would be aware of their social group-memberships (i.e. their identities as Caucasian-females), I acknowledge that this process would have also made available participants' personal identities in the form of their facial features. These efforts to identify the unique effects of people's social identities on their intentions to self-disclose, therefore, may have been compromised in Study 3. While acknowledging this confound in Study 3, it is nevertheless important to note that no other identifying information (i.e. name, background information) was made available to the hypothetical interaction partner, and in that sense, participants' personal identities were, to a certain extent, unavailable. In addition, given that participants' social identities were rendered salient across all experimental conditions in Study 3, it may be reasonable to suggest that information conveyed through a picture, will be interpreted at a group-level, rather than at a personal level. Participants' ethnic background (made available through their picture), for example, could have primarily been understood as signalling their membership in a particular social group (Caucasians), rather than be seen as conveying information about their individual identity. In this way, the intention to keep personal identities

anonymous across the experimental conditions may still have been achieved in Study 3. Most importantly, however, this confound was addressed in Study 4, where participants' personal identities were in fact kept constantly anonymous, and in this study, I found that the anonymity (or availability) of their *social* identities for participants in the social identity salient condition, resulted in vastly different patterns of willingness to disclose, as well as actual disclosing behaviours. This, therefore, unequivocally demonstrates the importance of people's social identities in influencing their self-disclosing tendencies, and that people are motivated to portray or maintain a positive image of themselves, as group-members.

Overall, I have shown that people's willingness, as well as actual disclosure on a negative topic, could be influenced by the anonymity of their own social identities and the group membership of the disclosure recipient. There is also evidence that a reduced willingness to disclose negative information to an out-group member when people's social identities were known may be mediated by their concerns for causing the in-group embarrassment through their disclosure content. My alternative theoretical reasoning, which sought to explain and predict people's willingness to self-disclose to in-group and out-group strangers under conditions of social identity salience will be further examined in Chapter 11.

CHAPTER 11.

STUDY 5: INTERGROUP IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT THROUGH SELF-DISCLOSURE

Context Statement

Studies 3 and 4 in the current empirical program, as outlined in Chapter 10, provided preliminary support for the application of an impression management explanation in an intergroup self-disclosure situation. In this current chapter, I sought to establish further empirical support for this alternative theoretical approach. I reasoned that if participants' self-disclosing behaviours were in fact motivated by their desires to maintain a positive impression of the valued in-group in front of an out-group audience, especially when their own social group-memberships were available, then apart from attenuating self-disclosure on negative topics, there should also be a desire to *increase* self-disclosure on *positive* topics. Prior to the actual experiment, I conducted a pilot test, which looked at whether the self-disclosure of both positive and negative personal information was thought to reflect upon the image of a salient in-group. Findings from this pilot study affirmed these predictions, indicating a belief (within our test population) that self-disclosing on a positive topic would reflect positively on the valued in-group, while self-disclosing on a negative topic would reflect negatively on the in-group. Importantly, these findings were only obtained for participants in the social identity identifiable, but *not* the social identity anonymous conditions. Study 5 in the current empirical program, which is reported in this current chapter, therefore, provides further support for the exercise of impression management strategies within an

intergroup self-disclosure situation, for participants whose social identities were salient and their social group-memberships made known to the hypothetical interaction partner.

Abstract

In this paper, I examine how people's impression-management strategies are affected by whether or not their social identities remain anonymous or identifiable to the in-group and out-group members with whom they are interacting. Specifically, through participants' self-reported willingness to disclose, I sought to identify whether intentions to self-disclose on positive *and* negative information would be influenced by the contextual need to project positive in-group images to a relevant out-group. Results indicated less reported willingness to disclose negative information to out-group than in-group members when participants' social identities were known (rather than anonymous) to the out-group members; willingness to disclose positive information to out-group members, however, was higher when participants' social identities were known than anonymous. I, thus, demonstrate the role of intergroup impression management strategies in affecting group members' disclosure of positive and negative information.

Introduction

For the past thirty years or so, research in the area of impression management (or self-presentation), has received a large amount of attention within the field of social psychology (Baumeister, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 1980; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Schneider, 1981; Tedeschi, 1981). A core principle of impression-management research is the idea that people are, in general, interested in how others perceive and evaluate them (Arkin & Sheppard, 1990; Goffman, 1969; Leary & Kowalski, 1992). The act of impression management, therefore, refers to the process through which individuals attempt to control or manipulate the image that others may form of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). Conceptually, impression management is motivated by the recognition that depending on the social situation, certain self-presentations are likely to result in desirable reactions, while others may result in undesirable reactions (Leary, Robertson, Barnes, & Miller, 1986). Tailoring one's own self-image to suit the particular nature of a social interaction, thus, maximizes the chances of forming positive relationships, as well as achieving desirable outcomes (Gergen & Taylor, 1969; Schlenker, 1980). Research by Leary et al. (1986), for example, demonstrated that leaders tend to strategically manage their impressions in front of group members, so as to appear to possess qualities that team members expected in an effective leader.

Managing Impressions of the Self as a Group-member

While the bulk of impression management research to date focuses on self-presentation to others, as an individual, (Baumeister, 1982; Gergen & Taylor, 1969; Schlenker, 1980; Schneider, 1981; Tedeschi, 1981), recent research has demonstrated that self-presentation to others, *as a group member*, is also important during social interactions (Douglas & McGarty, 2001; Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995; Vorauer,

Main, & O'Connell, 1998). From the social identity perspective, we know that a person's self-concept comprises of two components: the personal ("I", "me") and the social self ("we", "us") (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When people's social selves have been rendered salient, their perceptions and understandings of a particular social situation, as well as their ensuing behaviours, will be determined by their membership in the salient social category (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). The current study, therefore, suggests that impression management strategies during intergroup interactions may largely be guided by people's concerns for the image of the valued in-group. Consistent with past research which indicated that people are highly attuned to, and sensitive towards the out-group's impressions of the in-group (Hopkins, Reicher, Harrison, Cassidy, Bull & Levine, 2007; Klein & Azzi, 2001; Vorauer, et al., 1998), we suggest that, impression management efforts may be motivated and guided by a desire to portray the self (as a group member), as well as the salient social group, in a positive light.

In line with the interpersonal impression management literature (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992), therefore, the targeted audience of an impression management effort is instrumental in determining the types of behaviours deemed appropriate within an intergroup interaction context. A study by Hopkins et al. (2007), for example, demonstrated that within an intergroup interaction context, people who perceived the out-group as holding negative in-group stereotypes were more motivated to engage in behaviours (directed towards an out-group audience) which counter those negative in-group stereotypes (Hopkins, et al., 2007). Work by Klein and Azzi (2001) has also shown that when presented with a depiction of the in-group by out-group others, people will confirm positive aspects of this stereotype, while dis-confirming the negative

aspects. Recent research (Elder, Sutton, & Douglas, 2005), which showed the derogation of in-group members who openly criticized the in-group in front of an out-group audience, appears to further support the idea of a normative expectation that group members should work at fostering a favourable public image of the in-group (Elder et al., 2005; Goffman, 1969; Klein & Azzi, 2001).

Identifiability of Social Identity

It is important to note, however, that normative expectations regarding the presentation of a desirable in-group image to out-group others may be grounded in the belief that the communicative content will be attributable to the individual (as a group member), as well as the salient social group. In other words, if people's social identities are anonymous, the need for impression management strategies aimed at portraying a desirable in-group image is unnecessary, because its communicative content will *not* be attributable to the salient in-group. When people's social identities are known to the out-group, however, concerns about negative in-group evaluations by out-group members as a result of publicly communicated negative information, may be heightened. Consistent with the notion that public communicative behaviour has the ability to impact upon other's perceptions and treatments of ourselves (Goffman, 1959; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992), therefore, I suggest that impression management strategies are most likely to be employed in an inter-group interaction context, when people's social identities are *identifiable* rather than anonymous.

Impression Management through Self-disclosure

Central to impression management research is the process of communicating the desired social image to a specific audience. In this current study, I attempted to examine how certain impressions may be communicated through one's self-disclosure intentions. Self-disclosure, defined as the process whereby one person intentionally shares

information about him- or herself with another (Cozby, 1973; Joinson, 2001; Jourard, 1971; Wheelless & Grotz, 1977), represents an avenue through which impression management strategies may be employed. As suggested by Derlega and Grzelak (1979), self-disclosure can function as a form of social control, serving as an impression management tool through which individuals can selectively reveal information about themselves in order to create a favourable impression. Research by Chiou (2006), for example, suggested that individuals' sexual self-disclosure in cyberspace may be indicative of impression management efforts aimed at projecting certain sexual attitudes and securing further interactions. Whilst previous research has largely focused on how self-disclosure contributes to the managing of personal self-presentations, the current study will focus on how people's intentions to self-disclose may be affected by their efforts to manage the impressions of the *social* self.

Valence of the Disclosure Topic

Most self-disclosure research to date has suggested that the anonymity of the potential discloser's identity will facilitate or enhance willingness to self-disclose (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002; Christopherson, 2007; Joinson, 2001). This effect, however, is likely to depend on the valence of the disclosure content. Given that a key feature of most self-disclosure research is the notion that people's relative willingness to self-disclose is motivated largely by a desire to portray a favourable self-image (Bargh et al., 2002; Gardner & Martinko, 1988), disclosure intentions on positive topics may actually *increase* as a result of impression management efforts, *especially* if people's (social and/or personal) identities are identifiable. In contrast, disclosure intentions on negative topics are likely to decrease as a result of impression management efforts, again, especially if people's (social and/or personal) identities are identifiable.

Consistent with the literature previously reviewed above, I suggest that when people's social identities are known, concerns about negative in-group evaluations by out-group members may be heightened. Willingness to disclose on negative topics to out-group others may thus be reduced in order to preserve a positive image of the in-group. However, if people's social group memberships are anonymous to the relevant out-group members (i.e., these out-group members are unlikely to view the potential disclosers as group representatives), willingness to disclose on negative topics may *not* be inhibited as the content of the disclosures should *not* negatively impact upon the in-group image. On the other hand, willingness to disclose on *positive* topics to out-group members should be facilitated by the *identifiability*, not anonymity, of the potential disclosers' social identity. Strategically increasing disclosures on positive topics with the goal of portraying a positive in-group image, for example, will be futile and not likely to be pursued *if* the out-group disclosure recipient is unaware of the discloser's group membership. If the out-group recipient is unlikely to view the potential disclosers as representatives of their respective groups, positive disclosures are not likely to reflect favourably upon their in-groups. Willingness to self-disclose on positive topics to out-group members, therefore, is *not* expected to increase when people's social identities remain publicly anonymous, but *is* expected to be strategically *increase* when people's social identities are publicly known.

Based on the above reasoning, I currently expect a statistical interaction between the valence of the disclosure topic and whether the participants' group membership is anonymous or identifiable to a potential *out-group* disclosure recipient. Specifically, I hypothesized that, when the disclosure recipient is an out-group member: (1) willingness to disclose on a positive topic will be higher when the participants' social

identity is identifiable rather than anonymous, and (2) willingness to disclose on a negative topic will be *lower* when the participants' group membership is identifiable rather than anonymous. In order to understand whether the above predicted effect pertains specifically to self-disclosure intentions to out-group members and not self-disclosure intentions *in general*, I included in the experimental design an intra-group self-disclosure situation that served as a contrast condition. From past research, it was unclear, *a priori*, how participants would respond with an in-group member. On the one hand, social identity identifiability could enhance willingness to self-disclose, particularly with a positive topic, both to strengthen social bonds (Dovidio, Gaertner, Validzic, Matoka, Johnson, & Frazier, 1997) and to be seen as a good group member. In contrast, complete anonymity (including that of social identity), which represents a situation free of concerns for social sanctions or negative consequences, could enhance willingness to self-disclose, particularly on negative topics (Bargh et al., 2002).

Study 5

Method

Pilot Testing

A pilot study was first conducted to test the assumption that when people's social identities are salient, the act of self-disclosing personal information will be perceived to reflect (positively or negatively) upon impressions of themselves *as group members*, and by extension, reflect upon the positivity and/or negativity of the relevant in-group image. This should occur when peoples' social identities are identifiable rather than anonymous. Results from the pilot test provided support for this assumption. Among participants whose social identities were identifiable (N=11), self-disclosure on a negative topic to out-group members was thought to produce an image that was

significantly lower (i.e. more negative) than the scale mid-point of 0 [$M=-1.36$, $t(10) = 3.16$, $p<.005$, one-tailed]. On the other hand, self-disclosing on a positively valence topic to the same out-group recipient resulted in the perception of a more positive in-group image by out-group members [$M=1.36$, $t(10) = 1.97$, $p<.05$, one-tailed]. These effects, however, were non-significant for participants whose social identities were anonymous ($N=10$) to the out-group disclosure recipient, [$M=0.33$, $t(9) = .46$, $p>.05$, and $M=1.00$, $t(9) = 1.34$, $p>.05$, for the negative and positive disclosure topics respectively]. Based on these results, I went on to develop further the materials for the main study.

Participants and Design

One-hundred and fifty students (80 females and 70 males) at the Australian National University (ANU) whose first-language was English participated in this study. The experimental design was a 2 (group membership of potential disclosure recipient: in-group vs. out-group) x 2 (identifiability of participant's social identity: anonymous vs. identifiable) x 2 (valence of disclosure topic: negative vs. positive) mixed factorial design. The disclosure topic variable was a within participants variable while the other two variables were between participants. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of the four between participants conditions.

Procedure and Materials

Participants were students of two residential colleges at the ANU who voluntarily completed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire for AU\$5.00. The study was ostensibly interested in promoting greater psychological well-being among ANU students through better understanding self-disclosure processes through the use of online chat-rooms.

Participants were presented with two simulated internet chat-room dialogue boxes, similar to those observed in actual chat-rooms, and told to imagine that they were really in that situation.

Each dialogue box contained some introductory sentences from the supposed chat-room partner. The introductory comments included both the partner's name and the name of the university the partner attended. In order to minimize gender effects, a gender neutral name (Sam) was used to identify the chat-room partner. The in-group partner with whom participants imagined themselves having a chat was a fellow ANU student, while the out-group partner was a student from the University of Canberra (UC; a cross-town university). In keeping with the format of online chat-rooms, participants had their own section in the dialogue box in which they could potentially respond to the chat-room partner. This section was designed to provide a sense of realism.

The intergroup context of the experiment was made salient across all experimental conditions by stating that "the study is interested in comparing disclosure attitudes between ANU and University of Canberra students". At the start of the study, participants also completed 10 questions, measured using a seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree), designed to make salient their identity as an ANU student (e.g., "Generally, most members of the public tend to believe that we, ANU students, do well in our studies").

Identifiability of Social Identity. In the social identity anonymous condition, the chat-room partner stated that he/she was unsure about which university the participant attended. In the social identity identifiable conditions, the chat-room partner indicated that he/she knew that the participant was an ANU student. *Participants' personal identities remained anonymous across all experimental conditions.*

Valence of Disclosure Topic. In the negative topic condition, the disclosure topic was “Study related stress and anxiety”. In the positive topic condition, the disclosure discussion topic was “Good deeds that you have done as a student”. The presentation order of the negative and positive topics was counterbalanced between participants.

Dependent Variable. The dependent variable in this study was participants’ reported intentions to disclose to the chat-room partner; this was measured with the questions, “I am willing to disclose study-related stress and anxiety to the partner in the above chat-room situation” (negative topic), and “I am willing to disclose good deeds I have done in the time I have been an ANU student, to the partner in the above chat-room situation” (positive topic). These two questions were measured on a 7-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree).

Manipulation Checks. After indicating their willingness to disclose, participants responded to two manipulation-check questions: (1) “The above chat-room partner knew that I was an ANU student” (identifiability check), and (2) “The above chat-room partner is an ANU student” (group membership of partner check). Participants responded to each statement by ticking either “yes,” or “no.” Each participant answered the two manipulation check questions for the positive topic and for the negative topic.

Results

Manipulation Checks

A preliminary examination indicated that five participants failed at least one of the group membership manipulation checks. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) test for random attrition (Weiss, 2000) revealed that these five participants were randomly distributed across all experimental conditions; they were excluded from subsequent analyses. An inspection of the identifiability manipulation checks indicated that a

further ten participants had responded incorrectly on at least one of the identifiability checks. A test for random attrition (Weiss, 2000) indicated that more participants in the social identity anonymous condition failed the identifiability manipulation checks than participants in the social identity identifiable conditions, $F(1,143)=11.15, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2=0.05$. Incorrect responses were, however, evenly distributed across the in-group/anonymous and out-group/anonymous conditions. I thus excluded these ten participants from subsequent analysis. Implications of this decision will be further discussed in the Discussion section. The final sample thus consisted of 135 participants.

Willingness to Disclose

Preliminary analyses revealed no gender differences, so analyses reported below exclude this as a variable. The willingness to disclose responses were first analysed using a three-way mixed ANOVA, with group membership and identifiability as the between participants variables and valence of disclosure topic as the within participants variable. A significant three-way interaction was found, $F(1,131)=7.26, p<.01$, partial $\eta^2=0.05$. To clarify the nature of this interaction, separate two-way ANOVAs were conducted on participants' willingness to disclose under the out-group partner and in-group partner conditions.

Willingness to Disclose to Out-group Members. A two-way mixed ANOVA between identifiability and topic revealed no significant main effects. The predicted two-way interaction, however, was significant, $F(1, 131)=15.57, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2=0.17$ (see Figure 8). Pair-wise contrasts revealed support for my hypothesis; participants indicated significantly *less* willingness to disclose on a negative topic to out-group members under the identifiable ($M= 4.10$) than anonymous conditions ($M= 4.89$) [$t(131)=2.76, p<.05$], but were significantly *more* willing to disclose on a

positive topic under the identifiable ($M= 4.88$) than anonymous conditions ($M= 4.07$) [$t(131)=2.83, p<.05$].

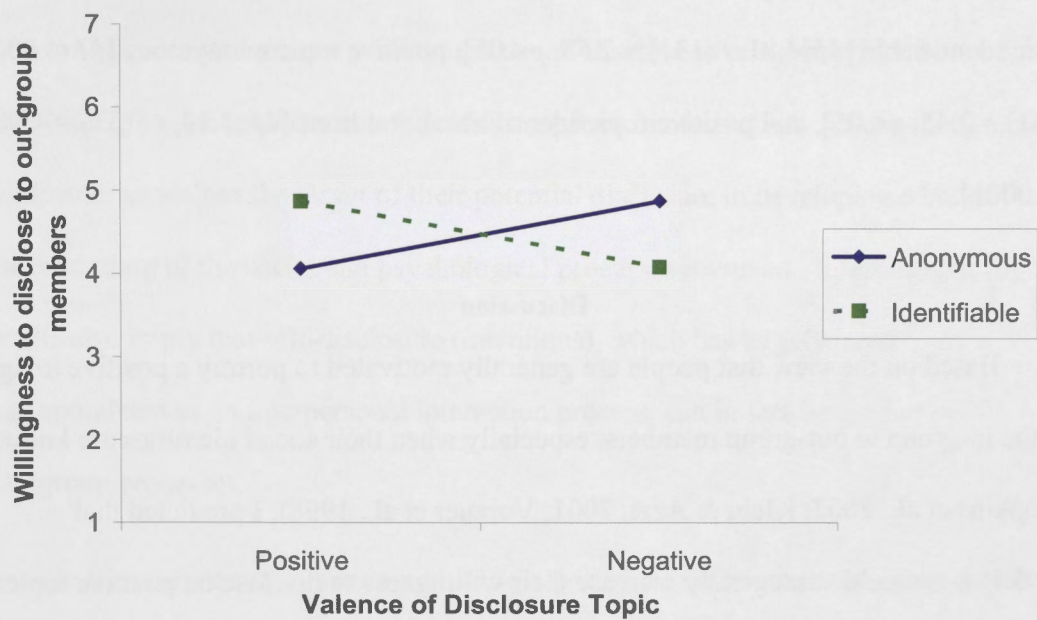


Figure 8. Identifiability by valence of disclosure topic interaction on participants’ self-reported willingness to disclose to out-group members.

Willingness to Disclose to In-group Members. A two-way mixed ANOVA revealed that the two-way interaction between identifiability and topic was not significant $F(1, 131)=0.02, p>.05$. The main effect for identifiability, however, was statistically significant, $F(1, 131)=4.26, p<.05$. Participants were more willing to disclose to an in-group member when their social identities were anonymous ($M= 5.21$) than identifiable ($M= 4.44$). There was also a significant main effect for the discussion topic variable, $F(1, 131)=4.39, p<.05$, partial $\eta^2=0.21$, with participants reporting greater willingness to disclose to an in-group member on a negative ($M= 5.17$) than a positive topic ($M= 4.47$). Thus, the greatest amount of willingness to disclose to in-

group members was observed when participants' social identities were anonymous and they were asked to disclose on a negative topic ($M= 5.53$). Willingness to disclose in the negative topic/anonymous condition was significantly higher than that in the negative topic/identifiable [$M=4.81$, $t(131) = 2.53$, $p<.05$], positive topic/anonymous [$M=4.80$, $t(131) = 2.45$, $p<.05$], and positive topic/identifiable conditions [$M=4.14$, $t(131) = 4.90$, $p<.0001$].

Discussion

Based on the view that people are generally motivated to portray a positive image of the in-group to out-group members, especially when their social identities are known (Hopkins et al., 2007; Klein & Azzi, 2001; Vorauer et al., 1998), I predicted that participants would strategically increase their willingness to disclose on positive topics to out-group members, while intentionally minimizing willingness to disclose on negative topics to these same out-group members. This strategic minimization or maximization of self-disclosure to out-group members, however, was expected to occur specifically when participants' social identities were known rather than anonymous. Results from the current experiment support this hypothesis, and add strength to the argument that it is people's concerns (at least in part) about how others view them as group members that motivated strategic self-disclosure to out-group members. These results also provide further support for the suggestion that certain normative expectations prescribe that people, as group members, should work on generating and maintaining a positive public image of the in-group (Elder et al., 2005; Klein & Azzi, 2001).

Whilst most empirical research has found anonymity to be a facilitator of the self-disclosure process, these results were largely based on operationalizations of self-

disclosure content as inherently negative (Bargh et al., 2002; Burnett & Illingworth, 2008; Joinson, 2001; Kelly & McKillop, 1996). In fact, these experimental results revealed that when the disclosure topic was a positive one, *identifiability*, not anonymity, promoted greater willingness to self-disclose to *out-group* members. This, thus, highlights the importance of identifying people's motivations for engaging in self-disclosure, as well as the target of their potential disclosure in developing a better understanding of the social and psychological processes involved. Interestingly, my results also imply that self-disclosure (intentions), which has largely been conceptualized as an interpersonal interaction process, can in fact be guided by intergroup processes.

In the current study, patterns of self-disclosure intentions to an in-group member were more consistent with previous work in the area of self-disclosure and anonymity. Specifically, the greatest amount of willingness to disclose was reported when the disclosure topic was negative and participants' social identities were anonymous. Interestingly, participants also reported an overall preference to disclose on a negative rather than a positive topic to in-group members. Given that this experiment was conducted during an exam period at the ANU, and that the negative topic was operationalized as "study related stress and anxiety", this finding is most likely to be a consequence of broader situational factors; I suspect that further study is required before firm conclusions based upon this finding can be made.

Although I obtained statistical support for my hypotheses in the current experiment, I acknowledge that the non-random distribution of incorrect responses on the identifiability manipulation check may imply the existence of certain ambiguities in my experimental manipulations. Participants in the social identity anonymous

conditions failed the identifiability manipulation check more than participants in the social identity identifiable conditions. This effect may have resulted from a misinterpretation of the identifiability manipulation. Specifically, participants in the social identity anonymous conditions were told by the chat-room partner in his/her introductory comments that “I am not sure which university you are from....” Participants who failed the anonymity check, therefore, may have interpreted “unsure” as *potentially* (but not certainly) knowing that the participant was an ANU student. If this were the case, participants whom I included in the analysis who had correctly answered the identifiability check, should have comprehended the manipulations the way I intended them to, thus implying that findings from the current experiment are likely to remain valid. Using more definitive statements in future studies may, however, enhance confidence in the experimental manipulations.

Findings from this current study have some important implications in terms of the theoretical reasoning being developed in this thesis. Demonstrating that participants were willing to increase self-disclosure on positive topics, as well as decrease willingness to disclose on negative topics, strengthens my argument that self-disclosure is potentially being employed as an impression management tool. This effect indicates that previous findings from Studies 1 to 4 of the current empirical program, which shows an attenuated willingness to self-disclose to out-group strangers when one's social group-membership was known, is not merely a result of people being reticent about disclosing *in general*, under those circumstances. Rather, it shows that the content and nature of the self-disclosure, which would significantly impact upon the image of one's salient in-group, was playing an important role in influencing people's decisions to self-disclose. In short, it was not the case the people who were thinking of themselves as

group-members were generally unwilling to disclose to out-group strangers who knew that they were out-group members. People were just unwilling to disclose on negative topics to these out-group strangers who knew that one was an out-group member, because it would make the salient in-group look bad. As demonstrated through the findings of the current study (Study 5), people were *more* willing to self-disclose to out-group than in-group strangers on positive topics, particularly when these out-group strangers knew that they were out-group members.

Taken together, these results suggest that concerns about the impressions that others may form about the salient in-group has a significant impact upon people's decisions to self-disclose (or not) in-group and out-group members. Moreover, I argue that variations in people's willingness to disclose may be a form of impression management strategy aimed at portraying a positive image of the in-group to out-group members. The data are consistent with this argument.

CHAPTER 12.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Chapter Overview

In this final chapter of this thesis, I will briefly review the theoretical argument upon which my initial hypotheses were based and some of the results obtained from my earlier empirical studies. I will then discuss the decision to revise my theoretical approach and how findings from subsequent experiments have been supportive of this revised theory. I will then consider some of the implications of my work on the three main areas of research examined in this thesis, namely, trust, self-disclosure, and impression management. Finally, limitations of the current research, as well as directions for future research will also be discussed.

Review of Thesis Aims and Objectives

This thesis initially set out to examine the development of a type of trust in strangers, which is based upon a shared social group-membership, and how it would apply to the domain of self-disclosing behaviours. Specifically, I wanted to see if higher levels of trust would develop among in-group strangers, and if this would express itself in higher levels of reported willingness to self-disclose to in-group than out-group strangers. Based on the social identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), I hypothesised that under conditions of social identity salience, greater trust in in-group strangers may develop through: 1) heightened perceptions of shared goals and values with in-group others, 2) greater adherence to a norm of in-group trust, and 3) attribution of comparatively more

favourable characteristics to in-group members. Based on group-based trust research conducted by Yamagishi and colleagues (Yamagishi, Makimura, Foddy, Matsuda, Kiyonari, & Platow, 2005; Yamagishi, Jin & Kiyonari, 1999; Yamagishi & Kiyonari, 2000), I went on to incorporate a “mutual knowledge” variable in the trust-development model that I set out to test. Specifically, I predicted that greater willingness to trust in-group than out-group others under depersonalized conditions may be more likely to occur under mutual knowledge conditions, where both the trustor and the trust recipient were mutually aware of the shared group membership.

Summary of Empirical Findings

In Studies 1 and 2 of my research program, I sought empirical support for my prediction that participants whose social identities had been rendered salient would be more likely to trust and be willing to self-disclose to in-group than out-group strangers, especially when these in-group strangers are able to recognize the participant as a fellow in-group member. Findings from these first two studies indicated that participants whose social group-memberships had been made salient were, indeed, more willing to self-disclose to in-group than out-group strangers under mutual knowledge conditions. When there was unilateral knowledge of group-membership, however, this difference was not observed. While this statistically significant three-way interaction was broadly consistent with my initial predictions, the pattern of results indicated some fundamental differences. Specifically, contrary to my initial theorising, participants' self-reported willingness to disclose behaviours did not appear to correspond with their perceptions of trustworthiness in the stranger and/or the self-disclosure situation. Results obtained from these first two studies failed to statistically demonstrate that participants who were more willing to disclose also perceived the potential discloser recipient as being more trustworthy. Furthermore, there was no

empirical support for any of the three pathways of trust development that I proposed. Participants' willingness to disclose intentions were not related to their perceptions of similarity with the stranger, their perceived favourability of the stranger, nor was it a result of a greater adherence to in-group trust norms under specific conditions.

The statistical findings of Studies 1 and 2, therefore, prompted me to consider alternative theoretical explanations for the pattern of significant findings on my measures of willingness to self-disclose. As previously discussed in Chapter 9, based on the idea that impression formation was a key outcome of self-disclosure processes (Cozby, 1973; Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Joinson, 2001; Jourard, 1971; Wheelless & Grotz, 1977), I hypothesised that participants' willingness to disclose behaviours as observed in Studies 1 and 2 may have been motivated and influenced by impression management concerns. This idea is also consistent with findings from Study 2, which found a negative correlation between participants' willingness to self-disclose on group-related topics and their fear of embarrassing the in-group. Moreover, results from Study 2 also indicated that participants whose social identities had been made salient also reported greater fear of in-group embarrassment when asked to disclose on a high-risk, group-related topic; this is consistent with an impression management approach towards this issue.

Building upon previous research which demonstrated that people were motivated to portray a positive in-group image in front of out-group others (Hopkins, Reicher, Cassidy, Bull and Levine, 2007; Klein & Azzi, 2001), therefore, I went on to predict that under conditions of social identity salience, people's self-disclosing intentions and behaviours may largely be motivated by a desire to project a positive image of the salient social in-group, especially under mutual knowledge conditions where their group-memberships are known to the potential disclosure recipient. Specifically, I

proposed that under social identity salience, participants would be less willing to self-disclose (on a negative topic) to out-group than in-group strangers, particularly when their social group-memberships were available to the out-group disclosure recipient. I further argued that this attenuated level of willingness to self-disclose may be motivated by a fear of portraying a negative image of the salient in-group to out-group others.

I tested this alternative theoretical model in Studies 3, 4, and 5 and obtained empirical support for the proposed psychological processes. Firstly, results from Study 3 found that participants' self-reported willingness to disclose was significantly lower to out-group than in-group members under conditions where their social group-memberships were identifiable, but not when their group-memberships were anonymous. This finding, which is consistent with results from Studies 1 and 2, further confirmed the robustness of this interaction effect, and is consistent with the idea that strategic minimization of disclosure on negative topics to out-group members need only occur when there is a chance for negative evaluation by these out-group others, that is when one's group-membership is known. In Study 4, apart from obtaining a similar effect on participants' self-reported intentions to disclose, the predicted mean difference between self-disclosure to in-group and out-group members under the social identity identifiable conditions was also observed on measures of actual self-disclosing behaviours for participants in the social identity salient conditions. Specifically, the empirical findings indicated that participants in the social identity salient conditions disclosed significantly more to in-group than out-group members under the social identity identifiable conditions. This difference, however, was not observed in the social identity anonymous conditions. Mediation analyses went on to reveal that this effect was partially mediated by participants' concerns about self-disclosing (i.e., worry

that one's disclosure would cause embarrassment to the in-group, expectations of favourable treatment). This finding, thus, provided further support for the idea that under social identity salient conditions, participants may have strategically minimized their levels of self-disclosure to out-group members who recognized them as being out-group members, for fear of portraying a negative image of the salient in-group and attracting negative in-group evaluations.

In Study 5, the idea that impression management concerns may trigger the strategic tailoring of people's self-disclosure levels was further put to the test by looking at participants' self-disclosure intentions on positive, as well as negative topics. Specifically, it was hypothesised that if impression management concerns were in fact resulting in an attenuated willingness to self-disclose on negative topics to out-group others, this same psychological process may similarly result in an increase in willingness to self-disclose on positive topics to out-group others. Results from Study 5 were indeed supportive of this prediction, with participants whose social identities were salient reporting a greater willingness to self-disclose on a positive topic to out-group members under the social identity identifiable conditions, but not the social identity anonymous conditions. These findings, thus, indicate that participants may have been strategically increasing their willingness to disclose on positive topics while decreasing their willingness to disclose on a negative topic, in order to maintain or portray a positive impression of the in-group to an out-group audience.

Implications of Current Findings

The findings of this thesis have both practical and theoretical implications for social psychological research in the area of self-disclosure, trust, and impression management. I will now go on to discuss some of these implications in the following sections.

Theoretical Implications

Overall, results from the current research program indicate that people's salient social identities and group-memberships play pivotal roles in influencing their self-disclosing intentions and behaviours. Based on the idea that a person's self-concept consists of a personal and social self, and that both these components are equally important to an individual's self-perception (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), I theorised that people's social identities should be just as important as their personal identities in influencing their self-disclosing behaviours under various situations. While the bulk of self-disclosure research has looked at how self-disclosure can be influenced by an individual's personal norms, values, and motivations (Berg & Derlega, 1987; Hymer, 1988; Jourard, 1964; Kowalski, 1999), this current research has shown that the norms, values, and concerns of a salient social in-group can also play an important role in the self-disclosure process. More specifically, the current empirical findings offer preliminary support for the idea that people's social group-memberships served to inform their decisions to self-disclose (or not) by influencing their risk-perceptions and impression management concerns.

Given that people inevitably form impressions of the self-discloser via the content of their disclosures (Cozby, 1973; Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Joinson, 2001; Wheelless & Grotz, 1977), considerations about the types of impressions that people aim and desire to project is obviously crucial in influencing what people choose to disclose, whom they choose to disclose to, and how much they want to disclose. Through my empirical studies, I demonstrated that the impressions people aim to project, and consequently their willingness to disclose, as well as the content of their disclosure, were significantly influenced by their salient social identities. While previous research emphasised the importance of people's *personal* image in influencing

impression management strategies (Baumeister, 1982; Goffman, 1959; Tedeschi & Linskold, 1978), I have shown that under social identity salience, people's impression management efforts were motivated by a desire to project a positive *group* image. When there was a chance that a relevant out-group could negatively evaluate the salient in-group from the content of people's (negative) disclosures, people strategically reduced their willingness to disclose on negative topics, and increase their willingness to disclose on positive topics.

Empirical findings from this research also underscore the importance of differentiating between group and personal level variables in the self-disclosure process. As demonstrated in Studies 1 and 2, for example, differentiating between topics that were relevant to participants, either as group-members or as individuals, significantly impacted upon their willingness to self-disclose, depending on whether their personal or social identities were salient. Similarly, whether the risk involved in self-disclosing was relevant to participants as unique individuals or as group-members was also important in influencing their self-disclosure intentions. Moreover, results from Studies 1 and 4 indicated that measures of individual predispositions to trust and/or self-disclose, *did not* significantly predict participants' responses in the experimental conditions. As previously mentioned in the introductory chapters of this thesis, therefore, personality-type measures of individual predispositions may be limited in their ability to predict actual trust and self-disclosing intentions under various circumstances. These current findings, therefore, highlight the need to consider group-level concerns and motivations in the self-disclosure process, especially under situations where people's social group-memberships may have been rendered salient.

I would also like to note that while in-group favouring behaviours (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2006; Tajfel, 1970;

Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971; Turner, 1975), and the strategic tailoring of participants' self-disclosing behaviours observed in the current research were similarly founded upon a common desire to perceive and portray one's own salient in-group more positively than out-groups on relevant comparison dimensions, there are significant differences between the two. Specifically, the current pattern of results obtained on my self-disclosure measures do not entirely map unto in-group favouring behaviours as conceptualised and demonstrated in previous theoretical and empirical research. As previously outlined in Chapter 5, in-group favouritism refers to the tendency to evaluate or perceive one's own in-group and its members more favourably compared to a relevant out-group and/or its members, either through over-evaluating one's own in-group, and/or under-evaluating a relevant out-group (Brewer, 1999; Hewstone et al., 2002; Scheepers et al., 2006). In this way, if self-disclosure was to be conceptualised as a positive behaviour (given that it signifies a desire for closeness and intimacy), one may predict, from an in-group favouring perspective, that there would be an overall greater willingness to self-disclose to in-group than out-group members, particularly under conditions of social identity salience.

Results from my studies, however, indicated that participants were not always more willing to self-disclose to in-group than out-group members. In Study 3, for example, I found that participants did not differ in their willingness to disclose to in-group and out-group strangers under conditions where their social group-memberships were unknown to the potential disclosure recipient. Furthermore, in Study 4, participants' actual disclosure of stressful information was only higher to in-group than out-group members under the social identity identifiable, but not the social identity anonymous conditions. In other words, when there was no chance for one to be (negatively) evaluated by a relevant out-group member, participants did not exhibit

“in-group favouring” behaviours by self-disclosing more to in-group than out-group members. This point was further underscored by results in Study 5, which found that participants were in fact more willing to self-disclose to out-group than in-group members on a positive topic, a behaviour akin to out-group favouritism. I proposed, however, that rather than a genuine desire to affiliate with out-group members, this increase in willingness to disclose under social identity identifiable conditions may be motivated by a desire to portray a positive impression of the in-group in front of out-group others. The fact that participants were not more willing to self-disclose to in-group than out-group members on a positive topic under social identity anonymous conditions appears to offer support for this line of theorising.

In terms of the theoretical implications of the current findings, another point that I would like to make pertains to the topic of group-based trust which I initially set out to examine in this thesis. Specifically, I would like to emphasise that while group-based trust processes did not significantly impact upon participants' self-disclosing intentions and behaviours within the current experimental situations, it would be premature to conclude that trust concerns are inconsequential to the self-disclosure process. In fact, as outlined in Chapter 4, previous research has, indeed, shown the importance of trust in influencing self-disclosing behaviours (Jourard, 1971; Steel, 1991; Wheelless, 1978). I, therefore, suggest the possibility that self-disclosure to strangers as operationalized in my empirical studies primarily evoked impression management concerns, and that these concerns overrode the importance of trust processes in influencing self-disclosure. For example, it may be the case that while the *decision* to self-disclose (or not) was primarily informed by a desire to project a positive impression of the in-group under social identity salience, trust may play a greater role in an actual self-disclosure interaction.

In my experiments, while I did take a measure of participants' actual self-disclosing behaviours (in Study 4), this process did not involve an *actual interaction* with a stranger. In this way, participants did not have the opportunity to modify the content or depth of their disclosures in accordance with the reactions or responses of the self-disclosure recipient. In other words, participants were unable to move beyond their concerns about projecting a positive in-group image during the self-disclosure process, and potentially establish common ground upon which trust can develop. In an actual self-disclosure interaction, for example, mutual exchange of information may highlight the shared characteristics and values between the interactants, resulting in greater perceptions of similarity and common goals, thus facilitating the development of trust between the disclosing parties. These higher levels of trust between the discloser and the disclosure recipient may consequently alleviate the discloser's impression management concerns, leading to higher levels of self-disclosure to those whom they perceive to be similar to the self.

Practical Implications

Apart from the theoretical implications outlined in the above section, findings from the current thesis can also serve to inform various practices outside the laboratory. For example, the increased popularity of online psychotherapy may benefit from the results of my experiments. From past research, we know that the lack of personal identifiability and individuating information in computer-mediated-communication tends to make psychologically salient people's group memberships and the intergroup nature of social interactions (Postmes, Spears & Lea, 2002; Sassenberg & Postmes, 2002; Tanis & Postmes, 2005). If social group memberships (e.g., gender, ethnicity, nationality) of both clients and clinicians are rendered salient through computer-mediated psychotherapy sessions, this may potentially lead clients to

perceive the situation as an intergroup interaction and the clinician as an out-group member. Clients may consequently increase disclosure on positive topics while attenuating disclosure on negative issues in an attempt to portray a positive image of themselves *as group members*. Clearly, this would undermine the effectiveness of the psychotherapeutic process and limit the benefits for clients.

In addition, an examination of the relevant literature also revealed that self-disclosure research heavily informs various aspects of counselling and psychotherapy practices (Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp, 1990; Rime, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, & Philippot, 1998; Rosenfeld, 1992), which is unsurprising, given that the self-disclosure is central to counselling processes and psychotherapeutic interventions. Several theories about the best approach that counsellors should take to elicit information and/or form positive relationships with their patients, therefore, were developed upon understandings of people's self-disclosure intentions and motivations. As previously discussed in Chapter 4, the bulk of the existing self-disclosure literature focuses on individual traits and characteristics, as well as their personal norms and motivations in influencing self-disclosure intentions and behaviours (Berg & Derlega, 1987; Hymer, 1988; Jourard, 1964; Kowalski, 1999). Without taking into consideration group-level concerns, norms, and values, therefore, the effectiveness of the approaches that counsellors or psychologists take to encourage the disclosure of information, as well as their ability to establish common ground and develop a rapport with their patients, may be severely compromised.

In a more general sense, findings from the current research also offer important insight into intergroup co-operation and communication processes. Effective sharing of information, for example, is crucial to the success of various collaborative projects, be it in corporate environments, community-based projects, or even between government

departments. It may, therefore, be important to recognize that the nature and content of the information conveyed within these contexts could potentially be influenced by people's desires to portray their own (sub)-group in a comparatively favourable fashion, especially in the absence of a salient superordinate identity between the interacting parties (Dovidio, Gaertner, Validzic, Matoka, Johnson, & Frazier, 1997). In this way, impression management strategies that people may employ to protect their salient in-group identity can stand in the way of effective intergroup communication, and limit the potential for successful collaborative efforts.

Limitations and Future Directions

Having looked at some of the implications of the experimental findings, I will now discuss some limitations of the current research program, as well as go on to suggest some directions for future research in this area. One potential limitation of the current empirical studies is the degree to which some of my independent variables were successfully manipulated or comprehended (by participants) as I had intended them to be. In Studies 1 and 4, for example, responses on the identity salience manipulation checks did not show the differences in the predicted direction. In both of these studies, responses on the personal identity salience manipulation check did not differ between participants in the personal and social identity salience conditions. Specifically, when asked the question “While completing this study, I was responding as a unique individual”, participants in both the social and personal identity salience conditions indicated high levels of agreement with the statement. Given that responses were extremely skewed on this measure (approximately 90% of participants with a score of 6 out of 7 in Study 4), it was impossible to exclude participants on the basis of their responses on this item. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 10, however, I believe that the skewed responses on this manipulation check question was due to the potential

ambiguity in how the question was phrased, thus resulting in misinterpretation of the question being asked. If this were the case, the skewed responses on this manipulation check measure may not be due to the effectiveness of our experimental manipulations per se, but rather the framing of the question. Future studies should, therefore, look at developing questions that are more efficient and accurate in tapping into the psychological processes under study.

Apart from the identity salience manipulation, another potential limitation of the current research pertains to my self-disclosure measures. While actual self-disclosure was measured in Study 4, all the other experiments measured participants' self-disclosing intentions. Even though measuring self-disclosure intentions as a proxy of actual disclosure is consistent with previous empirical research in this area (Schug, Yuki, & Maddux, 2010; R. Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007; Wheelless & Grotz, 1975), I recognize that this decision may have limited my ability to test the robustness of my theoretical reasoning as they apply to actual self-disclosing situations. It is important to note, however, that measures of participants' actual self-disclosing behaviours obtained in Study 4 were positively correlated with their self-reported willingness to disclose, and the pattern of results across both measures also map unto each other. This, thus, indicates that measuring participant's disclosure intentions as a proxy of their actual self-disclosing behaviours may well provide us with a relatively good idea of how people would behave when actually disclosing, at least in terms of negative self-disclosures. While I acknowledge that I did not measure participants' actual self-disclosure on a positively valence topic in Study 5, there is theoretically no reason to predict a discrepancy between disclosure intentions and behaviours on positive, but not negatively valence disclosure topics.

I would also like to point out that whilst measuring actual self-disclosure may provide valuable insight into these processes as they play out in daily interactions, the experimental predictions that I set out to test are not directly related to people's self-disclosure content. At the outset of this research, I sought empirical support for my prediction that people who were thinking of themselves as group-members would be more willing to enter into a trust relationship with those whom they share a social group-membership, especially when this knowledge of shared group-membership was mutually available. I also wanted to ascertain (if present in self-disclosure situations), the processes through which in-group trust in strangers developed. In this way, people's willingness to engage in self-disclosure with either an in-group or out-group stranger, as well as why they were willing to do so (or not), were the main questions I sought to answer. How the self-disclosure process plays out, therefore, was secondary to my research goals.

Similarly, when seeking empirical support for my revised theoretical approach, which was based upon an understanding of impression management processes, I wanted to ascertain if concerns for the image of the salient social in-group would impact upon people's willingness to self-disclose to in-group and out-group others. In other words, the question that I wanted to answer was, "Will people care enough about the image of the salient social in-group to want to strategically modify their self-disclosure behaviours to portray a favourable group image in front of out-group others who could negatively evaluate them". While measures of actual self-disclosure could potentially have provided me with information regarding the extent to which people would go to portray the salient in-group in a favourable light, as well as what people would actually say to achieve this aim, this additional information ultimately was not the focus of the research question that I posed.

In terms of further research in this area, however, a logical next step would definitely be to take a closer look at the content of people's self-disclosure under the different experimental situations. For example, it may be interesting to look at some factors which determine the kind of self-images that will be deemed desirable in any given social context, and how that would be reflected in people's self-disclosure content. An important point, which can be gleaned from the bulk of impression management research, is that the factors motivating impression management, and the types of traits and characteristics that people find desirable, consistently vary across situations. Schlenker and Weigold (1992), for example, recognized that the desirability of a particular self-image will vary based on the characteristics of the actor, situation, and audience. In addition, there is also recognition that, while some traits or characteristics are generally considered to be positive within specific cultures (i.e., honesty, courage), there is no one universally desirable identity which holds true for all individuals across all contexts (Schlenker, 1980; Tetlock & Manstead, 1985). Being 'fake', for example, may be perceived negatively in one's daily social interactions, but this same ability to adopt different personas would probably be highly valued in actors and actresses. Despite these understandings, however, the functional mechanisms behind these variations and their impact on the types of impressions that people aim to portray, remains unclear. In short, there has been no unifying theory to date which succinctly explains and predicts why and how these variations occur.

Consistent with my arguments presented in Chapter 9, I would like to suggest that the social identity perspective may offer valuable insight into how the desirability of particular traits and characteristics may vary across different contexts, and how this may impact upon impression management efforts. Specifically, I would like to note that an important point of self-categorization theory is that people vary systematically

in the way they categorize themselves in the social context. The theory further asserts that this systematic variation should be seen as the rule rather than the exception, and not be perceived as being inauthentic and a sign that the true person is being distorted (Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarty, 1994; Turner et al., 1987). This idea of systematic variation, thus, corresponds with the observation that the impressions people aim to project vary systematically across situations, and can serve as a platform upon which we build a better understanding of impression management processes.

While earlier impression management research tends to conceptualize a person's ideal self as a relatively stable and unchanging construct (Baumeister, 1982), I would suggest, however, that the types of self-images that people aim to project to others, are in fact, more variable and subjective to changes in the social context. As pointed out in Turner (1991), people's positions on various issues tend to shift, not as a result of abstract social values, but rather as a result of varying in-group norms. From self-categorization theory, we know that categorization processes are employed to help people make sense of their external environments by structuring cognitions and behaviours in a way which is most sensible to the individual, in that particular situation (Turner et al., 1987). The content and meaning attached to any one category, therefore, are not fixed, invariant structures stored in memory, but are generated within a situation as a function of context (Oakes & Turner, 1990). In short, the meaning of the salient social categorization will change to reflect the changes in the group dynamics across different contexts (Turner et al., 1994). Given that categorizing is inherently comparative and, therefore, context-dependent, the defining characteristics of the same social in-group can vary as a function of the different intergroup comparisons across social contexts (Hogg, Turner, & Davidson, 1990). The fluidity observed in

categorizing can, thus, explain the fluidity of valued characteristics across different social contexts.

These theoretical points, therefore, have important implications for impression management research given that it highlights the possibility that the salience of different social group-memberships and their relevant comparison out-groups can result in the varying desirability of certain traits and characteristics. For example, changes in the social context, such as a change to the comparative dimensions between the in-group and the out-group, or even the emergence of a different comparison out-group may result in a different set of traits being deemed valuable and desirable (Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarty, 1994). Under these circumstances, it will be in the interest of group members to portray themselves as embodying those particular traits as this will contribute towards their perceived prototypicality as group members and subsequently influence their status within the in-group (Turner & Haslam, 2001). In relation to impression management through self-disclosure, therefore, it would be interesting to examine in future research whether the content of people's self-disclosures would reflect the varying desirability of various traits and characteristics prototypical of the salient in-group across different social comparison contexts.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have looked at integrating research from different topic areas to develop a more comprehensive understanding of intergroup communication processes. While I initially set out to examine the effects of group-based trust processes on self-disclosure to in-group and out-group strangers, empirical findings from Studies 1 and 2 indicated that the psychological component of trust that I conceptualised was not present in the interaction situations portrayed in my experiments. I thus developed an alternative theoretical framework based upon an impression management approach

that I thought would better explain the findings from my first two experiments. I subsequently obtained empirical support for this new framework from the findings of Studies 3, 4 and 5, which indicated that people's self-disclosure intentions and behaviours were significantly influenced by impression management concerns related to the salient in-group identity. Specifically, people were motivated to strategically tailor their self-disclosing behaviours in ways that would help project or maintain a positive image of the salient in-group in front of an out-group audience who recognized one as being an out-group member.

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