

Trust Violation

Introduction

The basis of trust construction is self, at the heart of which is one's value orientations. Given self's desire for the relationship, the other is a conceivable candidate for friendship or love based on a judgment of character that is specifically grounded in the self's sense of essential values, that is, values possessing a self-affirming message. Because of the specific role requirements of intimate status-roles (family, friendship, love), there is a further interactional basis for trust in the other's willingness to orient to self as a privileged object of interest. Therefore, a feature of trust relationships, such as love and friendship, is the expectation that the other orients to the self in decision-making, in turn requiring the ability to understand the self's perspective (taking the role of the other). There is an expectation that one will come through for the self in various ways (i.e. be loyal, faithful, protective of self, and refuse to betray confidences, as examples of specific role demands). Orienting to the other involves understanding the other's desires and needs, performing acts that are beneficial to the other, refraining from acts that might harm the other, and usually prioritizing the other over other role demands and relationships. The orientation to other that underlies trust construction in interpersonal relationships exposes one to the risk of violation. Couch et al. (1999) declare trust violation to be "the greatest threat to the structural integrity of intimate pair bonds" (p. 451). Although literature on betrayal is rather sparse (see Akerstrom, 1991; Baumeister et al., 1990; Couch et al., 1999; Jones et al., 1997; Leary et al., 1998; Mayer & Johnson, 1988; Metts, 1994; Warren, 1986), we hope to contribute to this growing field of study by investigating how social structure, power and time frame the violation process, that is, how these social forces that influence trust construction, create the potential for violation. Afterwards, we will investigate how self-disclosure and perspective-taking are at work in those phenomena that we call violations. This chapter follows along the lines of Akerstrom's (1991) study on the sociology of treachery that attempts an application of Simmel's formal sociology which assumes betrayal to be a common rather than an uncommon form of sociation. We use as our stepping stone Akerstrom's (1991) definition of betrayal as "when you in one way or another overstep the boundaries of a we" (p. 5).

Social Structure

Classical theorists of social organization can provide us with a sense of the social organization of moral relationships such as those characterized by trust. Durkheim's notion of social facts as "ways of acting or thinking with the peculiar characteristic of exercising a coercive influence on individual consciousness" is instructive for an understanding of both trust and trust violation. (Durkheim, 1895/1964: iii) When we think of the Durkheimian idea of a normative order that is external and constraining, we think of a common normative order, such as marriage and its accompanying expectations for behavior such as fidelity. In our analysis, we are pointing to an understanding of normative (moral) structures of relationships that can be conceived as more specific, unique or comprehended differently by individuals, unarticulated or elusive to articulation, yet still understood to exert recognizable moral demands on participants in relationships. For us, trust relationships reflect the larger normative order within the moral dynamic that frames subsequent behaviors.

In this section, we will develop the concept of the *assumed* moral structure of the trust relationship that particular values are agreed upon and will be adhered to and that behavioral, emotional and cognitive activity will reflect those standards. Particular expectations depend on the particular value orientations of the participants. Trust's moral structure is used as a basis for self's behavior and is thought to structure behavior for the other. In a sense, trust is self's claim in particular status-roles to the expectation that the other should orient to self and privileges of self's interests. We are not asserting that trust is a moral structure; trust is an orientation whose primary characteristic is self-reflexivity, a dynamic of meaning and behavior that changes through experiences of self, other and relationship. To lay claim to violation, one invokes the moral structure of trust to make sense of the experience. Ironically, in so doing, one discovers that trust, like its moral structure, is inherently a dynamic.

How does social structure create the potential for trust violation? As expectations, as established by the normative order, underlie a relationship when these expectations are not met, a violation is said to have occurred. Many researchers have identified the core of trust violation to be a significant breaching of the norms and expectations of a close interpersonal relationship (Couch et al., 1999; Jones & Burdette, 1994; Jones et al., 1997). Trust can be dissolved in a moment through discovery of an act that violates the structural integrity of the trust armature that is comprised mainly of expectations from the larger normative order. The action itself is not enough to constitute a violation of trust, its context within the particular expectations of a relationship also is important. Many other factors influence whether one considers a particular act a violation (Metts, 1994). We assert, as do others (see Akerstrom, 1991), that the act of betrayal emerges from a thoroughly moral evaluation. When violated, these expectations can end the

relationship. Whatever the influencing factor, an act perceived as betrayal is a serious threat to a relationship. Shelley gave up one promising relationship when her boyfriend abruptly ceased contact after an old flame entered the picture:

Shelley: Like things were just like, everything was, we just got really close because we had so much in common it was just like, it was like, oh God, it's really weird to find somebody like that. And he just totally stopped calling and it was like, I deserve an explanation. And I finally got one like three weeks later, but I had to hunt him down for the explanation. And he gave me the explanation and that's just fine and dandy but you know, I'm gone. He had somebody else coming back into his life and put an ultimatum on him ... So we had a really long discussion. He understood what I was thinking and he was like, well, you know what the funny part is? I'm like, what? He goes, I was going to choose you. I said, wrong. You didn't have a choice. I'm like, the first day that passed that you didn't bother to return my call that was when your choice ended. And he was like, but you kept calling. Your choice ended. I said, I wanted an explanation and I deserved one ...

Shelley speaks to the normative requirement of reciprocity and mutuality in love relationships. Finding that her partner had violated these expectations, she terminated the relationship. As we demonstrated in Chapter 2, certain expectations in a trust's invoked moral structure are considered essential. Once violated, they dissolve as expectations and trust dissolves. A person can go from surety to distrust of another in a moment. Pumpkin's close friend, Ed, violated Pumpkin's standards for a relationship by making an offer to participate in illegal behavior:

Interviewer: Did it bother you at all when you stopped being friendly with Ed or ...

Pumpkin: No, it didn't because he wanted me to get into criminal activities and I realized he wanted me to.

Interviewer: That's what he did?

Pumpkin: Yeah, well that's what's suspected. I didn't ask. If you don't ask, you don't know. If you don't know, then you don't.

Interviewer: How did you?

Pumpkin: In a conversation he asked me to do a little job.

Interviewer: Like what?

Pumpkin: I think it to help drive a car or something, and I just knew a couple people he was hanging with and I knew what their behaviors were and I just had a I kind of like did the math and I said, they're running drugs, cocaine or something like that. And it was (?) to because I have a lot of (?) skills and I believe, I don't know, I haven't confirmed it but I believe what they wanted me to do was to use my boat to run drugs from one point to another point through the Intercoastal Waterway. And I kind of got a little chill and said no way, you know, I'm not going to get in that 'cause I, just, I'm not gonna do that. When you grow up and act like that, a reasonable human being, you don't get into that. So I broke that relationship off.

For Pumpkin, Ed's invitation to participate in an illegal activity means the end of what had been an important relationship. He shows ambivalence about his own ideal of loyalty that is owed such a friend, juxtaposed with a sense of the impossibility of continuing a real relationship given Ed's activities:

Pumpkin: I guess we extinguished it. We still are there if we really need each other but it's kind of like an agreement without saying. You're here and I'm there. We're going parallel but we can't see each other. We just don't contact each other. It's like when it was happening, it was right but now, when he asked me to do that, I just. And I drive by every once in a while. I drive in the area of his home and I could stop in, I think I will, but something always makes me keep going.

Trust therefore is an immensely powerful orientation wherein an underlying moral dynamic causes participants to give up or to not even contemplate behaviors that they would otherwise pursue. At the same time, it is an extremely vulnerable orientation that can be destroyed by a single event. Relationships can persist, but often without trust.

Social structural forces are often hidden from view even as they actively influence behavior. The often implicit nature of trust's moral structure creates the potential for violation. Respondents' claims of violation reveal a prior assumption in trust formation that such a structure exists. Its assumed and implicit character is such that in many cases it is only rarely discussed or invoked explicitly. That the structure may be implicit has several implications for violation. First, it means that in most cases the grounds or standards of the trust relationship are not narrowly articulated; they remain somewhat vague and not spelled out, nonspecific and thereby functionally generalizable to different contexts or developments in the relationship. Lack of specificity renders the claim of violation a difficult one. Raquel mentions a trust violation by a friend that occurred in the context of a painful ending to her marriage:

Raquel: Well, my ex-husband was a minister. And this woman was a minister. She was the minister of the church I attended. My ex-husband was the minister of another church because there was a collegiate congregation, so I chose to go to it. A family church. And she, we had done a lot together. I had done things for her, I was one of the people that helped her when she had two adopted children and she had the church service and I often would help with the kids and we were in groups together and when my ex-husband left, I looked to her for some support and sort of informal counseling, and she did apparently, her professional career was more important to her than our friendship because she was giving my ex-husband, he would call and get advice and she would do things behind my back with him, about giving him advice about the divorce and (?) super duper lawyer where she chose not to give me that and then the ultimate, I guess the ultimate break came after my husband (?) stopping by the church and just glad-handing everybody and... While we were separated, yeah. For the first few months, 6 months, 8 months separation. And a thing came, I was a member of the church and she went and had arranged for him to host the youth group Christmas party

where my kids were a member of and didn't ask me when I was a member of the church and I didn't find out about it until right before. Her excuse was, no one else wanted to do it. (?) so I realized at that point, that I was trusting the wrong person.

Interviewer: In other words, up to then, you had been trusting her? Even knowing that she had been advising your husband.

Raquel: No, I found that out later.

Interviewer: That was sort of the turning point.

Raquel: Right...

Specific acts of violation may eventually lead to the revelation of the generalizable rule that comprises the moral structure of trust. Raquel begins with a complaint about her friend's behavior, prioritizing her husband over herself by getting him a high-powered lawyer and inviting him to lead church functions. Raquel further amplifies her sense of violation by explaining it as a complaint about values; her friend chose to value career over friendship. Because of this value orientation, Raquel claims that her friend chose another relationship to prioritize and fulfilled the expectations of that relationship instead of the one she had with Raquel. Her behavior violates two typical standards of the friendship relationship that are often considered essential: loyalty and not harming. Raquel understands her friend's failure as one of value commitments, not sheer preference for another. She favors her husband because it is a good career move, not because he is a better friend. Her friend's disloyalty resulted in the dissolution of trust that was the basis of the friendship.

Second, that the moral structure is implicit means that its content may be different for both parties to a relationship or that it may be "revoked" or go "unsigned" by one party without the other party necessarily knowing it. People's significantly different definitions of appropriate relationship behavior may go unnoticed because of the assumed and implicit character of the moral structure of trust. Bobbie, for example, explains how she thought she had a mutual agreement with her husband; she seeks evidence for her assumptions in his behavior during their twenty-eight year marriage:

Interviewer: And so it was like a done deal. You didn't even have a chance to participate in it.

Bobbie: Right. And everybody couldn't just understand why I got a lawyer right away and why I was proceeding the way I was but ... and the other thing that I talked to him about I said Mike we have the understanding that if either one of us were unfaithful that would end the marriage. 'I don't remember that, Bobbie'. And I thought I don't think I was in the dark. I thought we had talked about these things when we were first married but we hadn't really talked about them later. But he had talked about all his friends and said, you know, why are they doing these things you know if you're married then you're faithful to the other person. Although in today's day and age I don't know how



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