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On Reconstructing Trust: Time, Intention, and Forgiveness

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ABSTRACT

The central focus of this paper is the mechanisms that ordinary people use in their everyday lives to manage relations that have included trust violations. Trust violations provide the impetus for strong emotional experiences. Many relationships recuperate from significant violations of trust, although in a changed form. Our data, gathered from ten in-depth interviews, indicated that on those occasions where individuals deemed the relationship worth salvaging, our respondents and their violators participated in a negotiation process that included the following components: the passing of time, an assessment of the seriousness of the violation and the intent of the other, the offering of an apology, and the rendering of forgiveness. Trust is an orientation to self, other, and relationship whose existence provides the framework for the possibility of intense emotional experiences such as love and hate. These experiences provide a motivating force and goal for the construction, maintenance, and destruction of interpersonal relationships which comprise the fabric of society.

INTRODUCTION

Trust is an orientation toward self, other, and relationship whose existence provides the framework for the experience of strong emotions such as love and hate. As in Kemper's (1978, 1987) social relational theory of emotion, we suggest that specific structural dimensions of relationships can provide the

impetus for emotions. Whereas Kemper focuses on relational power and status, we believe that trust is an additional structural element that influences emotive states. It is these strong emotions that provide the motivating force or the goal for the construction of, the maintenance of, and the destruction of, social relationships.

We turn to one facet of an immense research arena, that of trust reconstruction in interpersonal relationships after a significant trust violation. Trust violation is an assault upon the self that allows for intense emotional experiences. The uncertainty of interpersonal interactions and the emotional investment of such put the actor at risk in a way that institutional and/or stranger relationships do not, for trust places the self at risk. One's decision to trust is essentially a decision to make the other an object (i.e., in the sense of Mead 1934) of emotional experience. That is, one is willing to place the self at risk because it is through this risk that the emotional benefits of the relationship are achieved. The positive emotional experiences that individuals strive for are those that affirm the self, the possibilities of self, or self transcendence.

This research is a continuation of our past work on trust construction (see Weber and Carter's 1991, 1992, 1997) wherein we developed our conception of trust.¹ From our work, trust is an interactional orientation between actor and other whose object is the relationship; this relationship is typified by the actor's belief that the other will take the actor's perspective into account when decision-making and will not act in ways to violate the moral standards of the relationship. From this definition emerges the cognitive, moral, and social dimensions of trust. In essence, the cognitive ability that G.H. Mead (1934) defined as role-taking, that is, the actor's ability to imaginatively take the perspective of the other, allows for the possibility of trust. As a moral construct, trust only emerges when the actor believes that the other takes his or her point of view into account while decision-making and will not act in a way that violates the moral standards of the relationship, which include expectations of reciprocity, expectations that the other will not harm, as well as other value-orientations. The social dimension, implicit in the other two dimensions, clearly emerges when trust is conceptualized as a facet of human social relationships. Trust emerges from and is maintained within social relationships. In constructing trust, time, self-disclosure, and affirmative responses to self-disclosures have the potential to move individuals, each with respective trust histories and orientations, toward trust (see Weber & Carter 1997). Recognizing the sociality of trust lends insight into how trust violation is destructive to relationships and may, in actuality, bring them to an end.

The pleasures of the intimate relationship, whether the close friendship, the love relationship, or the familial relationship, become its problematics and, potentially the source of its downfall via the trust violation. Evolving the

sharing of that which is "the core, value, and chief matter of his existence" (Simmel 1950: 126), the intimate relationship emerges. Trust allows for emotion as "self-feeling" (Denzin 1984) for we experience the self through the other via the relationship. The self is disclosed in the trust or intimate relationship in a way that it is not in other impersonal or institutional relationships. So one believes that the self that is presented to an intimate other is authentic and, therefore, the response to that self is crucial. This is true whether this is a long-experienced part of the self that is disclosed or a new facet of the self that is elicited by the developing relationship. Unlike relationships of mere acquaintance, the self becomes exposed and vulnerable to betrayal.

As trust is the fundamental basis of human social relationships, trust violations are inherently threatening to social relationships. Many relationships recuperate from even significant breaches of trust, albeit in a changed form. This research² focuses on the process through which ordinary actors in their everyday lives move toward reconstructing trust in their interpersonal relationships.

ON TRUST RECONSTRUCTION

Our actors defined various significant trust violation incidents in their lives ranging from rape by a boyfriend, to derogatory name calling by a stepmother, to being conned by a relative, and so on. Respondents described trust violations in terms of behavioral events and interpreted trust-violating occasions as instances where self or the relationship was put at risk by the other. The primary mode of being placed at risk was when the other did not take into account the interests, expectations, and value orientations of the actor.

Violators of interpersonal trust breached actor's subjective valuations of what is expected of a relationship whether that be a friendship, a love relationship, or a familial relationship (Weber 1947). These outcomes go beyond Luhmann's (1979) analysis of risk in trust situations in that we see the violation of trust as breaching the conditionality of the relation rather than solely as an obstruction to the actor's perceived self-interest. For Luhmann, risk is defined solely in relation to the self rather than to the relationship.

The power of the trust violation to destroy the relationship is found in its ability to move the inherently habitual and accepted to the inherently problematic and questioned. The reality of the relationship is disrupted and the violated begins to question the nature of the other and the relationship that such a thing could have happened. For each violation is a statement about the self of the actor, the other, and the relationship that has an inherently moral characteristic. According to Goffman (1959:13), society is organizing around the principles that individuals have a moral right to expect others to treat them

in an appropriate way and that others should be what they claim. Acts of betrayal do not readily come to be defined (or redefined) as appropriate treatment and betrayers become, at least for a time, to be viewed as strangers.

Trust, even as it originates in and through an orientation which acknowledges the inherent riskiness of its endeavor, may, as relationships develop, come to be routinized and taken-for-granted. This may take the form of an elision of self and other in the subjectivity of the actor. In relationships where there is some elision of self and other, self assumes, as a consequence of trust, that the other's interests are the same and that these interests take self into account. If the interests of the dyad are, for all practical purposes, treated as identical, trust violation is a reminder of the specificity of interests of self and other.

The act of betrayal reveals the possible misrepresentation of the other and the relationship. In the intimate relationship, the actors feel as if they know each other as no other; in effect, reciprocal disclosure of intimate information occurs only if the actors perceive that they are not placing the self at risk. Actors, in the process of trust building through disclosure, may be highly aware that such disclosures constitute an act of risk-taking. However, one assumes in most cases that they weigh the risks and consider that there is a good chance that they are not placing the self at risk. Prior to violation, in the process of moving along the continuum of disclosure, the individual has evaluated the signs and the expressions, both given and given off, of the other and has come to the conclusion that the other is as he or she presents him/herself to be. To achieve the level of intimacy of best friend or lover, the other must have been very skillful at this presentation and the more threatened is the self upon violation. "Paradoxically, the more closely the imposter's performance approximates to the real thing, the more intensely we may be threatened, for a competent performance by someone who proves to be an imposter may weaken in our minds the moral connection between legitimate authority to play a part and the capacity to play it" (Goffman 1959:59).

Whereas serious violations of trust may bring the relationship to an end, our data indicate that even serious violations may result in the reconstruction of trust and, hence, the reconstruction of the relationship. On those occasions where the actors deemed the relationship worth salvaging, our respondents and their violators participated in a negotiation process that included the following components: time, the actor's assessment of the seriousness of the violation and the intent of the violator, and the offering of an apology with the rendering of forgiveness. The entire process of trust reconstruction is intrinsically tied to the dialectic between self and relationship.

TIME

The passage of time is crucial to the reconstruction process. Time orders

social life (Zerubavel 1981; McGrath 1988) and allows for the present to become the past. In this manner the self in action becomes the self in reflection (Mead 1934) and one is then better able to examine critically the trust violation incident and its meaning for self, other, and relationship. "What determines or selects the meaning of the past for me...is the particular present within which I find myself. In other words, my present perspective actually creates, reconstructs, my past" (Tillman 1970).

The degree of perceived seriousness of the violation is proportional to the amount of time to reconstruct a relationship. According to one respondent "...the big things, this is going to take a little time..." Time allows for the possibility of reconstructing trust because time is needed to a) demonstrate that the violator will not continue to violate trust, b)allow for forgetting, to not let past negative interactions determine the nature and the direction of current interactions, c)allow for the possibility of an interactional pause, without which, the relationship might otherwise end, and d)reconstruct the relationship on a limited basis.

Time may be needed for violators to demonstrate that it will not be a continued pattern of behavior. The crisis of trust one respondent (#6, pp. 73-74) and her mother had during her high school years is being resolved: "I think that I've showed her how much I changed from like the past. So I think I showed that really clearly to her". Highlighting the significance of the passage of time, she recalls that during high school she wouldn't confide, "But like now I can talk to her about a lot more stuff, be more open with her. And I even tell her certain things that I did in the past...I laugh about them but she still doesn't laugh about them. I think she always knew anyway" (p.74). The disclosures she chooses are a way to differentiate her present self from her past self; rather than forgetting the past, this respondent's allusions frame the past as the past. For those experiences she chooses not to disclose, she is not willing to take the risk of moving the past into the present. " I don't think I can tell her everything...I think it is just certain things that might upset her, she won't understand, so I would rather not, you know, tell her about them" (pp. 73-74). Emotional distancing is, in part, distancing that moves the present into the past. Re-experiencing the emotion of a past event brings the past transgression into the present and shatters the differentiation of past and present selves. Even in the present, to acknowledge the daughter's behavior would threaten the relationship; nevertheless, the fact that the mother does not laugh along shows the daughter the limits of what can be disclosed in the present. Currently, this respondent says of her mother, "She trusts me a lot more now." This shows a limited degree of trust on her mother's part rather than an absolute determination of trust.

Time allows for forgetting. In another case, the major trust violation presented by this respondent (#7) resulted from her abusive relationship with

her stepmother based upon her having been adopted by her father. These significant violations resulted in a termination of the relationship for quite some years. However, they reinitiated a relationship .

But I think what kind of turned it around is when I was pregnant with my first child. My mother called me and said, I really want to be a grandparent. 'Can't we forget the past and start from scratch?'I think I said something neutral because I really had to think about it. I think I said something, that I would believe that I would, but I wasn't too sure at that moment. I had to kind of think about that. And I mean this was years later so and I think having my first child, me becoming a mother, you know, all that stuff kind of worked into it. And so I decided to let the past be the past (pp.80-82).

Unlike the previous case, where the past was reinvoked for the purpose of differentiating self, in this case the relationship is premised on putting the past behind them. When the mother asks her stepdaughter to "forget the past and start from scratch," the forgetting she recommends or advocates is not a cognitive loss of memory but rather a deliberate setting aside of the past. In the interactional sense, forgetting is a decision to not let past interactions influence the nature of current interactions.

Time also allows for the interaction to pause rather than to end. In another case a failed negotiation that produces another violation led the respondent to "marking time."

Yes, I'm still friendly with him. He is my brother and I don't and I'm not going to lose my brother over something like that. I just don't feel that I can give him my full trust at this time (#1, p. 6).

Pausing allows for the interaction to stop, if only for a short time. In this manner, actors neither commit to a continuation of the relationship in its current form nor to an ending of the relationship, providing a period of neutrality that, in essence, places the relationship on probation. During the pause, and the ensuing passage of chronological time, the present violation moves into the past and the emotional intensity is diminished. One respondent's mother excluded her and her husband from Christmas dinner (#3b). Her irrationality and frequent violations of confidence eroded the relationship so the respondent decided to "just cool things out and cool the relationship which we did" (p.40). This respondent notes that her present relationship with her mother was resumed on a limited basis after not speaking for a year and one half after the Christmas incident "I know this is how she behaves and after 55 years I don't think she is going to change."

ASSESSING SERIOUSNESS AND INTENT

The designation of a violation as a "serious" violation results from the

actor's subjective evaluation of the action against his/her moral standards, the basis of which appears to be the maintenance of the actor's physical, psychological, moral and social self via the relationship with the other. Those violations that are perceived by the actor to harm the self (and hence the relationship) are serious violations. Willingness to negotiate appears to be related to the degree of seriousness of the violation. One respondent discussed a rape by her then boyfriend and an abandonment by her stepfather who had adopted her. In answer to the question of whether it is possible to recreate trust when violated, she responds, "Not with me, maybe with other people, but not with me" (p.35). She attempts to defend against the future possibility of violation by announcing her absolute standards for relationship which cannot be violated; "I'll say it right out when I start a relationship with anyone man or woman, all I ask from anyone is honesty...you can do whatever you want, just be honest about it and if you have your own reasons for doing something then do it but don't lie to me about it and once you do I just don't care anymore" (#3a, p.35).

Serious violations tend to render the relationship unsalvageable unless the actor comes to an understanding that the behavior was unintentional. An intentional act involves a person who "(a)is trying to accomplish something he wants or has a reason to do, (b)has the knowledge relevant to the attempt, (c)is recognizably doing the sort of thing one would do in order to accomplish this, and (d) his doing this is neither an accident nor coincidence but an exercise of skill or competence" (Ossorio 1969:358). In other words, the actor willfully and consciously participates in the behavior, whether or not there is a conscious intention to harm. In one case, the respondent lent her boyfriend money, and he just "took off". She found out that this person had also taken money from other people with a promise to pay it back, but that he never did. She no longer trusts this individual and has never attempted to reconstruct the relationship. The discovery that the same thing had happened to others revealed the intentionality of the violator's behavior. The seriousness of the violation is demonstrated in its consequence for her: "...after that...I realized that there is no one that you can totally trust...The only people that I can totally trust are like my family" (#8,p.91).

An assessment of a violation as intentional, even for "less serious" violations makes that relationship difficult to reconstruct. In this case, the respondent's sister would lie about the respondent's appearance in order to deliberately make her look worse. The negotiation occurred years later when they "rehashed" it. The sister said she "used to do that... 'cause you know like...I felt really self-conscious...she was like always kind of jealous so she would...just put us down to make herself seem a little higher..." (#2, p.20). The confession revealed the intentional nature of her sister's appearance-oriented violations. An understanding of the motivation of the other based upon

insecurity was not enough to completely restore trust, and, consequently, the respondent limits the relationship.

Intention becomes meshed with moral responsibility (Goffman 1971) as the violated attempts to come to terms with the other's predicament that resulted in the failure to abide by normative constraints surrounding the relationship. The assessment of moral responsibility involves "why the individual acted as he did, how he could have acted, how he should have acted, and how in the future he ought to act" (Goffman 1971:99). For the previous two cases, our respondents' assessment of intentionality reflect an assessment of the violators' moral responsibility, which becomes the basis for the decision not to reconstruct trust. We believe that it is possible to reconstruct trust, understanding that the other intentionally participated in the trust-violating behavior while assigning responsibility to the other for his/her behavior, but we have not found any instances in our data. Our actors theorized away the importance and impact of intention via reinterpretation, by assigning responsibility to character flaws and situational exigencies which render the violation understandable and therefore excusable.

It appears that an assessment of the violation as unintentional renders negotiation to reconstruct the relationship a "possibility," for this reason, intention is often reinterpreted. The idea that the other intended to harm one's self is a difficult if not impossible thing to integrate into a trusting relationship.

Putting up with violation has a powerful stigma attached to it, at times, even more powerful than the stigma of being a violator. Society labels the former as doormats, wimps, and as probably deserving it. The metamessage that emerges is that people who violate others must think poorly of them. What kind of person would put up with such abuse? The act of relationship maintenance with a violator is also a moral statement of the nature of the relationship and the nature of the selves of actor and other. Such a denigrating statement threatens the survival of the self, a self which people strive to view in a positive light. Our respondents who wish to reconstruct (or continue) the relationship in the face of trust violation (for whatever reason) respond with an attempt at reinterpreting the event so that it is not deemed intentional.

The most frequent reason our respondents gave for the others' violations was that of a character flaw. If the other's violation is deemed to be the result of a character flaw (e.g. "weak soul"), then the other's action is not seen as intentional, and, hence, its significance is reduced. For example, one respondent's assessed his father's continued violation of trust in the following manner: "He'll start talking to his friends and just not thinking about it, its not purposely, it's just he doesn't think about it and he'll just say some things that shouldn't be said at that time" (#1,p.7).

In another, case, in response to a stepmother's continued abuse when she was a child, in deliberating whether or not to reconstruct a relationship after

termination of such for many years, our respondent suggested, "I see her about four times a year and because of that limited contact that makes it easier to accept her for what she is. I mean I did a lot of soul-searching and realized her frailties too, and she did the best she could at the time" (p.82). Although the respondent says she trusts her, she adds, "If she were to violate my trust I would take it with a grain of salt because now she, her short-term memory is gone and her physical situation is such that, I mean, she called me three years ago right before Christmas and was telling me all these horrible things that happened like more than twenty to twenty-five years ago. And I'm like, why now? And I just said, uh-huh, uh-huh. I just let her get it out" (#7, p.82).

The importance of the assessment of nonintent in reestablishing trust is demonstrated by one respondent's attempt at reclassifying an apparently intentional manipulative violation on the part of a friend who went out with her boyfriend as an unintentional violation. In this situation, the respondent's best girlfriend went out with her ex-boyfriend (#2). In the negotiation, this respondent also recognizes the character flaw of the violator and the relatively unintentional nature of the violation.

I love her and I still want her to be my friend. I'm more mad at him than at her 'cause she's just a weak soul you know, but it's just like I have to start building up from scratch again. It's more of a nuisance.. (p.16).

By directing her anger at the ex-boyfriend, she appears to be attributing the intentionality for the hurt to the boyfriend and exculpating her friend. Interestingly, she introduces the passage cited above by saying "I just don't trust her anymore" and then follows with her declaration of love seemingly reflecting her justification of maintaining and attempting to recreate the relationship. Throughout this passage, there is an ongoing attempt to minimize the seriousness of the violation. Our actors also deflect responsibility to situational exigencies. For one respondent, the process of re-achieving trust resulted from a reinterpretation of his mother's intention based upon knowledge and experiences he acquired in college rather than through an actual interactional negotiation which process we term as "self-negotiated reappraisal of the relationship" (#5). For this respondent, the reinterpretation of his mother's relationship to him amounts to the reestablishment of trust on the basis of new understanding which reveals that "everything she has done for me has been in my best interest. I didn't know that when I was in high school...I thought she was a nag, but she really wasn't...she really is concerned about me." His ability to take the role of his mother he attributes to "maturing and going to several courses, just life experiences" (p.63). In the process of taking the role of his mother, his analysis revealed the unintentional nature of her violations: "my mom would say we will go eat at this place, that place, and we would never go. Now I've come to know that she was never lying; she

had all the intention in the world of taking us ...she meant well and I guess realized that you couldn't do certain things." His realization allowed him to empathize with her, "...Reading literature, Afro-American history, literature, really [was]...the one thing that really, um, made me realize how important my mom is to me, how important the struggles...[made me realize]...that she has struggles, that she is continuing to struggle....I guess that really opened up my eyes" (#5,p.64). His reassessment of his mother's intentions are embedded in his understanding of her situation as a poor African-American woman.

It is possible, although not evidenced in our interviews, that power differentials create the situation of stuffing it or "lumping it"; that is, putting up with intentional violations in a relationship. A popular example is the woman who is being physically abused by her spouse and continues to stay in the relationship. To the observer, this is a clear example of intentional violation that is put up with. However, one must keep in mind that it is the subjective interpretation of the individual that determines whether or not the act of physical abuse is a violation (i.e., it may be normative), whether or not it is serious (i.e., is damaging to the self as much as other constraints such as no food, or housing) or is intentional (i.e., it could be his drinking). In fact, many in "abusive" relationships love their abusers. In contrast, two may even coexist, but the violated would never say their relationship is a trusting or intimate one. We found no one who said that they have actually "lumped it," rather our respondents appeared to participate in reinterpretation of their selves, the other, and the relationship that forgoes the notion that they are just putting up with the situation. Lumping may be more often found as a knowledgeable third party observer's interpretation of the relational status. This, however, is not to rule out the possibility of conscious lumping as the actor participates in a cost-benefit analysis of various interactional possibilities. In any case, lumping precludes the participants' involvement in trust reconstruction.

APOLOGIZING AND FORGIVING

The issue of intention, once resolved, leaves the violated open to possible remedial exchanges with the violator. A remedial interchange involves an attempt by both violator and violated to rectify the situation (Goffman 1971:64). One such exchange which is crucial to relationship reconstruction is the apology. An apology "is a gesture through which an individual splits himself into two parts, the part that is guilty of an offense and the part that dissociates itself from the delict and affirms a belief in the offended rule" (Goffman 1971:113). By assuming blame, one demonstrates moral responsibility for the behavior; the second part of the apology, the distancing of self from the morally inferior violator self takes place during the castigation of self. The value of such distancing is in the demonstration that the self, or

part thereof, is still worthy of consideration, is still worthy of integration back into the desired social unit. Apologies provide an impetus for the violated to reconsider whether or not to attempt to reconstruct the relationship. The apology provides evidence that the violator recognizes the seriousness of the violation, and that the violation was indeed a real act. In this ritualistic exchange, two individuals are circling around the remains of their relationship and questioning how and if it can be salvaged; the apology thus reflects an initiation of a reorientation to the other and to the relationship that may or may not take the form of the old relationship. The process of apologizing is found in the following respondent's story. The friend "confessed" to "cleanse her soul," the respondent(#2) isolated herself from the friend, the friend continually reapproached. She asked the friend "Why should you do that to me? Why would you hurt me like that? ...I don't want to talk to you unless you can give me a good reason why. At least even a stupid reason, just give me a reason... Two days later she came up to me 'I'm stupid, that's the only reason I can come up with' and I'm like I knew that already...she's been coming up to me and saying all this stuff and I'm like I didn't do anything wrong, you did, so you better start kissing some butt" (p.18). "She's just been saying it over and over 'God, I'm just so stupid, I'm so stupid, I'm so sorry, you should have killed me, I would have killed me and stuff'". Because of this the respondent notes "I'm starting to trust her again" and, in part, recognizes the significance that "...she's has never done it before so" (p.18).

If the apology is accepted, the phase of forgiveness begins. Forgiving is an affirmational response to the part of other represented in the apology that upholds the moral order of the relationship. The extent to which this part of the other is affirmed is represented in our typology of forgiving-and-forgetting and forgiving-and-not-forgetting. To forget or not-to-forget is to return to the former relationship and the view of other (and self) and relationship that previously existed or to establish a new and somewhat limited relationship whose limitation acknowledges the fact of the violation. In either form, forgiveness is the orientation of trust reconstruction.

Forgiving and forgetting implies a resumption of the relationship in its prior form and on its prior terms, that is, as if the trust violation had never occurred. This possibility appears to exist for minor violations. (Although it seems likely that this orientation may be part of abusive relationships, we have not seen this in our interviews). Forgiving and forgetting for more serious violations did not happen with our respondents although we cannot ignore the possibility of such, especially in relationships where power differentials are great. Our actors, for the most part, participated in a process of forgiving-and-not-forgetting. Forgiving-and-not-forgetting implies the reconstruction of a relationship on slightly different terms, terms influenced significantly by the nature of the trust violation that has occurred. The primary mode of

reconstruction of the relationship is to limit the relationship, thereby reducing vulnerability in the area of violation.

The act of "not forgetting" is the actor's attempt at reducing further harm to the relationship and to the self. One way of not forgetting is by redefining the relationship and the self. In one case, the respondent reacted to an infidelity by her boyfriend. Her response to the situation was to delimit the relationship by not caring "that much afterwards. I still stayed in the relationship but I didn't care too much afterwards. Like I kinda changed my perception of what our relationship was like...I kinda let myself go emotionally" (#6 p.72). It was interesting that this respondent said that the violation did not influence the subsequent break-up which occurred shortly thereafter. This could be due to her reevaluation of her partner as one with whom the relationship was not meant to be. The image of the other is altered so that in retrospect the break-up seems inevitable given the newly defined nature of the person which is nevertheless perceived to be the true self of the other throughout the relationship. A failure of trust can lead to a redefinition of the relationship, of the other, where the original trust is seen as unfounded and as a mistake. Although the respondent identified this incident as a trust violation, she subsequently stated that the break-up had nothing to do with trust but with his character.

Many respondents do "not forget" by limiting trust to certain parts of a relationship. Our respondent whose sister continually lied about the actor's appearance to make the actor look bad (#2, p.20) would only trust her sister with "certain things": being in trouble or keeping secrets. Nevertheless, other "certain things, like how I look, I can't ever do that [trust her]." In this case, the confession revealed the intentional nature of most appearance-oriented violations and while an understanding the motivation of the other based upon insecurity was not enough to completely restore trust, the respondent limits the relationship.

The fact that people forgive can be abused. Violator (#4) slept with various women friends. He could not think of a particular negotiation but suggested that "just by explaining myself" (p. 56), the others would trust him. His experience has been that he does not have to work hard to reestablish trust because his partners are willing to forgive suggesting that he holds much power in these relationships: "...say it was like your girlfriend, who would really like to trust you...sometimes it wouldn't be that I had fixed the trust but that they ignored it...[the trust-violating incident]...or they had to overcome it because they wanted to. They wanted to forgive me or whatever." This respondent was uncomfortable in his dominant relationship, perhaps feeling that it violated a norm of appropriate reciprocity in a relationship: "you know like the girl, the girl would be so into the relationship or so into me,...but then...that's part of the reason I would walk away from a relationship like that

because they would be so trusting that anything you did would not be very terrible, I mean, to break their trust. They could probably forgive you" (p.56).

CONCLUSIONS AND CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

The process of trust construction requires time, self-disclosure, and affirmational responses to such (see Weber and Carter 1997). The orientation of trust that emerges allows for intense emotional investments and intense emotional experiences. Positive emotional experiences such as love and happiness emerge as the self that is disclosed is affirmed by the other; in essence, we love those who we believe love us. But such positive emotional experiences do not come without the risk of trust violation, violations that take place in the context of an intimate relationship.

Trust violation is an assault upon the self. Through self-disclosure, that self has become exposed. Violations of trust do not affirm the value of the self of the violated, and hence, negative emotional experiences ensue; depression, despair, and unhappiness follow as we nurse the wounds of this assault. How then is it possible for the violated self to venture forth again into the realm of trust, especially with the one who has committed the violation? Should the individual even consider such an endeavor? These clinical guidelines are offered in an attempt at providing an answer to these questions. It is hoped that therapists and others working with those who have experienced a trust violation and the violated themselves will benefit from the insights gained from this research that illustrated the importance of the dynamics of time, intention, and forgiveness in the reconstruction of trust.

First, the reconstruction of trust takes time, for time allows the present to become the past. Time allows for emotional distancing, as the present in action becomes the past in reflection. Through this mechanism, trust violation and its meaning for self, other, and relationship can be more critically examined, with serious violations requiring more time. How does one know if enough time has passed? One indicator is whether or not the individual still experiences the intense negative emotions evoked by the trust-violating experience. If this is the case, then enough time has not passed for the individual is not able to place the event in the past, a process that is essential for the critical and successful evaluation of the event. By rushing to reconstruct the relationship, one also does not allow for the violator to build up a non-violating history. Was the trust violation an aberration of character or an indicator of the true nature of the other's self and the true nature of the relationship? Only time will tell. If one does not allow for enough time before reconstructing the relationship, one may be foolishly forgetting, a process which could have future serious negative consequences for the self.

Second, the individual must assess both the seriousness of the violation for the self and the intent of the trust violator. Serious violations are those

perceived by the actor as bringing harm to the actor's physical, psychological, moral, and social self via the relationship with the other. How serious was the violation for the individual? One indicator is the amount of emotional turmoil experienced by the violated; and it is the violated who are the best judges as to seriousness, for what one person considers to be a serious violation may be considered trivial by another. After a serious violation, it is difficult if not impossible to reconstruct the relationship, the difference is determined by intent. Relationships that have suffered serious violations that are deemed to be unintentional may be worthy of reconstruction even though the process may be a difficult one. It may be ill-advised for the individual to attempt to reconstruct a relationship if the violation is deemed intentional. A review of the intentions of the violator may be aided by answering the following questions: 1) Was the other trying to accomplish something they wanted and in the process engendered the trust violation, even if what they wanted was just to hurt the actor? 2) Did the other have the knowledge that such an action would be a trust violation? 3) Is the action generally recognized by others as a trust violation? 4) Did the violation take some skill, planning, so that it could not be construed as a fluke or coincidence? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then the action may very well have been intentional. If the violation is serious and intentional, then it is ill-advised to proceed with relationship reconstruction. It should be noted that people regularly participate in the reinterpretation of intentional actions as unintentional when they desire to reconstruct the relationship for whatever reasons. Such a reinterpretation allows for the individual to morally "save-face" when they proceed with relationship construction with an intentional violator, for serious violations assessed as intentional result in grave difficulty in trust reconstruction unless the violation is reinterpreted as unintentional. Reinterpretation also allows for emotional distancing so that negative emotional experiences do not have to be re-experienced in the present. In addition, reinterpretation allows the self to "save face" in dealings with the other and the community. However, reinterpretation negates the reality of the relationship and may prove ultimately detrimental to the self.

Finally, the vehicle to re-initiate the reconstruction is the apology. Relationship reconstruction should not proceed without a clearly stated apology from the violator. In the apology, the violator should castigate the violator-self thereby reaffirming that part of self that upholds the moral order of the relationship is the true self of the other. Apologies that do not place responsibility where it is due, and, even worse, apologies that place blame for the violation upon the violated are clear warning signs that the relationship and the self of the actor are in trouble.

When the actor chooses to move forward with relationship construction, forgiveness is necessary. Forgiveness legitimizes that the violator self is not

the true self in the relationship and thereby allows for reorientation toward the non-violator self. We advocate the forgive-but-not-forget mode of reorienting for significant violations. In this mode, the violator reorients to the other as one who has violated but is not inherently a violator. This process requires recognizing the reality of the violation and, if necessary, limiting the relationship such that the self is protected in this arena should another violation take place. Such a recognition could, for example, be represented by the statement "I recognize that my partner has been unfaithful, and I do realize that it could happen again, but I believe that it most likely will not happen again."

Reconstruction of trust is essential for the reestablishment of intimacy that allows for intense emotional investments and emotional experiences. It is perhaps these accoutrements of the trust relationship that render the risk worth taking. For a statement of willingness to re-participate in the relationship is a statement that the self is willing to be put at risk again. In an attempt at reducing the risk, individuals attempt to limit access to those portions of self that were previously violated. Limitation of the structure of the relationship results in the ability to participate in emotion management (Hochschild 1979, 1983). It then becomes questionable whether the emotional benefits of the relationship can be re-experienced at their level prior to trust violation, for limited trust suggests limited emotional investments and returns.

NOTES

1. For an overview of various definitions of trust or similar constructs please see Weber and Carter 1997. Distinctions are made between our conception of trust, and other definitions of trust (Barber 1983; Erikson 1963; Garfinkel 1967; Haas and Deseran 1981; Henslin 1985; Lewis and Weigert 1985a, 1985b), confidence (Luhmann 1979) and faithfulness (Simmel 1950).
2. The data for this study were collected as one part of 10 in-depth interviews that focused upon the creation of, maintenance of, and destruction of interpersonal trust. These interviews took up to one and one-half hours to complete. The participants of this study were selected from sociology classes at a small college in the Northeastern United States that services a predominately working-class, first-generation student population. In the manner of inductive qualitative research, diverse students were chosen to participate in this study in order to reflect as many perspectives as possible. Inductive research is all-inclusive, and data collection is considered complete when no new data is found; for this reason, these researchers expect research to be ongoing.

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