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FOUR RESEARCH-BASED APPROACHES TO TEACHING TRUST

With organizations and their executives frequently in the news for violating the trust of their customers and shareholders, business schools, whose students will become the executive decision makers in both local and global firms, have begun to require courses in business ethics. While ethics is a subject area that can be taught, instilling ethical behavior and trustworthiness may be more complicated. The chapters in this book have shed light on the importance of trustworthiness not just for preventing unethical behavior but for leader-follower relationships (e.g., Den Hartog, chapter 26 this volume; Lyu & Ferrin, chapter 5 this volume), entrepreneurs Williams and Shepherd, chapter 23 this volume), teams (Nienaber, Holtgrave and Romeike, chapter 6 this volume) and interorganizational relationships (Bachman, chapter 8 this volume, also see Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012 for a review). Thus, the advantages of teaching and increasing trustworthy behavior in organizations may have benefits that go beyond ethical behavior to include improved coordination and performance.

Business schools and executive education centers have taken four distinct approaches to helping students and executives understand the importance of trust and fortify their own trustworthiness. In this chapter, I introduce and describe the core characteristics of these four approaches: 1) the bounded rationality approach, 2) the behavioral approach, 3) the social construction approach and 4) the relational approach. Each approach focuses on a different challenge to developing and maintaining trust. *The Bounded rationality approach*, for example, focuses both on the components of trustworthiness and on the attributions and biases associated with trust judgments. According to this approach, trustworthy behavior is impeded both by a lack of understanding of what trustworthy behavior entails and by specific cognitive processes that bias our ability to objectively evaluate our own trustworthiness and that of others (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010; Mayer & Norman, 2004). *The behavioral approach* focuses on behaviors associated with demonstrating trustworthiness. From the behavioral perspective, individuals need to align their actions with their trustworthy intentions (e.g., Simons, 2008). The focus here is on the identifying the discrepancy

between intentions, statements and actions. Although psychological biases may influence one's ability to perceive these discrepancies, the focus of this approach is on accurately measuring and decreasing discrepancies rather than on the psychological influences on our ability to perceive these discrepancies. The third approach, *the social construction approach* views characteristics of trustworthiness as interpretive acts that are co-constructed by interaction partners rather than as static traits that one can aspire to attain independent of one's specific interaction partners (Williams, 2007). The challenges to trust building and maintenance, from this approach, stem both from a lack of open communication of expectations and from an unwillingness to explore assumptions and create a shared perspective on trustworthy behavior within a relationship (Williams, 2012). Fourth, *the relational approach* views trust as integral to high quality connections (Dutton, 2003) and thus, an inextricable part of broader relationship building. From the relational perspective, people often allocate an inadequate amount of time, emotional energy and attention their interpersonal relationships and this lack of investment can either prevent initial trust development or undermine the trust within an existing relationship.

Teaching Trust

All approaches to teaching trust are likely to start with research, cases and/or video clips that give students and executives a feel for the personal, professional and legal ramifications of untrustworthy behavior as well as the organizational and financial costs of such behavior. Stories of large auto manufacturers engaging in emissions fraud, others failing to recall life-threatening defects when first noticed and banking fraud perpetrated on low- and mid-income consumers are just a few of the current examples available for use in the classroom. These shocking but true narratives about trust abuses are often followed with classroom exercises. I argue that there are not merely a wide-variety of exercises from which faculty, consultants and trainers choose, but that these various exercises often have different underlying assumption about the nature of trust building, trust maintenance and trust repair. This chapter seeks to clarify the relationship among (1) different approaches to teaching trust, (2) the assumptions and challenges to trustworthy behavior that are identified by those approaches and (3) the smorgasbord of trust-related instructional exercises that we see on executive retreats and in the MBA classroom.

Bounded Rationality Approach.

The bounded rationality approach is a character-based. It posits that one of the main obstacles to building trust is understanding the core components that others use to assess one's trustworthiness. This lack of understanding stems both from not knowing the core elements of trustworthiness and not understanding the

emotional and psychological biases that may influence the attributions that individuals make when evaluating their own and others' trustworthiness.

Understanding trustworthiness.

Teaching the core components of trustworthiness is the foundation of this approach, which often entails instruction in Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) Ability, Benevolence, Integrity (ABI) model, which has received wide spread validation (Colquitt et al., 2007; Schoorman et al. 2007). Students, professionals and executives are taught the definition and importance of these characteristics and then engage in activities that make the experience "real" for them. For example, Mayer and Norman (2004) have developed a scenario-based activity that involves gauging your trust in individuals who are low on one of the three attributes of trustworthiness. This activity not only opens up a discussion of trust, but also promotes a deeper understanding of its ABI antecedents.

Trust repair can also be approached from a bounded rationality perspective. For example, Kim and colleagues (2004; 2006; 2009) have linked strategies such as apology, reparations and denial to the ability to repair violations of different dimensions of trustworthiness (e.g., ability-based violations versus integrity-based violations, also see Dirks, Kim, Ferrin & Cooper, 2011; Kim, this volume). Understanding the dimensions of trustworthiness may be central to identifying the type of violation one has perpetrated and choosing an effective repair strategy.

Psychological Biases

Psychological Biases are the second aspect of the bounded rationality approach. Based on an attribution-bases model of trust (e.g., Tomlinson & Mayer, 2009), psychological biases including self-serving biases and the sinister attribution error, influence the types of attributions others make for our behavior. Jones and Shah (2015), for instance, found that initial trust in team members was primarily actor-centered. In other words, when relationships are new, it is our own past experiences, trust propensity, sinister attribution biases etc. that drive most of the variance in how trustworthy others appear to us. Perceptions of trustworthiness are influenced by a variety of self-serving biases that people enact to maintain their self-esteem: egocentrism (overestimates of the extent to which our own behavior is widely accepted, appropriate and in our case trustworthy), the self-serving attribution bias (the increased likelihood of noticing extenuating circumstances for our own questionable behavior, while attributing others' questionable behavior to their dispositional lack of trustworthiness) and self-confirmation bias (seeking out and attending to information that supports our perceptions of our own trustworthiness and that of others, while ignoring disconfirming information, See Bazerman & Moore, 2013). Exercises that highlight self-serving biases often involve

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perspective taking exercises that have students practice imagining a scenario from another person's point of view in addition to thinking about how contextual factors have influenced the behavior of others. Perspective taking exercises include hands on exercises (see Lego® Serious Play activities) as well as cases for which each half of the class or a few individuals receive case materials with information that provides a different perspective from that in the material given to the other members of the class (e.g., Williams & Stumpf, 2008, teaching note). Contextual mapping exercises such as described by Gitell (2016) can involve mapping the demands and interdependencies across organizational roles or departments to demonstrate how structural aspects of role interactions can contribute to difference in perspectives on trustworthy behavior in a situation.

Kramer (1994) found that status and uncertainty can lead to paranoid or hostile attribution biases (i.e., the “sinister attribution error”) that also influence how trust is evaluated during uncertain times such as organizational changes. Exercises designed to uncover these sinister attributions often strive to demonstrate how easy it is to create unwarranted suspicion. Sitkin (2014) developed a disruptor exercise that creates suspicion and hypervigilance by first providing teams with a challenging but fun structure building task, and then indicating that there may be a team member on some of the teams who has received secret directions to try to interfere with the team's ability to reach its goal. Given this set of instructions, students experience bias first hand because they often identify honest mistakes as sinister actions and identify disruptive intent in well-meaning team members (see Table 1).

Behavioral Approach

The behavioral approach is based on the assumption that there are clear-cut expectations for trustworthy behavior that you can follow to ensure that you are building trust, such as aligning one's words with one's actions (e.g., Simons, 2002; Whitener et al., 2008). The challenge people face is that behavioral consistency is not always easy. In their paper on managerial trustworthiness, Whitener et al. (1998) identified a set of behaviors that managers can use to demonstrate benevolence and integrity and thereby build trust. Simon's (2002) introduced the concept of behavioral integrity, defined as the alignment between one's words and deeds. Behavioral integrity has been linked to follower commitment and performance (Leroy, Palanski, & Simons, 2012). Teaching exercises from this approach focus on helping students identify the gap between their intended trustworthiness and their behavior. For example, Simon's (2008) provided a behavioral integrity interview that students and executives can use as interviewers to gain insights from others into the gaps that exist between their words and behavior. Another activity has individuals compare what they say they value with the time they actually spend on activities relevant to their values in order to identify integrity gaps for themselves (Simons, 2008). See Table 1.

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Social Constructionist Approach.

Constructionism posits that knowledge is not the direct result of sensory data, but rather shaped and filtered by the language and beliefs of communities (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The social constructionist approach to teaching about trust views trust and trustworthiness as actively co-constructed between individuals (Williams, 2007). From this perspective, ability, benevolence and integrity are not individual traits that are revealed by watching how other people behave, but rather attributes based on the interpersonal understanding of another's expectations for trustworthy behavior (Williams, 2007; Williams and Belkin, 2016). According to this approach, perspective taking, perspective testing and dialogue are critical for helping people uncover their hidden assumptions and beliefs about trustworthiness. While the need for perspective taking overlaps with the bounded rationality approach, when using the social construction approach, perspective taking is not used to uncover or correct bias but rather to provide a starting point for dialogue. Dialogue is then used to come up with a "third story" (Stone, Patton & Heen, 2010) or a mutual understanding of what trustworthiness means within the context of a specific relationship. This co-created understanding may overlap with interaction partners' original views or may reflect a new way of seeing the relationship that could only be arrived at through dialogue. From the social constructionist perspective, the main challenges to trust are self-esteem threat and defensive behavior that impede the open communication and respectful engagement necessary to undertake a meaningful dialogue. For instance, a study in the UK found that major obstacles to bias-changing dialogues about racial stereotypes and race relations come from majority group members' fears about having this type of discussion (DiAngelo, 2011). Exercises to teach trust from a social construction approach not only include exercises in perspective taking but also exercises in generative listening, open communication and dialogue (see Table 1).

Relational Approach

The relational approach takes a holistic approach to trust-filled relationships, one that focuses on the emotional, cognitive and behavioral components of a relationships. The relational approach addresses both cognitive and affective aspects of trust (Van Kippenburg, this volume for review) as components of a relationship that develop through mindful interrelating. Dutton and colleagues, for instance, have developed the concept of high quality connections between individuals (Dutton, 2003). High quality connection reflect "short-term, dyadic, interactions that are positive in terms of the subjective experience of the connected individuals and the structural features of the connection" (Stephens, Heaphy & Dutton, 2012). Interactions that foster high quality connection can build trust, but require time, emotional energy and attention. The challenge to trust development from this perspective is the lack of mindful engagement with others and the

limited relational work that people are often willing to put into their interpersonal interactions, in part because they do not know this work is necessary for high quality connections and strong trusting relationships. Teaching exercises include those that have students practice and reflect on their relationship building as well as develop practices related to gratitude, mindfulness and forgiveness—practices which have been found to strengthen interpersonal relationships (see Table 1).

Conclusion

Over the past 20 years, researchers have contributed to an impressive stock of knowledge about the importance of trust for leaders, teams and organizations (e.g., Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010; chapters in this volume, for reviews). However, during the same period, news about executives and teams who have betrayed the trust of their employees, customers and/or regulatory agencies has also proliferated. The next frontier may not only involve teaching ethics in business schools but also teaching about trust development—building, repairing and maintaining trust—in a systematic way that has an impact on the current and future leaders of corporate, family and non-profit businesses. This chapter identifies four approaches to teaching trust: (1) the bounded rationality approach, (2) the behavioral approach, (3) the social construction approach and (4) the relational approach. It is not meant to be a teaching handbook, it does not present a comprehensive review of all of the experiential exercises used to teach trust, but rather provides an overarching framework of the approaches to teaching trust and sample exercises that I hope can broaden the teaching of trust by allowing instructors to select from a wider variety of perspectives and by providing students and executives with more insight into the factors which affect their ability to develop the trust that they need to achieve sustainable and productive relationships within their own organizations and in collaborations with other organizations.

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Table 1: The Four Approaches to Teaching Trust

Teaching Trust	Challenge	Key Take Aways	Sample Exercise
Bounded Rationality Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A lack of understanding of the psychological biases that can undermine trust development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Learn to define and recognize the core components of trustworthiness ◆ Identify and address biases in accessing the trustworthiness of others ◆ Identify and address biases others' are likely to have in assessing your trustworthiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Trustworthiness scenarios (Mayer & Norman, 2004) ◆ The Trust Building Exercise (Sitkin, 2014): www.deltaleadership.com ◆ Perspective taking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Lego® Serious Play (https://www.lego.com/en-us/seriousplay) ~ Role Play case study (Williams & Stumpf, 2008) ◆ RC Survey-(Gitell, 2016)- http://rcrc.brandeis.edu/survey/RC%20Survey.html
Behavioral Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Acting in ways that are inconsistent with espoused values and trustworthiness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Practice refraining from making promises that you are unlikely to be able to keep ◆ Practice Kindness ◆ Reflect on gap between what you value and what you do. Try to reduce that gap. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Integrity Interview (Simon, 2008: 132-133)
Social Constructionist Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Lack of interpersonal understanding ◆ Self-esteem threat sensitivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Perspective taking and testing is critical ◆ Creating a third story about trustworthy interactions that builds on the two parties perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Perspective taking (see Bounded Rationality exercises) ◆ Dialogue : http://www.pearceassociates.com/essays/comm_perspective.htm ◆ Third story (stone, Patton & Heen, 2010)
Relational Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Not investing appropriate time, attention and relational energy to interpersonal relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Practice relationship building with guidance ◆ Mindfully interact with others and reflect on how you attempt to build relationships ◆ Focus on connecting with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Building High Quality Connections at Lightning Speed (Dutton, 2012) ◆ Gratitude letters (Toepfer, Cichy & Peters, 2012)