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Building and Rebuilding Trust: Why Perspective Taking Matters

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Building and Rebuilding Trust: Why Perspective Taking Matters

Abstract

[Excerpt] There is growing interest surrounding the function of perspective taking in social interactions and organizational life. In this chapter, I examine the role of perspective taking in trust building and trust repair. Whereas some researchers focus on the ability of perspective taking to elicit sympathy, concern, and cooperative behavior (Batson, Turk, Shaw, & Klein, 1995; Parker, Atkins, & Axtell, 2008; Parker & Axtell, 2001), others focus on the strategic impact of perspective taking (Epley, Caruso, & Bazerman, 2006; Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin & White, 2008; Galinsky & Mussweiler, 2001). I build on both streams of research by examining work that connects perspective taking to trustworthy, cooperative behavior and by delineating how the proactive (or more strategic) aspects of perspective taking can generate and repair trust.

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Building and Rebuilding Trust

Why Perspective Taking Matters

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INTRODUCTION

There is growing interest surrounding the function of perspective taking in social interactions and organizational life. In this chapter, I examine the role of perspective taking in trust building and trust repair. Whereas some researchers focus on the ability of perspective taking to elicit sympathy, concern, and cooperative behavior (Batson, Turk, Shaw, & Klein, 1995; Parker, Atkins, & Axtell, 2008; Parker & Axtell, 2001;), others focus on the strategic impact of perspective taking (Epley, Caruso, & Bazerman, 2006; Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin & White, 2008; Galinsky & Mussweiler, 2001). I build on both streams of research by examining work that connects perspective taking to trustworthy, cooperative behavior and by delineating how the proactive (or more strategic) aspects of perspective taking can generate and repair trust.

Perspective taking refers to the process of "imagining another person's thoughts or feeling from that persons point of view" (Davis, 1996; Mead, 1934). Perspective taking not only fosters understanding and caring actions that build social bonds, but also is likely to play a central role in active trust building (Williams, 2007) and trust repair. Although trust building and trust repair involve many of the same processes, I use the term "trust building" to refer to processes that increase trust, from a neutral or positive initial state—one that has not been damaged. In contrast, I use "trust repair" to refer to processes used to increase trust once a preexisting level of trust has been decreased by the actions of one party, the transgressor. Rebuilding trust is more complicated than initial trust building because the victim, who has been harmed, is likely to be concerned about additional harm and predisposed to believe that greater trust in the transgressor is not warranted (Kim, Dirks, 8c Cooper, 2009).

Perspective taking may help transgressors and victims take proactive steps to repair trust violations, especially asymmetric trust violations (i.e., violations that are initially experienced by only one member of a dyad, the victim). Perspective taking may allow transgressors to identify these violations and allow victims to initiate a more complex process of trust repair—one that recognizes contextual factors that may have influenced or constrained the transgressor's behavior. Moreover, perspective taking can repair trust by influencing the multiple facets of a trust violation identified by Dirks, Lewicki, and Zaheer (2009) and Kramer and Lewicki (2010)—attributions, negative affect, and social exchange.

Because the implications of perspective taking for interpersonal interactions have been examined by scholars in both sociology and psychology (Davis, 1996; Epley et al., 2006; Galinsky et al., 2008; Mead, 1934), I take an interdisciplinary

approach to perspective taking. Integrating the research from these disciplines provides insight into why, when, and how perspective taking facilitates trust and trust repair.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, I review literature that suggests that perspective taking fosters strong social bonds. I then examine the relevance of perspective taking for trustworthy behavior. Next, I argue that the processes that make perspective taking a powerful process for building trust also allow individuals to proactively repair trust through multiple mechanisms.

PERSPECTIVE TAKING AND SOCIAL BONDS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Perspective taking builds social bonds in several ways. It facilitates interpersonal understanding, strengthens self-other overlap, and elicits considerate behavior (Williams, 2011). Each of these processes undergirds trust because social bonds (i.e., strong affective ties) form a base for trusting relationships (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; McAllister, 1995, Williams, 2001). These processes also facilitate trust repair. Thus, I review the processes through which perspective taking facilitates social bonds before examining how these mechanisms influence trust building (Fig. 8-1) and trust repair (Table 8-1).

Perspective Taking and Interpersonal Understanding

Perspective taking is a process for gaining interpersonal understanding. It enables one to understand the meaning that a situation holds for another and to adjust to the needs of that interaction counterpart (Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1967). Perspective taking allows people to respond to the needs and actions of others in a flexible, responsive manner (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). It allows them to understand the values that others place on various goals, possessions, achievements, and identities (Brown 8c Levinson, 1987). Moreover, it allows them to communicate their

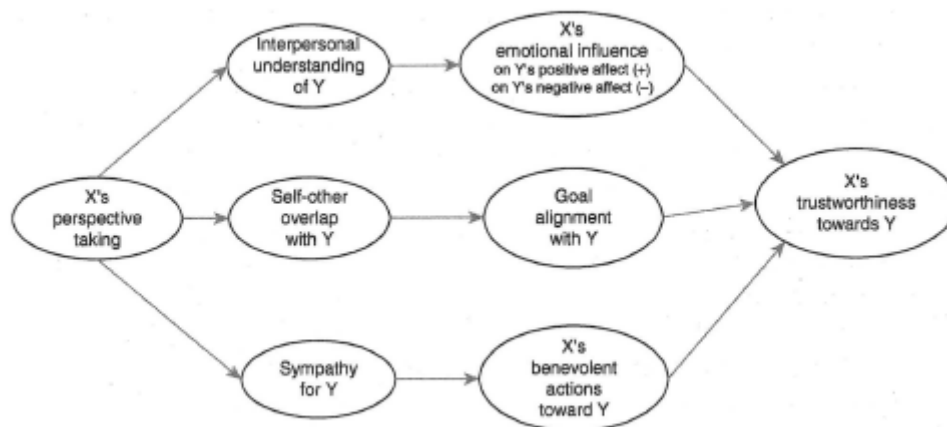Figure 8-1 Perspective Taking, Trustworthiness, and Mediating Processes

preferences in a way that more closely matches the way their interaction partner uses and understands language (Blumer, 1969; Collins, 1990; Goffman, 1967). Because people respond positively to being understood (Swann, 1987), using perspective taking not only fosters greater interpersonal understanding but also builds social bonds (Williams, 2007).

Perspective Taking and Self-Other Overlap

In addition to good communication and mutual understanding, which are important mechanisms for strengthening social bonds, perspective taking also strengthens social bonds by increasing perceived self-other overlap (i.e., similarity, Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005; Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008). Perspective taking increases positive perceptions of other individuals by increasing the overlap between the cognitive representation of the self, the representation of the other, and the representation of the group to which the other belongs. Thus, perspective taking influences the self-other overlap between people from different social groups, who may initially perceive themselves as quite different from one another. The increased self-other overlap that results from perspective taking is influential because it decreases processes that undermine trust—that is, the stereotyping of other individuals, prejudice toward others, and negative perceptions of other groups, including stigmatized groups (Batson, Polycarpou, Harmon-Jones, Imhoff, Mitchener, Bednar, Klein, 8c Highberger, 1997; Galinsky et al., 2005, 2008).

Perspective Taking and Empathy-Related Processes

Finally, perspective taking fosters social bonds by eliciting feelings of sympathy and considerate actions. In contrast to the perspective taking literature in microsociology, the literature in psychology has examined perspective taking primarily in the context of empathy-related processes and helping behavior (Batson, 1998; Batson, Turk, Shaw, 8c Klein, 1995; Eisenberg 8c Miller, 1987; Parker 8c Axtell, 2001). Although closely related to empathy, perspective taking refers solely to the cognitive understanding of another persons point of view (thoughts, feelings, and/or appraisals). Empathy, in contrast, always has an emotional or affective component that has been labeled "emotion matching," "affective attunement," and/or "emotional resonance" (Davis, 1996). Sympathy refers to tender, concerned feelings for others (Davis, 1996).

Whereas symbolic interactionists highlight the strategic use of perspective taking to increase the positive emotional quality of interactions (Blumer, 1969; Collins, 1990; Goffman, 1967), social psychologists suggest that perspective taking can also evoke positive behaviors during interactions through non-strategic, empathy-related processes such as sympathy (Batson et al., 1995). For example, in noncompetitive experimental studies, perspective taking consistently elicits considerate behavior (Batson, 1998; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). In organizational contexts, the empathy-related manifestations of perspective taking have been shown to foster cooperative behavior (Parker & Axtell, 2001). Perspective taking can also lead people to value others' welfare, feel sympathy for them, and engage in helpful, benevolent behavior (Batson, 1998; Batson et al., 1995; Batson, Sager, Garst, Kang, Rubchinsky, 8c Dawson, 1997; Van Lange, 2008).

In sum, perspective taking fosters strong social bonds by promoting interpersonal understanding, strengthening self-other overlap, and motivating caring, considerate actions.

PERSPECTIVE TAKING AND TRUSTWORTHY ACTION

Perspective taking builds ties that undergird social bonds by promoting affective processes (e.g., feeling

understood, empathy, sympathy) and cognitive processes (e.g., interpersonal understanding, perceived self-other overlap, valuing others' welfare). Perspective taking strengthens the trust component of social bonds because these same mechanisms motivate trustworthy actions (Williams, 2007).

Trust is defined as one's willingness to rely on another's actions in a situation involving the risk of opportunism (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Trust is based on an individual's expectations that others will behave in ways that are helpful or at least not harmful (Gambetta, 1988). These positive expectations, in turn, are based both on people's perceptions of others' trustworthiness—benevolence, integrity, and ability (e.g., see Mayer et al., 1995, and Schoorman, Mayer, 8c Davis, 2007, for review and update)—and on their affective responses to others (e.g., Jones 8c George, 1998; Lewis 8c Weigert, 1985; McAllister, 1995; Williams, 2001). The process of perspective taking strengthens the trustworthiness of perspective takers in three ways: (1) by motivating them to engage in benevolent actions, (2) by fostering goal alignment, and (3) by enabling them to have a positive emotional influence on others. Figure 8-1 summarizes these processes.

Perspective Taking and Benevolence

Benevolent actions are a central component of trustworthy behavior (Mayer, Davis, 8c Schoorman, 1995; Williams, 2001). Perspective taking influences benevolence through motivational mechanisms. As mentioned above, psychologists suggest that perspective taking can generate sympathy, which "amplifies or intensifies motivation to relieve another person's need," (Batson et al., 1995, p. 300). Consequently, perspective taking not only motivates individuals to prioritize the interests of others, but also triggers benevolent behaviors, such as concerned statements and caring actions (Batson et al., 1995; Davis, 1996; Eisenberg 8c Miller, 1987).

Perspective Taking and Goal Alignment

Because perspective taking leads people to value others' welfare, prioritize the needs of others (Batson et al., 1995), and develop greater self-other overlap (Galinsky et al., 2005, 2008), perspective taking should increase goal alignment and the likelihood of trustworthy behavior. It should also motivate restraint from behavior that would benefit the perspective taker but harm others whose interests and welfare the perspective taker now cares about. Because they value the welfare of others, perspective takers should be less likely to overlook, ignore, and actively disregard the concerns of others.

Perspective Taking and Emotional Influence

In the affective domain, perspective taking may indirectly influence trust by enabling individuals to influence the emotions of others (i.e., emotional influence). Specifically, the understanding gained through perspective taking increases individuals' ability to (1) avoid negative interactions (Williams, 2007) and (2) foster positive interactions (i.e., interactions with energy and mutual engagement) (Blumer, 1969; Collins, 1990; Goffman, 1967). Williams (2007) argues that because perspective taking provides a mechanism for understanding when people feel threatened and anticipate harm, it provides the information that individuals need to actively decrease the amount of negative emotion experienced by others. Symbolic interactionists suggest that perspective taking is also likely to generate pleasant feelings in others because it

enables perspective takers to maintain emotionally positive interactions (Blumer, 1969; Collins, 1990). Further, because perspective takers tailor their communications to others (Blumer, 1969), perspective taking may also generate positive affect by increasing feelings of being understood (Williams, 2007).

Consistent with assertions by scholars who propose that individuals use feelings as information about trustworthiness (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005; Jones & George, 1998; Williams, 2001), I contend that when perspective takers generate positive feelings in others, those feelings may increase perceptions of the perspective taker's trustworthiness. Similarly, when a perspective taker prevents negative feelings, the resulting absence of negative feelings should maintain or at least not detract from the perception of his or her trustworthiness. To the degree that perspective taking fosters affective bonds, it should form an important foundation for trust.

PERSPECTIVE TAKING, PROACTIVE TRUSTWORTHINESS, AND TRUST REPAIR

I define trust repair as a process that "occurs when a transgression causes the positive state(s) that constitute(s) [trust] to disappear and/or negative states to arise, as perceived by one or both parties, and activities by one or both parties substantively return [trust] to a positive state" (Dirks et al,, 2009, p. *69).*[2] The negative states that appear include the victim's attributions about the responsibility of the transgressor for the violation (Kim et al., 2009; Tomlinson & Mayer, 2009), the victim's feelings for the transgressor (Dirks et al., 2009; Morrison & Robinson, 1997), and the victim's unwillingness to engage in positive exchange (cooperate) with the transgressor (Dirks et al., 2009; Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005).

Whereas trust building can easily be thought of as an active process, trust repair appears at first glance to be a reactive process. Both the transgressor and the victim must respond to a violation that has already occurred. However, attempts at trust repair can be both self-initiated and future-oriented, core components of proactive behavior (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker, Williams & Turner., 2006). Thus, to the degree that individuals actively seek ways to repair trust, perspective taking can be used as a proactive process to anticipate how others will respond to repair attempts and proactively select among various possible repair strategies.

I define proactive trustworthiness as behavior in which an individual actively engages because he or she anticipates that others will view it as trustworthy (i.e., benevolent, morally appropriate, and/or competent), even if the behavior seems unnecessary from the individuals own point of view. Similarly, proactive trust repair, from the transgressor's standpoint, refers to behavior in which an individual actively engages in order to repair trust because he or she perceives that others have experienced his or her behavior as untrustworthy (i.e., lacking benevolence, moral appropriateness, and/or competence) or anticipates that they will view his or her future behavior as untrustworthy (even if the behavior seems trustworthy or completely justified from the individual's own point of view). Proactive trust repair, from the victim's standpoint, refers to behavior in which an individual actively engages to repair trust, especially when he or she perceives that transgressors have not understood that their own behaviors have been perceived as untrustworthy (i.e., lacking

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2   Kramer and Lewickis (2010) adaptation of Dirks et al. (2009, p. 69) definition of relationship repair.

benevolence, moral appropriateness, and/or competence).

Examining trust building and trust repair through a proactive lens reflects a new way of looking at these processes. With few exceptions (Child & Möllering, 2003; Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998; Williams, 2007), the scholarly research on trust has not focused on the intentional interpersonal processes individuals can use to build trust. Scholars most often describe trust development as a relatively passive process of gathering data about other people's trustworthiness by watching their behavior in various situations over time (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Shapiro, Sheppard, & Cheraskin, 1992) or by using information from proxy sources (e.g., Burt & Knez, 1996; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010; Zucker, 1986). Scant attention is given to the fact that people are evaluating the trustworthiness of individuals, who are often not passive, but engaged in proactive attempts to influence the evaluation process.

Similarly, the literature on trust repair has not focused on the transgressor's active role in identifying asymmetric breeches of trust (i.e., those perceived only by the victim) or the transgressor's role in anticipating and trying to mitigate the impact of justified trust violations (Williams, 2010). Moreover, while victims often play an active role in generating awareness of asymmetric trust violations and resisting repair attempts by transgressors (Kim et al., 2009), the literature on trust repair has not focused on the wide variety of ways victims can have an active role in facilitating trust repair or their motivation to do so (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010). Lor instance, the role of the victim in making transgressors more receptive to acknowledging their transgression and to initiating repair attempts has received little attention (Williams, 2010).[3]

I contend that perspective taking is a process that individuals may use to build trust by proactively avoiding behavior that others will perceive as harmful and to preemptively repair trust by mitigating the impact of behavior that has already been viewed as harmful. Symbolic interactionists, for example, suggest that perspective taking can provide cognitive information about how others are likely to view one's actions (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969). This in turn allows one to better respond with behaviors that others will define as trustworthy and, in the case of trust repair, adequately penitent. In other words, perspective taking helps individuals "negotiate" the meaning of benevolent actions, harm, culpability, and acceptable penance within a specific relationship.

Although organization scholars routinely investigate a variety of proactive processes, including feedback seeking, taking charge, job crafting, and selling issues (e.g., Ashford 8c Tsui, 1991; Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Wrzesniewski 8c Dutton, 2001; see Grant 8c Ashford, 2008, for review), they tend to focus on behaviors rather than cognitive processes. Thus, despite the proactive implications of perspective taking for trustworthy actions and trust repair, perspective taking has rarely been investigated as a proactive process (c.f., Parker & Axtell, 2001). Thus, I argue that perspective taking is not merely a process that allows people to have a more active role in building and repairing trust, but that perspective taking allows individuals to demonstrate proactive trustworthiness and make proactive attempts to repair trust.

In the following section, I draw on Dirks et al.'s (2009) dimensions of relationship damage to develop arguments about

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3 Dirks et al. (2009), Kim et al. (2009), and Kramer and Lewicki (2010) provide reviews of the literature on trust repair.

perspective taking as a proactive method of trust repair that should influence attributions, affect, and positive exchange. Table 8-1 summarizes these arguments.

PERSPECTIVE TAKING AND TRUST REPAIR BY VICTIMS

Although victims of trust breeches may at any point advocate for their aggrieved position (Kim et al., 2009; Kramer 8c Lewicki, 2010; Lewicki 8c Bunker, 1996), perspective taking may allow them to proactively approach the interaction in a more socially complex and comprehensive manner (Williams, 2010). More specifically, because perspective taking leads to increased interpersonal understanding, self- other overlap, and sympathy, it may allow individuals to consider factors that mitigate the transgressor's behavior, such as situational pressures, and/or a transgressor's beliefs about the action being a "necessary evil."[4]

When a person is guilty of a transgression, determining his or her level of control and responsibility for the negative action is central for determining the effect of the action on trust and the necessity for trust-repair processes (Kim et al., 2009; Tomlinson 8c Mayer, 2009). More benign interpretations of the transgressor's actions should decrease the victim's negative affect, the perceived decrement in the transgressor's trustworthiness, as well as the victim's desire for revenge (Tomlinson 8c Mayer, 2009). To the extent that a victim's perspective taking does lead to decreased negative affect, fewer negative attributions, and a diminished desire for revenge, cooperation may be restored.

PERSPECTIVE TAKING AND TRUST REPAIR BY TRANSGRESSORS

From the transgressors side, perspective taking may allow him or her not only to identify asymmetric trust violations—violations that are only salient to the victim—but also to proactively anticipate when his or her behavior is likely to be perceived by the target as a trust violation (Williams, 2010). Once aware of an actual trust violation, perspective taking may allow the transgressor to identify with and feel sympathy for the victim. Understanding how the victim views the transgres¬sion could allow the transgressor to more effectively use trust repair strategies. The transgressor may be able to more successfully advocate for a revised interpretation of the transgression, one that mitigates attributions of responsibility (e.g., makes external attribution more plausible). Or the transgressor may be more likely to offer an adequate apology (i.e., one that is accepted by the victim) because he or she better understands the aspects of the situation that are important to the individual (e.g., relationship damage vs. infringement on autonomy or entitlements).

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4   Margolis and Molinky (2008) define necessary evils as doing harm in order to provide a greater good (e.g., mangers handling layoffs or negative performance appraisals, police officers handling evictions, physicians performing painful medical procedures).

TABLE 8-1 *Perspective Taking and Trust Repair*[1]

	Transgressor Perspective Taking	Victim Perspective Taking
Attributions	(Negative attributions ↓) • Transgressor uses his/her understanding of others' perspectives and his/her own perspective to reframe the situation for the victim in a way that mitigates the victim's negative attributions (i.e., perceptions of the transgressor's control, responsibility, and/or negative intentions).	(Negative attributions ↓) • Using perspective taking, the victim considers factors that mitigate perceptions of transgressor's control, responsibility, and/or negative intentions.
Affect	Sympathy ↑ • Transgressor's understanding of another's perspective and pain may evoke tender, sympathetic feelings for the victim. (Negative Affect ↓) • Transgressor's sympathy may evoke considerate behavior that decreases victims' negative affect and increases their positive affect.	Sympathy ↑ • Victim's understanding of transgressor's perspective and situational constraints may evoke tender, sympathetic feelings for the transgressor. (Negative affect ↓) • Victim considers factors that mitigate perceptions of transgressor's responsibility or negative intentions, and this decreases the victim's own negative affect.
Positive Exchange	(Cooperation ↑) • Increased by decreases in the victim's negative affect and negative attributions and by increases in the victim's positive affect (described above) • Increased by the transgressor's sympathy (described above) (Victim's acceptance of transgressor apology ↑) • Increased by decreases in victim's negative attributions (described above). • Increased by decreases in the victim's negative affect and increases in their positive affect (described above)	(Cooperation ↑) • Increased by decreases in the victim's negative affect and negative attributions (described above) • Increased by the victim's sympathy (described above) (Victim's acceptance of transgressor apology ↑) • Increased by decreases in the victim's negative affect and negative attributions (described above). (Desire for revenge ↓) • Reduced by decreases in the victim's negative affect and negative attributions (described above)

1. Abstracted from Williams (2010).

In the case of transgressors who use perspective taking to proactively anticipate that their actions will harm the target or be perceived as a trust violation, perspective taking may help them implement the harm in a way that reduces the negative impact on the target and lessens the target's experience of the event as a trust violation (Williams, 2010). For

example, Margolis and Molinsky (2008) found that when organization members were required to harm others in the service of a greater good (for society, their organization, or the individuals themselves), the care and concern with which they implemented the harm influenced the targets experience of the organizational representative's benevolence and the target's experience of harm.

PERSPECTIVE TAKING ACCURACY, PERSPECTIVE ANALYSIS, AND TRUST REPAIR

Does perspective taking have to be accurate for trust-related benefits to accrue to the perspective taker? Perspective taking influences social bonds and trust through three primary mechanisms: (1) increased interpersonal understanding, (2) increased self-other overlap, and (3) empathy-related processes. Although the benefits of perspective taking derived from better interpersonal understanding should increase with the accuracy of one's perspective taking (i.e., precisely imagining another person's point of view), self-other overlap and the empathy-related, sympathy-based motivation to act in a caring manner should be less sensitive to accuracy. For instance, if you take the perspective of a subordinate whom you must lay off, you can feel concern for him or her and act in an interpersonally sensitive manner (e.g., use a calm tone and discretion) even if you have some details of his or her perspective wrong. For instance, it may be more difficult to accurately offer resources to your subordinate because you will need to precisely understand which resources the person needs or wants most (e.g., advice, temporary housing, emotional support, or all three).

Despite the benefit of accurate one-shot perspective taking, perspective taking can improve over time within the context of a relationship. Thus, it may be better to view perspective taking as an ongoing regulatory process. For instance, after taking the perspective of the subordinate in our example above and using discretion to tell him or her about the layoff, your perspective taking may also suggest that he or she would most value advice on getting a new position and contacts for interviews. However, if your offers are met by blank stares, you would notice a discrepancy between your subordinates behavior and your expectation of a positive response. You might then use your subordinates behavior as an interpersonal cue (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debeebe, 2003) to update your understanding of your subordinate's perspective and offer a different set of resources.

I call this process "perspective analysis" (i.e., the cyclical process of intrapsychic perspective taking, perspective taking-based action, interpreting the target's response, updating one's perspective taking, and again taking action). Further, once initial perspective taking has occurred, the sympathy and concern evoked by perspective taking should motivate continued perspective analysis—that is, continued efforts to update one's understanding of the other person's perspective and respond to him or her with interpersonal understanding. Thus, I argue that perspective analysis is likely to increase interpersonal understanding over the duration of an interaction as well as over multiple interactions with the same person.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Because perspective taking requires cognitive effort (Rossnagel, 2000), cognitive constraints such as time pressure and workload are likely to inhibit perspective taking at exactly the times when it would be most helpful to understand how one's actions will affect others. Thus, reaping the benefits of perspective taking may require managerial foresight. Managers not only need to sponsor professional development seminars that enable employees to understand the benefits

of perspective taking, but also encourage the use of perspective taking during slack times to enable the effective use of perspective taking during the most critical times in the organization—when people are under pressure.

On a cautionary note, managers need to be cognizant of the competitiveness of the culture in which they foster perspective taking. Although perspective taking with respect to imagining others' thoughts from their point of view can increase understanding across functional boundaries (Boland & Tenaski, 1995) and decrease some cognitive bias (Epley et al., 2006; Galinsky & Mussweiler, 2001),'imagining individuals' feelings as well as their thoughts may be critical for obtaining cooperative benefits in highly competitive contexts (Galinsky et al., 2008).[5] In fact, imagining the feelings of others from their point of view is associated with showing concern, facilitating collaboration, and higher joint gains across both competitive and cooperative contexts (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2008; Parker & Axtell, 2001). Moreover, people may be less able to use perspective taking to take advantage of others or behave maliciously after imagining how those others feel because the process of imagining how others feel elicits sympathy, concern, and increased valuing of their welfare. These positive processes should serve to undercut malevolent intentions.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I contribute to the growing interest surrounding the role of perspective taking in organizational life by exploring the role that perspective taking can play in building and repairing trust. I integrated research from the disciplines of sociology and psychology to provide insight into why, when, and how perspective taking should facilitate social bonds, trust building, and trust repair. Perspective taking motivates and enables social bonds in three ways: (1) by promoting interpersonal understanding, (2) by strengthening self-other overlap, and (3) by evoking sympathy (an empathy-related process). Through these mechanisms, perspective taking also influences trustworthy behavior (Williams, 2007, 2008): (1) by allowing individuals to influence the emotions of others in a positive direction, (2) by aligning goals, and (3) by motivating benevolent, trustworthy behavior (see Fig. 8-1).

Finally, in this chapter, I discuss the proactive nature of perspective taking and how it can affect the way both transgressors and victims approach trust repair. Perspective taking can influence a transgressor's ability to identify asymmetric trust breaks (those perceived only by the victim) and anticipate when his or her behavior is likely to be viewed as a transgression. It can also influence the victim's ability to facilitate trust repair in a more effective and socially complex manner than simply airing his or her grievances. Perspective taking should enhance both parties' ability to perceive factors mitigating attributions of responsibility, reduce negative affect, and restore cooperation (see Table 8-1).

While the potential importance of perspective taking seems clear—not only for trust building and trust repair but also for a variety of interpersonal processes within organizations—there is currently a dearth of work on perspective taking in organizational contexts. This chapter seeks to motivate additional theoretical and empirical work on perspective taking in organizations.

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5   See Williams (2011) for separate survey measures of perspective taking with respect to others' feelings and thoughts.

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