

# A SOCIAL IDENTITY APPROACH TO INTERGROUP CONTACT BETWEEN FRATERNITY AND SORORITY MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS

KATIE M. WARBER, MELISSA E. TAYLOR, AND DANA C. MAKSTALLER

*This study examined group salience (i.e., prominence, relevance) as a moderating variable in intergroup contact between fraternity/sorority members and non-members. Specifically, it examined how salience moderates the relationship between non-member perceptions of intergroup contact and stereotypical behavior of fraternity and sorority members. Results revealed little support for membership salience as a moderator of non-member perceptions of contact quality with members and non-member perceptions of stereotypical member behavior. Main effects were found regarding non-member levels of trust and self-disclosure and perceptions of fraternity/sorority members as deviant.*

Undergraduate fraternities and sororities create an environment in which social boundaries are established between members and non-members. Fraternity and sorority members engage in shared attitudes and behaviors, and form group boundaries that tend to be publicly known. In addition, stereotypical perceptions of members are known to dictate cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors on non-members. For example, members may be perceived as more sexually and academically deviant, yet at the same time, more socially competent when compared to non-members (Scott-Sheldon, Carey, & Carey, 2007). Further, on college campuses, members sometimes live together in fraternity/sorority houses and can, at times, be identified through fashion and other personal symbols not available to the general student body (e.g. wearing member letters), possibly distinguishing them from the rest of the students on university campuses. As a result, group differentiation and in-group favoritism, or preference for one's own group, could emerge (Allport; 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Tajfel, 1978).

Understanding interaction between fraternity/sorority members and non-members has important practical implications for those who work with fraternity/sorority members on college campuses. Members and non-members frequently interact in the classroom, in athletics, and in social interactions off campus. Raising

awareness of the psychological phenomena that are operative during such interactions could give practitioners an advantage when it comes to counseling members on challenges that might arise when interacting with non-members. Further, it is important that educators generally understand intergroup dynamics between members and non-members, as fraternities and sororities are prominent groups on many college campuses and intergroup contact is inevitable.

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which group salience moderates interpersonal contact between members and non-members. More specifically, this research intended to determine if the salience of membership for non-members moderated perceptions of social contact with members and, ultimately, non-member perceptions of member behavior. Both deviance and social self-efficacy are prominently, if not stereotypically, associated with fraternity/sorority membership; therefore, it was expected that salience of group membership for non-members during interpersonal contact with a member should influence the relationship between non-member perceptions of social contact and stereotypical fraternity/sorority behavior.

The primary framework for examining this research problem was social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), which posits group members differentiate and receive positive perceptions of

their group through intergroup comparisons. Notably, social identity theory specifies the importance of self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) as well as contact theory (e.g., Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998) in understanding how groups distinguish themselves from one another. In this research, aspects of both theories were combined to address non-members' attitudes toward fraternity and sorority members. More specifically, the focus of this article is how salience, or knowledge/awareness of group membership, moderated the relationship between non-member perceptions of intergroup contact and stereotypical behavior of members.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### *Social Identity Theory*

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) argues that important characteristics of a person's identity are derived from their group membership. Group members achieve a positive identity through favorably evaluating one's own group and negatively evaluating other groups (Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade, & Williams, 1986; Tajfel, 1978). Tajfel defines social identity as: "that part of an individual's self concept which derives from his or her knowledge of his or her membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to the membership" (as quoted in Brown et al., 1986, p. 275). Within social identity theory, self categorization and contact theory are addressed.

Self-categorization theory (Brown & Gaertner, 2003; Turner, et al., 1987) posits that individuals regularly categorize experiences with others. Self-categorization is a process that explains how individuals identify with different groups. Group categories must be salient if members are to minimize differences within and maximize differences between groups. The act of categorization is determined by category-stimulus fit (i.e., how well an object falls into

a certain category) and the perceiver's motives and values (Oakes, 2003).

Based on the literature, self-categorization affects intergroup contact between fraternity/sorority members and non-members (Brown & Gaertner, 2003; Oakes, 2003; Turner, et al., 1987). The extent to which non-members possess high salience (e.g., knowledge of group membership) of fraternity/sorority membership during an interpersonal contact might influence non-members' perceptions of intergroup contact and attitudes toward members, and vice versa.

Contact theory states that unfamiliarity increases a group's propensity to create stereotypes about another group; therefore, increased familiarity between groups should ultimately lower intergroup bias. Connectedly, the contact hypothesis asserts that under certain conditions, intergroup contact could decrease intergroup hostility and discrimination (Allport, 1954; Brown & Gaertner, 2003).

Several conditions foster positive intergroup interaction. Both acquaintance potential (i.e., development of interpersonal relationships) and salience of group membership are moderating variables that strongly influence the relationship between intergroup familiarity and lowered hostility toward the outgroup (Allport, 1954; Brown & Gaertner, 2003). In the case of social contact between members and non-members, one could argue that how non-members view their interpersonal contact with members (i.e., trust, self-disclosure) influences overall perceptions of stereotypical fraternity/sorority behaviors. It is essential that salience of group membership be present for non-members to judge the quality of contact in relation to fraternity/sorority members. In other words, to accurately study non-members perceptions of members, non-members must know the person they are talking to is a member. There are primary assumptions about group salience, trust, self-disclosure, deviance, and social self-efficacy that are made by those involved in the social exchange.

## **Group Salience**

Management and regulation of closeness is necessary for human survival (Smith, Murphy, & Coats, 1999); therefore, wanting to be part of a group is the response to one's desire to feel safe with and accepted by others. A group can create an identity by differentiating itself from other groups (Brown, et al., 1986). Knowledge of group membership must exist for between-group differentiation or social comparison to occur (Oakes, 2003). This knowledge of group memberships is known as *group salience*. From this research, it is possible that when fraternities and sororities are made known to non-members, perceptions of members by non-members become highly differentiated from the rest of the student body due to members' strong attachment to their organization. For example, fraternities and sororities are, on some campuses, noted for similarities in clothing, adhering to group oaths, and developing relationships that are expected to last throughout their lifetimes. This salience could lead non-members to activate certain stereotypes (e.g., social class, membership exclusivity, deviance) of members.

The literature indicated that as fraternity/sorority membership becomes salient to non-members, perceptions of stereotypical fraternity/sorority behaviors were likely to become salient for non-members. Non-member satisfaction with interpersonal contact may influence this salience of group membership.

## **Self-Disclosure**

Self-disclosure is the process one uses to present information about himself or herself (including thoughts, feelings, and experiences) to another person (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993). Disclosers must determine what aspects of their self require disclosing. Each group has its valued identities (Goffman, 1963). Group identities become part of the members' self-identity. In fact, "encounters with others are encounters with expectations of what those in front of them should be like" (Weber & Carter,

1998, pp. 17-18). Therefore, when interacting with outgroup members, stereotypes and group identity play a major role in forming expectations and the decision of what kind of "self" should be disclosed.

In interpersonal communication, self-disclosure is important in developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships (e.g., Cozby, 1972; Goodstain & Reinecker, 1974; Jourard, 1971). In intergroup communication on an interpersonal level, self-disclosure can decrease the bias and disliking that usually exist between an ingroup member and an outgroup member (Bettencourt, Brewer, Croak, & Miller, 1992). Ensari and Miller (2002) summarized three interpretations for the beneficial effects of self-disclosure in intergroup communication. The first one is that "by promoting individuation and familiarity, disclosure reduces threatening aspects of interaction with outgroup members" (Ensari & Miller, 2002, p. 314). The second interpretation is that the other party would perceive the disclosure as something scarce, thus, more valued. The reason is that intimate information usually is revealed in friendship situation (Petty & Mirels, 1981). A third interpretation emphasizes that self-disclosure induces trust. Disclosing oneself to the other will make the other feel trusted (Steel, 1991), and therefore, it is more likely that the other party will have a positive attitude toward the discloser (Altman & Haythorn, 1965).

## **Trust**

Trust is defined as the "socially learned and socially confirmed expectations that people have of each other, of the organizations and institutions in which they live, and of the natural and moral social orders that set the fundamental understandings for their lives" (Barber, 1983, p. 164-165). Trust is an important component in interactions. How one views another and the amount of disclosure in which one engages are both affected by perceptions of trust. On campus, fraternity/sorority members and non-

members have many opportunities for contact (e.g., classrooms, clubs, student union). These contacts help to build trust and can influence perceptions of one's outgroup (Allport, 1954).

Stereotypes and competition can hinder effective communication and trust between groups. Fraternity/sorority members and non-members often hold negative stereotypes of one another. Members may be seen as cheaters, promiscuous, or alcoholics by non-members. Non-members are seen, by members, as nerds, lower class, and socially inept. Therefore, existing stereotypes can affect perception of each other's trustworthiness (Storch & Storch, 2002).

Second, trust can be impaired by competition (Sherif, et al., 1961). On college campuses, members and non-members are frequently in competition for organization offices (e.g., student government) and honors. Because of this competition, one might presume non-members perceive members as untrustworthy, and vice-versa.

Lastly, perceptions of fraternity/sorority member trustworthiness are affected by the knowledge of group membership (Ensari & Miller, 2002). When members and non-members interact, it is important to consider whether individuals are aware of the other person's fraternity/sorority membership (e.g., through T-shirts and hats with Greek letters, style of clothing, slang used). If membership is salient, one could expect membership status to influence the perceptions of trust in the interaction.

### ***Deviance***

Much extant research recognizes the role that deviant behavior plays in the activities associated with fraternity/sorority membership (McCabe & Bowers, 2009; Scott-Sheldon, et al., 2007; Storch & Storch, 2002). Substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, and sensation-seeking behavior, as well as controversial hazing activities and academic dishonesty, are typically associated with college life in general; yet, fraternities and sororities seem to be scrutinized

most for such behaviors (Kalichman, et al., 2003; Storch & Storch). Past research in these areas mainly focused on substance abuse (e.g., alcoholism) and sexual behavior; however, academic dishonesty has experienced less investigation and deserves further attention (McCabe & Bowers, 2009). Storch and Storch claim that administrators have only recently recognized the high incidences of fraternity/sorority member academic dishonesty. Importantly, the extent of one's involvement within a fraternity or sorority (e.g., salience of group membership) seems to be a moderating variable of academic dishonesty (McCabe & Bowers, 2009).

Storch and Storch's (2002) finding of a positive correlation between the level of one's activity in fraternities/sororities and academic dishonesty relates to the idea that the higher one's salience of group membership (especially high status), the more likely a strong social identity will emerge, which could result in the condoning of deviant behavior. Importantly, non-members are aware of member deviance (e.g., newspapers, word of mouth), which can impact non-member interactions with members.

### ***Social Self-Efficacy***

Understanding the role of social self-efficacy in groups is important because it may reveal the extent to which a group perceives the ability to attain and maintain group status. Smith and Betz (2000) looked at the perceived social self-efficacy of college undergraduates and found that social self-efficacy was strongly correlated with social confidence. Additionally, social self-efficacy is significantly correlated with college satisfaction (DeWitz & Walsh, 2002). Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory advances that all attitude and behavior changes are the result of an individual's perception that he or she possesses the ability to succeed at a given task. Bandura extended this concept to include the construct of collective efficacy, which he defines as "the group's shared belief in its conjoint capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to pro-

duce given levels of attainment” (1997, p. 477).

Stereotypically, fraternities/sororities are high-status group. As such, non-members may perceive members as being more efficacious in social situations than non-members. This perception could strengthen the extent to which group membership is salient during the interaction. Furthermore, comparisons of engagement levels reveal members can be equally or more engaged in academic tasks, active learning, interaction with faculty, community service, diversity, satisfaction, personal development, and learning than non-members (DeWitz & Walsh, 2002; Hayek, Carini, O’Day, & Kuh, 2002; Pike, 2003). All of this can enhance the overall college experience, and lead to perceptions of higher social self-efficacy among members. If non-members perceive members are more socially successful, they may interact with members in a way that reflects that stereotype, further perpetuating the label of members as more socially self-efficacious.

## METHODOLOGY

Research questions based on this framework were aimed specifically at non-member perceptions of fraternity/sorority members. It was also important to explore potential relationships between non-member perceptions of quality of contact and member stereotypical behavior. The following research questions were generated from these speculations:

1. Is there a relationship between non-member perceptions of contact with a fraternity/sorority member and their stereotypes of member behavior?
- 2a. If salience of membership is high for non-members during intergroup contact, will quality of contact be positively correlated with non-member perceptions of stereotypical behavior?
- 2b. If salience of membership is low for non-members during intergroup con-

tact, will quality of contact be negatively correlated with non-member perceptions of stereotypical behavior?

## Participants

Participants of this study included 67 non-members (52.3%) and 55 members (sorority = 27.3%; fraternity = 15.6%) from a large southwestern university who were given extra credit for filling out the survey. For the sample, 42.2% of the participants were male, and 53.1% of the participants were female. Participants’ ages were normally distributed,  $M = 21.70$ ;  $SD = 3.65$ . The ethnic composition of the sample was 74.2% Caucasian, 4.7% African American, 8.6% Hispanic, 3.1% Asian, and 4.7% of some other ethnic group.

## Measures

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval, both fraternity and sorority members and non-members completed a self-paced questionnaire to receive extra credit for their participation. The questionnaire included a series of demographic items pertaining to themselves and family. Next, a question asking the students to briefly describe the last conversation they had with a member was presented. In terms of “conversation with a member” characteristics, 73% of the non-member sample indicated their conversation with a member was voluntary, and 64% indicated they initiated the conversation. The duration of the conversations ranged from one to 11 minutes or more, with 32% of the participants indicating that their conversation was 3-5 minutes, and 25.4% indicating their conversation was more than 11 minutes.

Interestingly, 18 out of 67 non-members (just under a third) indicated their discussion with a member was school- and/or group project-related, suggesting a limited context for many of the conversations. However, these conversations are important to consider in an educational context, as this environment is one that is designed to promote non-segregated interac-

tion. After explaining their conversation, non-members were then asked to rate themselves on the variables discussed below in relation to their discussion with a member.

### **Independent Variables**

**Self-disclosure.** The Revised Self-Disclosure Scale developed by Wheelless and Grotz (1976) was used to measure self-disclosure. The measurement is in three categories including amount of disclosure, accuracy and honesty of disclosure, as well as the depth of disclosure. There are three items in each category. Participants rated each statement on a five-level Likert scale from (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Statements about the amount of disclosure included statements such as, "During our conversation, I talked about myself for a long period of time." Statements about the accuracy and honesty of disclosures included items like, "During our conversation, I was not confident that my expression of my own feelings, emotions, and experiences were true reflections of myself." Statements about the depth of disclosure included statements such as, "During our conversation, I intimately disclosed who I really am, openly and fully." Alpha reliability for the amount of disclosure scale was  $\alpha = .64$ . For the honesty/accuracy scale,  $\alpha = .71$ , and for the depth of disclosure scale,  $\alpha = .77$ .

**Trust.** A modified version of Wheelless and Grotz's (1977) Individualized Trust Scale was used to measure trustworthiness. The scale contained 12 items. Each item consisted of two antonyms, or semantic differentials. An example would be "trustworthy" and "untrustworthy." Between each set of words were seven spaces. Participants were instructed to place an "X" in the space which best represented their feelings toward the fraternity/sorority member with whom they last engaged in conversation. The trust scale was reliable,  $\alpha = .96$ .

**Salience.** The salience measure, which was expected to moderate the relationship between quality of contact and attitudes toward fraterni-

ty/sorority members, consisted of several questions generated by the research team. Questions included: "To what extent is the individual you talked to like other Greek (fraternity or sorority) members?" and "When talking with this person, how aware were you that they were a Greek member?" The scale was reliable, alpha  $\alpha = .81$ .

### **Dependent Variables**

**Social self-efficacy.** A scale was constructed to examine non-members perceptions of the social success of members to measure social self-efficacy. The measure included items such as "I think the Greek system helps people become successful in life," and "Greeks will have better college social experiences compared to non-Greeks," and was measured on a five-level Likert scale from (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The scale was reliable,  $\alpha = .73$ . The team also measured self-efficacy in the survey using the Sherer, et al. (1982) Self-Efficacy Scale; however, the measure was not reliable in this study.

**Deviance.** The deviance scale used was based on Storch and Storch (2002) and consisted of statements such as, "People who are part of the Greek system are more likely to cheat on college tests than non-Greeks," and "Greek members are more likely to lie about an aspect of their life to avoid course assignments compared to non-Greek members." The reliability of this instrument was  $\alpha = .83$ .

## **RESULTS**

To address the main research question of whether salience of group membership moderated the relationship between non-member perceptions of contact with members and their stereotypical behaviors, a linear regression analysis was performed. Following this, bivariate analyses were conducted to determine relationships within the non-member sample on the variables discussed. Finally, independent *t*-tests were used to determine differences between non-members and members.

**Regression.** To explore whether group salience moderated the relationship between non-members' perceptions of their contact with and perceptions of members, a linear regression was performed for the non-members ( $n = 67$ ). There was a main effect for the independent variable of trust on the dependent variable of deviance for non-members,  $\beta = .36$ ;  $t(61) = 2.79$ ,  $p < .01$ , thus indicating that their level of trust was associated with variance in perceptions of member deviance. However, there was no significant main effect for salience,  $t(61) = .36$ ,  $ns$ , nor was there a significant interaction between salience and trust,  $t(61) = 1.851$ ,  $ns$ .

There was also a significant main effect for the amount of self-disclosure on deviance,  $\beta = -.27$ ;  $t(61) = -2.05$ ,  $p < .05$ , thus indicating that the amount of self-disclosure during the conversation was associated with variation in non-member perceptions of member deviance. However, there was no significant main effect for salience,  $t(61) = .60$ ,  $ns$ , nor was there a significant interaction between salience and amount of self-disclosure  $t(61) = -1.51$ ,  $ns$ . More regressions were run to determine main effects and interaction effects for the other variables (e.g., honesty/accuracy of self-disclosure, self-efficacy), but none were found to be significant. In sum, two main effects were found to be significant, yet the general research question of whether salience of membership would moderate the relationship between quality of contact and non-member perceptions of fraternity/sorority members went unsupported by the results.

**Correlation.** A Pearson correlation revealed that in the non-member sample ( $n = 67$ ), there was a significant negative relationship between non-members' amount of self-disclosure and perceptions of member deviance,  $r(64) = -.30$ ,  $p < .05$ . This suggested that as the amount of self-disclosure increased, perceptions of member deviance decreased, thus lending some support to the research question. There was also a positive, significant relationship found between trust and perceptions of deviance,  $r(63) = .38$ ,

$p < .05$ . Importantly, high scores for trust indicated the participants perceived fraternity/sorority members as *less trustworthy* during the conversation. Hence, it seems as non-members had less trust for members, they also perceived them as more deviant.

Further, a significant negative correlation was found between non-members' perception of self-disclosure amount and salience of membership,  $r(64) = -.37$ ,  $p < .05$ . This suggested that as salience increased, the amount of self-disclosure of non-members decreased. There was a significant, positive correlation between salience of membership and non-member perceptions of trust during the conversation  $r(62) = .36$ ,  $p < .05$ , indicating that as salience of membership for non-members increased during the conversation, perceptions of trust for members decreased.

**Independent t-tests.** Independent t-tests were used to determine differences in member ( $n = 55$ ) and non-member ( $n = 67$ ) perceptions of the independent and dependent variables of this study. Results determined significant differences between member and non-member perceptions of deviance (members:  $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ; non-members:  $M = 1.93$ ,  $SD = .98$ ),  $t(120) = 6.19$ ,  $p < .001$ . This indicated that members perceived themselves as more deviant than non-members. There were also significant differences between perceptions of fraternity/sorority member self-efficacy,  $t(119) = -3.56$ ,  $p = .001$ . This indicated that non-members ( $M = 3.13$ ,  $SD = .75$ ) had significantly higher perceptions of member self-efficacy compared to members ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = .66$ ).

In terms of self-disclosure, there were significant differences between members and non-members in depth of self-disclosure,  $t(116) = -3.32$ ,  $p = .001$ . This indicated members ( $M = 2.47$ ,  $SD = .88$ ) had lower perceptions of depth of self-disclosure with members relative to non-members ( $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = .98$ ) during their conversation. There were also significant differences between member and non-members'

perceptions of trust during the conversation,  $t(114) = 4.40, p < .001$ . It seems members ( $M = 2.18, SD = .85$ ) had significantly less trust during their conversation with other members than did non-members ( $M = 1.53, SD = .72$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Though results from this study did not reveal support for the salience of group membership as a moderating variable between non-member perceptions of quality of contact (trust and self-disclosure) with members and non-member perceptions of stereotypical behavior (deviance and social self-efficacy), some support for the first research question was found. The first research question examined the relationship between non-members contact with a fraternity/sorority member and their stereotypical perceptions of member behavior. Of particular relevance are the significant main effects uncovered for trust and self-disclosure on deviance. Non-members perceptions of trust and self-disclosure account for variance in non-members perceptions of member deviance; therefore, these variables are important to consider when examining relationships between groups.

Individuals constantly make group-based assumptions about individuals that may not accurately reflect true experience. Those who work with fraternity/sorority members can combat false perceptions by reminding members that non-members might make assumptions about members that are not necessarily based in reality, but rather based in stereotypical perceptions of fraternity/sorority membership. This is evidenced in the results indicating non-members often perceived members to be more efficacious. Members could be taught, for example, ways to minimize the salience of group differences during interaction (e.g., not wearing membership letters/identifying symbols, meeting for group work at a neutral location) as a means of facilitating harmonious relationships between the two groups.

As non-member self-disclosure increased, their perceptions of member deviance decreased. This significant negative correlation indicated non-members were more willing to reveal personal information to the extent they perceive the member as non-deviant. Examining the extent to which frequency of intergroup contact affects levels of trust between groups may be an area for future research to explore. Further, a significant positive correlation between non-member perceptions of trust and non-member perceptions of member deviance implies that the less trustworthy a non-member perceives the member to be, the more they will perceive members overall as deviant.

Practically speaking, understanding the role of self-disclosure in building trust and intimacy in relationships is invaluable in advancing what is known about intergroup interaction between fraternity/sorority members and non-members. The more individually we come to know and trust members who are not in our group, the less likely we are to stereotype that group as a whole. This is because the more we know people on an individual level, the less likely we are to rely on group-based characteristics to evaluate them. This implies that trust-building activities such as class projects between members and non-members could lead to less negative stereotyping. This is consistent with contact theory (Allport, 1954) which suggests that positive experiences with outgroup members decreases the likelihood of negatively stereotyping the outgroup as a whole.

The relationship between non-member self-disclosure and salience of membership is such that the more salient membership is to the non-member, the less likely non-members are to self-disclose during the interaction. This finding lends some support to the idea that salience of group membership will lead to greater intergroup comparisons and behavior based on stereotypical perceptions of other groups. Finally, a significant relationship between membership salience and non-member levels of trust during

the interaction suggests the more non-members were aware of fraternity/sorority membership, the less trusting they felt of that person during intergroup communication. Lack of trust, in turn, could lead to shallow self-disclosure. These findings could be useful to practitioners in understanding how knowledge of group membership can negatively influence the dynamic of interpersonal interaction.

Tests of independence between groups revealed some interesting findings. First, members seemed to perceive themselves more stereotypically than non-members. For instance, members perceived themselves as more deviant than non-members. Also, members appeared to have less trust in their interactions with other members than non-members had in their interactions with members. Members also reported less depth of self-disclosure in their interactions with other members than did non-members in their interactions with members, suggesting a need for future research.

On the other hand, non-members seemed to perceive members as more socially self-efficacious than members perceive themselves. So, non-members might have been less trusting of members, while simultaneously viewing them as more successful in social situations. Focusing on ways that members could increase trust in non-members would lead to more self-disclosure, thus enhancing the overall quality of intergroup interaction. The more one self-discloses, and to the extent that disclosure is reciprocated, the more likely trust and intimacy are to develop with the other person in the dyad. Self-disclosure is the vehicle through which trust develops in relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Through the process of self-disclosure, members and non-members can discover commonalities, thus leading to more fulfilling relationships.

Understanding how levels of trust might influence depth of self-disclosure in intergroup encounters, particularly when group member-

ship identity is salient, is important for practitioners to understand. If low levels of outgroup trust lead to reduced self-disclosure, then positive differentiation might result from perceiving the outgroup as deviant.

#### **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study was limited by the fact that the researchers categorized fraternities/sororities as homogeneous and did not account for differences between sororities and fraternities, or for differences between individual chapters on campus. Also, nearly a third of the reported interactions were school-related, suggesting a limited context in which these interactions may have occurred. However, there are important implications for those who work with fraternity and sorority members. Understanding how non-members perceive members is important because, regardless of whether stereotypes are based in reality, they might still dictate perception and drive behavior during intergroup interaction.

Future research should attempt to address the role of trust in intergroup contact, and determine the extent to which frequency and quality of contact with outgroup members affects trust levels. Also, whether certain groups are perceived as more socially efficacious could account for intergroup communication differences and should be examined further. Looking at intergroup communication through a social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) framework allows for further understanding of the role of groups in the formation of one's social identity. Furthermore, self-categorization theory (Turner, et al., 1987) and contact theory (Allport, 1954) provide additional support for intergroup communication processes. Clarifying why people become members of groups, as well as the role of contact between groups in intergroup relations is essential in uncovering social identity formation, as well as other intergroup phenomena.

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#### AUTHOR AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

*Katie M. Warber is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication at Wittenberg University. She received her Ph.D. in Interpersonal Communication from the University of Arizona, Tucson. She teaches courses in courses in interpersonal communication and communication research methods and statistics. Her research focuses on the role of emotion in interpersonal communication.*

*Melissa E. Taylor, educator for ConnectCare3 Patient Advocacy Service, received her Ph.D. in Interpersonal Communication from the University of Arizona, Tucson. Her research interests include interpersonal conflict, family dynamics, and mental health.*

*Dana C. Makstaller is a junior communication major at Wittenberg University in Springfield, OH. She worked as an undergraduate research assistant on this project.*