

# **THE INFLUENCE OF PAST RELATIONSHIP TRUST VIOLATION ON THE RELATIONAL OUTCOMES OF CURRENT RELATIONSHIPS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Interpersonal relationships depend upon trust for maintenance and positive relational outcomes. But what is trust, and what happens when that trust is violated? This paper explores the effects of trust violation in previous relationships on perceptions and metaperceptions of the partner in current relationships. Utilizing an empirical phenomenological approach, the researcher interviewed adults regarding their life experiences of interpersonal trust, trust violation and “dark” perceptions of other’s motivations. This paper offers a reflexive, and self-reflexive, response to the question “To what degree do my perceptions of the other affect relational outcomes?” This paper also offers possible explanations to how negative experiences of past relationships can and do influence behavior in current relationships which may be destructive or otherwise unhealthy to the relationship. It is proposed that “dark” perception occurs when an individual judges intent or motivations for the other’s behaviors based upon their experiences with a third party. In determining the source of “dark” perception, scholars and practitioners may offer guidance for improvement on relational outcomes.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Interpersonal relationships depend upon trust for maintenance and positive relational outcomes. According to Held, trust has to do with situations of uncertainty and “that trust is most required exactly when we least know whether a person will or will not do an action” (1968, p. 157). An individual may trust his or her relational partner in a developing relationship precisely because he or she does not know the partner fully. But what if trust is violated? More to the point, what effect do violations of trust in previous relationships have on current relationships? The purpose of this study is to investigate individual experiences with interpersonal trust, trust violation and “dark” perceptions of other’s motivations.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Defining Relational Trust**

Trust is a necessary component of any ongoing human relationship by virtue of the fact that individuals cannot know with certainty the internal motivations of their relational partners. According to Ekiki (2013), individuals in relationships may have very different conceptions of trust based upon their motivations, and that trust may be viewed as something that is built over time or as an attribute. This “attribute” view of trust comports with the findings of Rempel, Holmes and Zanna (1985) who described trust as based on the perceptions of the relational partner’s motives. As well, Rempel and colleagues characterized trust as a developmental progression in the relationship.

According to Brunell, Pilkington and Webster (2007), intimate self-disclosure in a personal relationship is risky but contributes to relationship quality. As a risky behavior, intimate self-disclosure requires vulnerability and trust. The authors found that perceptions of risk in intimate self-disclosure were negatively related to relationship quality. Brunell and colleagues posited that when individuals perceive the relationship as risky, those individuals tend to reduce self-disclosure and thus harm the relationship. Even with the current generation who tends to self-document online (Hancock, Toma, & Fenner, 2008), information disclosure can be risky.

Trust may be a “meso” concept (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998) in that it crosses boundaries from dyadic relationships, to familial, organizational, societal, cultural and cross-cultural relationships. Indeed, Shapiro (1987) described how trust is embedded in societal expectations that go beyond personal relationships. In this sense, relational trust is learned from individual observations of external relationships. Rousseau and colleagues (1998) examined cross-discipline definitions of trust and concluded that “trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another” (1998, p. 395).

### **Trust Violation**

As trust may involve a “willingness to be vulnerable” (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995), a violation of trust may lead to intent or actions to reduce vulnerability in the relationship where the trust was violated. According to Lemay and Clark (2008), one partner’s expression of vulnerability affects the other partner’s behavior. A violation of trust occurs when one partner deceives the other (Guerrero, Anderson, & Afifi, 2014). Trust violation may also be a consequence of abuse or physical violence (see Calton, Grossman, & Cattaneo, 2017; Giordano, Soto, Manning & Longmore, 2010; Wekerlea & Wolfeb, 1999), observation of abuse in relationship between others (see Carpenter & Stacks, 2009; Holmes, 2013; Howell, 2011), betrayal, or disappointment. For example, Ekiki (2013) described the “dark side” of trust violations stemming from betrayal or disappointment when a partner feels taken for granted.

Betrayal and disappointment in personal relationships may occur when one partner expects certain behaviors from the other but observes behaviors in the other that do not match that expectation. As such, perception of trust within a relationship may be highly dependent on the individual asked. A perception of a trust violation may be in the mind of one individual, as it is based on an expectation of the other's behavior (perception), or possibly on an expectation of the other's motive (metaperception).

An example of trust violation also can be seen in perceptions of deception. Deception, broadly defined, involves an action which is intended to alter the perceptions of the other from what the deceiver perceives them to be (see Miller, 1983). Miller, Mongeau, and Sleight posited that deceptive communication "has profound consequences for personal relationships" and that relational partners ... "will probably assume veracity on their partners' parts unless presented with considerable conflicting evidence" (1986, p. 509). Planalp and Honeycutt (1985) demonstrated that an individual's perception is affected by events that increase their uncertainty. Deception or other unexpected trust-violating behavior from one relational partner might qualify as such an uncertainty increasing event.

As well, intrusive behavior may have profound negative consequences for personal relationships (Vinkers, Finkenauer, & Hawk, 2011). According to these authors, intrusive behavior occurs when an individual does not trust the relational partner due to perceptions of low self-disclosure. Discovery of intrusive behavior may also lead to feelings of betrayal of trust. Generally, lack of trust in a relational partner may be one-sided, and possibly lead to neglect or relational exiting (Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986) unless a discovery of a violation of trust occurs. Such discoveries can negatively influence relational satisfaction and relational dynamics for both partners.

However, according to Giordano and colleagues (2010), the perception of characteristics affecting relational dynamics may differ significantly between relational partners. In their study, the authors discovered that self-reported perpetrators of physical violence perceived their partners as engaging in trust-violating behaviors such as cheating. Regardless, the authors found no significant differences between partners in perceptions of partner caring or intimate self-disclosure. Other studies do show higher rates of intimate partner physical and verbal violence based upon histories of adolescent abuse (Sunday, et al., 2011).

### **Perception of Trust Violation Motivation**

As noted above, prior experiences of trust violations in previous or observed relationships may influence perceptions of trust in current relationships. This may be accomplished through the creation of uncertainty about vulnerability with others. According to Boucher (2015), causal uncertainty predicts relational uncertainty. Causal uncertainty may derive from past experiences or observations external to the current relationship. For individuals with high levels of causal uncertainty, perceptions about the quality of the individual's current relationship were negatively influenced, primarily based upon doubts about their relational partner's motivations toward the relationship. Females with moderate to high trust towards their partners report equal degrees of

relational satisfaction when oriented towards uncertainty (Sorrentino, Holmes, Hanna, & Sharp, 1995).

Relatedly, McLaren, Haunani-Solomon, and Priem (2011) found that relational uncertainty and perceptions about the relational partner's motivations predicted negative relational dynamics. Robbins and Merrill (2014) found that violations of trust increased individual's perceptions of the relational partner's motivations, which in turn decreased relational closeness. These tendencies towards distrust of partner's motivations following the discovery of a trust violation may be moderated by age (Rusbult, et al., 1986).

Perceived motivations for trust violations stemming from deception in relationships also may influence relational dynamics. According to Metts (1989), individuals attempt to understand the motivations for their partners' deceptions in light of perceptions of relational quality. Metts found that when individuals perceive the relational quality to be high, or have high relative relational satisfaction, those individuals tend to perceive the partner's motivations to be related to the needs of the other. This finding comports with the findings of Miano, Fertuck, Roepke, and Dziobek (2017) who found that when individuals perceived tenderness in the relationship, they tend to protect the relationship by maintaining positive perceptions of the partner's motivations and trustworthiness.

Gibbs, Ellison, and Lai (2011) found that individuals use uncertainty reduction strategies to deal with concerns of personal security in dating relationships. The authors also found that the frequency of the use of uncertainty reduction strategies influences subsequent amount of self-disclosure. As trust is a relationship developmental process, degree of trust influences degree of self-disclosure. When partners talk about events that increase relational uncertainty and offer their partners reassurances, partners tend to become closer (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985). Individuals, thus, might be motivated to reduce relational uncertainty and to increase accuracy of perception about the other, as well as metaperceptions about the other's internal motivations.

These studies, taken as a whole, suggest that individuals make assessments about their relational partner's motivations in order to assess relational quality. These assessments, in turn, influence communication in the relationship. According to LeBlanc (2018), when the metaperception of one relational partner about the other partner does not match the self-perception of the other partner, ineffective communication occurs. This ineffective communication can lead to a self-fulfilling feedback loop which exacerbates feelings of distrust in the relational partner (see Fischer, 1987). To investigate the implications of trust violations on relational outcomes, the following research questions are proposed:

- RQ<sub>1</sub> To what degree do perceptions and metaperceptions of trust violations by the other relational partner affect relational trust?
- RQ<sub>2</sub> To what degree do trust violations in previous relationships affect the perceptions and metaperceptions of the partner in current relationships?

## **METHOD**

This study utilizes an empirical phenomenological approach which acknowledges the role of the researcher while seeking reflexive responses from research co-participants. According to Couture, Zaidi, and Maticka-Tyndale (2012), this approach is well-established in post-positivist research. The phenomenological method focuses on the lived experience of the individual (van Manen, 1990). It attempts to describe phenomena as it is presented to the individual consciousness at the pre-reflective state before the experience has been categorized by the individual co-researcher. The purpose of the method is to understand the meaning of the experience for the individual. Recently, this method was utilized by Freeman, Cassidy, and Hay-Smith (2017) to investigate couples' perceptions of relationship intimacy.

To construct a model of the experience of trust, we interviewed five adults (four females and one male) who are currently involved in intimate, personal relationships. We used a guided, semi-structured interview protocol (Creswell, 2007) to gather data (see Appendix). Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. In order to protect the identity of the interviewees, names were scrubbed from the transcripts. Quotes of interviewees utilized in this paper are differentiated by assigned numbers placed in parentheses. To analyze the interview data, the tripartite phenomenological approach of description, reduction and interpretation as described by Lanigan (1988) was utilized in this study.

## **DESCRIPTION AND REDUCTION OF COMMON THEMES**

A three-step process related to trust violation emerged from the interviews: Optimism, disappointment, and then caution. Trust violation may be a common experience, both from the perspective of someone whose trust has been violated by another, and from the perspective of someone who has violated the trust of another. Regarding the latter perspective, the possibility exists that the trust of the other was not violated even though the other perceives it to have been violated. It is this possibility that motivated the current research. Relationships are a universal human experience. The author and interviewees have each experienced perceived relational trust violations and their relational consequences. According to one interviewee,

“I think it’s extremely important to have trust because otherwise I don’t think you can really have a relationship if you are not able to trust someone enough to communicate what it is that you need or how they make you feel, or if you’re not happy.” (4)

Trust may be an expectation of relationships by individuals hoping to move forward or toward greater levels of intimacy.

## Optimism/Expectation

As described above and elsewhere, human beings need relationships, and relationships are built upon trust. When asked to describe a close relationship, one interviewee put it this way.

“I am in a relationship with someone that I can trust, that I will offer support emotionally or financially... I think that’s the foundation of a relationship and friendship because if I don’t have that trust in the person, then they don’t have anything to grow or won’t have the routes to be able to move forward.” (4)

Another interviewee described the degree of intimacy between herself and a friend as being a type of unity.

“We were so close that it kind of felt like she was a part of me: like two halves, one whole. We were so close it was like a family member, but more. I knew everything about her; she knew everything about me, and there was very little division when we were with other people as to who was who sometimes, because where I ended she began. We were just incredibly close. She meant everything to me, I meant everything to her.” (2)

Trust seems to be related to intimacy in communication, or the ability to share one’s innermost thoughts without regard for personal safety. Additionally, trust involves faith in another’s goodwill and commitment to the relationship (Tallman & Hsiao, 2004). As one interviewee put it:

“When you find a partner, you expect that you can find details about your past, your history with them and that there’s really not going to be any consequences by sharing those details.” “To me, anyway, trust means that again, I can speak to you in confidence and that I don’t have to worry about it getting spread beyond what we’re talking about.” “But trust, to me, in a serious personal relationship, would entail that I could tell you anything and I know it’s not going to go any further.” (3)

For two other interviewees:

“There’s never been a time where I felt like I couldn’t disclose feelings to her or anything.” (1)

Trust is knowing “...that if I need something she’ll be there, if she needs something I’ll be there.” (2)

Interviewees described their beliefs in the importance of trust as moving forward in the relationship, despite difficulties.

“I think trust is incredibly important, but I also think that with trust, you need to be able to like...if something happens...and even if it’s not super serious, like if they do something that like is either, maybe not breaking, but, bending your trust a little

bit...you need to still be there and be like ok well why? Because you'd want them to afford you the same courtesy. If something happened in your life and you just throw your hands up and you just can't and you like blow up at them...you don't want them to then be like oh well that's it, cut ties, let's go. Like you want them to still be like "what's going on like let's figure this out" like I'm not just going to run away because something bad has happened in your life." (2)

Thus, a kind of optimism drives the trust in the other person for the sake of continuing the relationship. As two interviewees described:

"I knew I could trust (my current boyfriend) in taking care of me and helping me get through (a very difficult time) and just helping me because of where our relationship already was. It was very solid." (1)

"My guardian let me come and stay with him and just stepped up and became involved and helped me ... and I could trust him. I could trust to talk to him. I could trust that he'd take time. I trusted completely that he had my best interests at heart." (5)

It is this complete trust in another that allows relationships with that other to move forward. In this sense, trusting the other is a form of optimism. Trust requires hope that the other person will be present, able to help, and able to share most important aspects of one's life. Individuals who enter into relationship may expect that they will be able to trust the other person. This expectation of trust as an antecedent to relationship development thus can be seen as relational optimism.

## **Disappointment**

Disappointment occurs when expectations are not met. In close, personal relationships, individuals may expect that their trust would not be violated by the other. Interviewees were asked to describe situations when their trust was violated by someone, up to that point, they considered close. Interviewees used different words to describe how a violation of trust felt:

"A violation of trust looks like just like it's disheartening, it's devastating: devastating depending on the situation. Yeah I did think it's just like our best to find, and I would think all hope is lost in this person or in the relationship because there's just no trust." (4)

Having my trust violated by the other person was "shocking" ... and created "overwhelming sadness to the point where I feel incredibly depressed"... or "makes me feel unworthy in a way. Like it all folds back on me like what did I do that made them break that trust with me?" (2)

"I think just trying to go and talk to my mom about something and not being believed. It felt like betrayal...(like) my parent choosing (her) own needs over mine." "It's heartbreaking." (5)

Having your trust violated by the other person is "like you're swallowing rocks and they all hit your heart and your lungs and your intestines and it just goes down and it feels like man...and there's no repairing the relationship." (3)

A violation of trust looks like: "When someone completely disregards your personhood and doesn't take into account your autonomy at all." "He violated a part of our bond by not disclosing that (information) sooner...I felt taken advantage of." (1)

These disappointing consequences of trust violations lead to a diminution in the optimism of the relationship.

"It hurts, and it causes you to question things about the other person and yourself." (1)

Such diminution in optimism about the relationship may subsequently lead to caution in trusting others. As one interviewee put it:

"If you burn me that many times, I'm an idiot for allowing you to burn me and continue to burn me so, it feels really bad." We "took a family vacation, and (my brother) threw me off the dock. He was like "sink or swim," and I'm sure it was something (to) toughen me up, but I damn near drowned and ever since that experience I feel like he just violated me in so many ways." "Every time I was around him I feel like I was on pins and needles and I didn't feel like I could fully trust him." (3)

## **Caution**

Individuals who have their trust in another person violated become cautious in investing that trust again. As one interviewee put it:

"I'm still cautiously hopeful but still thinking if things were going well." "You've got to be careful for that person either or be careful around that person." "This is someone that I'm just kind of got to watch out for me because there's something not good there." "If you trust and then hopefully they're trusting in you, so you need to be a little cautious with it." (4)

Another interviewer described it this way:

"I have this phrase that I go by "second chances, third glances, but fourth time, there's no romances." Once trust is violated and once it's broken, it's hard to repair that. It's hard to forgive; it's hard to forget." (3)

Individuals may try to manage the relationship in which the trust violation occurred, depending on the nature of the violation.

"I think because I had had that really devastating one happen in high school, I was able to better micromanage my reaction and my ability to process what had happened and be able to, not only later on still have a relationship with her and forgive her and now we're getting back to where we were, but I think I was able to have a better just frame of mind." (2)

It is possible that individuals will choose to temper their trust in a relationship with the other who violated the trust:

"I just knew that through everything we had been through that really wasn't going to work out." "Trust is very important but elusive." (5), or

"With friendships, I think that I'm a lot more careful about who I choose to trust immediately." (2)

However, it is also likely that individuals will take their experiences from a previous relationship and apply it to other relationships:

"I think trust is incredibly important, but I also think that with trust, you need to be able to still be there and be like ok well why?" "If you're in a relationship with someone for 3-4 weeks and you want them to trust you completely...that's not enough time to build a solid foundation...It is very difficult to not want that immediate trust, but you need to make sure that you're both on the same page with what you want out of the relationship. Which is why like having open dialogue, always, is the most important thing for relationships." (2)

"Outside of family, I'm just very skeptical. I believe people are fickle, and you can't trust people, so just take what people say as a grain of salt. I think for me maybe someone who hasn't had that trust broken so often in big ways maybe it would be different, but I think it's probably more negatively impacted my relationships with people." (1)

The application of caution when trusting others following trust violation involves metaperceptions about the others' internal motivations. Trying to assess the internal motivations of the other in the current "untrustworthy" relationship may influence the tendency to do so in subsequent relationships. The "cautious" application of "perceived" internal motivations from one relationship marked by trust violations to a subsequent relationship "darkens" the metaperceptions toward the other.

### **"Dark" Perception**

"Dark" perception derives from caution which may be applied to subsequent relationships. Interviewees were specifically asked, "How might your previous experiences in relationships

influence your current beliefs (regarding the importance of trust, see Appendix)? The most explicit responses to this question, which imply potential “dark” perception, included:

"My past experience has single-handedly defined my ability to trust." "I would say for somebody who's like me, who's had their trust, you know, broken repeatedly, I think it's hard to really trust anybody a hundred percent." (5)

"I believe my previous early relationship I was...made...aware exactly what was important to me and how I would do it." (4)

My previous relational experiences have influenced me "probably more negatively than positively." When I asked for my Aunt's advice about a conflict I was having with my boyfriend, she said, "You got too defensive about something else, there might be something else going on there." (1)

"I think that because I've had my trust broken so many times in past relationships, it's very difficult for me to, not necessarily forget, but just move past like being cheated on or being broken up with because of something stupid or anything like that." (2)

Interviewees often reflected upon trust violations when they occurred in order to prevent the pain and disappointment from such events from reoccurring. One interviewer described it as such:

"If you're the one on the end of being burned, there's always going to be something in your mind wondering, "why did they do that to me?" "I feel like our exchanges are becoming possibly abrasive, or uncomfortable...then that's going to get me to pause." (3)

Another interviewer directly applied that reflection for future use:

The divulgence of my personal experience by this other person "kind of broke me for a little while because I've had trust issues my entire life because my father left when I was 6 and I haven't seen him since, so it's very difficult for me to trust people. So, the fact that just got cut so easily on her end that I was like...should I just stop trusting people again? I had to reexamine a lot of my personal relationships after that." (2)

## **INTERPRETATION**

Relationships rely on trust for maintenance and continued development. In fact, individuals might expect trust to be part of the relationship. Trust involves an optimistic view (hope and faith) or expectation toward this continued development. When trust is violated by one member of a relationship, this maintenance or continued development may be disrupted. More directly, such

violations result in a disappointment of this optimism and a strategy by the person whose trust was violated to avoid future occurrences of this pain of disappointment.

However, because relationships with others fulfill basic human needs (see Maslow's Hierarchy), trust violations do not result in individuals hurt by such violations in continuing to seek relationships with others. Instead, individuals modify the overall optimism toward the relationship, and relational outcomes, with caution. This caution is likely applied within the relationship in which the trust violation occurred, if that relationship survives or continues. In many cases, the relationship is redefined as something different or "less than" what it was previously hoped to be.

That caution learned in a previous relationship may be applied to subsequent relationships. It is in this sense, that a previous relationship which involved a violation of trust influences the individual's perceptions and metaperceptions of the "other" in subsequent relationships. Therefore, it is proposed that "dark" perception occurs when an individual judges intent or motivations for the other's behaviors (in light of whether the other can be "trusted") based upon their experiences with a "previous" third party.

How I (the first author) came to the topic of this study began with an observation of a relationship between two people very close to me whose relationship was wounded by a perception of a violation of trust. The incident that led to the perception of violation occurred forty plus years ago when the two were children. One of the two (the accuser) felt the other (the accused) was responsible for not protecting her (the accuser) from a predator. They were both children. Thirty years after the event, the two were not speaking to each other. Both were in pain about what had happened to their relationship with each other.

From my perspective, the accused had done nothing wrong. She was not the predator. She was only a child. However, the accused had no way to effectively repair the relationship despite attempts to convince the other that she had not violated her trust. Shortly thereafter, I was accused of violating someone's trust. Despite my attempts to convince the other that I had not done so, the accuser persevered with the perception of trust violation. The relational rupture involved mediation and forensic documentary evidence supporting the claim that trust was not violated. Yet, the accuser persisted with the perception. At this time, the relational rupture seems permanent.

Consequent to these two relational events that I observed, it seemed to me that whether trust was violated or not is not the issue that leads to negative relational outcomes. Rather, it is a persistent perception of a violation of trust, true or not, which leads to negative relational outcomes. The question for me became to what degree is the other party responsible for negative relational outcomes by persisting with a false perception? Subsequently, is that persistence based upon the experiences the other person had in a previous relationship with a third party?

Not all is lost for current and future relationships affected by prior damaging relationships. Resolution is possible with cautious optimism, as one interviewee put it:

"We were willing to both admit fault, but at the same time both admit like how hurt we both were, and that I think is what like saved our relationship at the end. We were both able to put a little bit of our pride aside." (2)

In this sense, trust in relationships may develop through a three-step process of optimism, disappointment, and caution when trust violations occur. Depending on the severity or frequency (or both) of the trust violation, these relationships could lead to a “dark” perception of the new other (person) in subsequent relationships. The constant in all five interviews includes a universality of experience in personal relationships regarding trust. For all interviewees, trust was paramount to the relationship before and after the trust violation event. The belief in a lack of trust in the other following the trust violation event resulted in a redefinition of the relationship.

## **DISCUSSION**

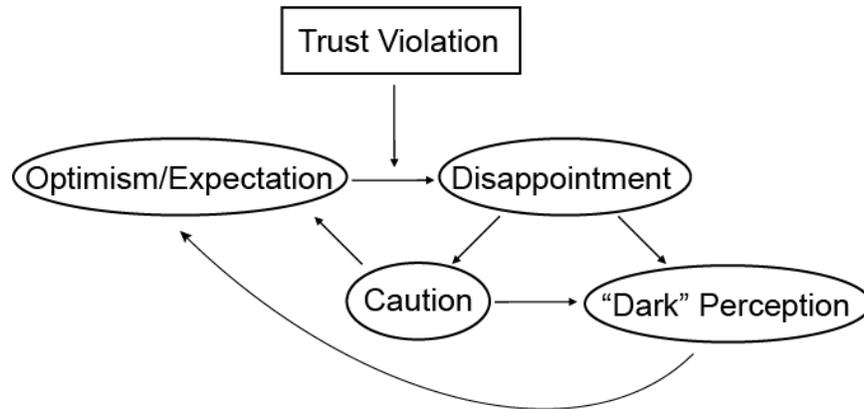
This study describes how that individual perceptions of trust violation and individuals’ requisite metaperceptions of the motivations of their relational others may influence their subsequent relational trust in that other. Additionally, such trust violations may negatively impact the individual’s ability to trust others in subsequent relationships, even if the subsequent other has not committed any trust violations. Processing violations of trust influences individuals to be cautious in trusting others. Consequently, individuals might enter into new relationships with the tendency to question the motivations of their new relational partners. This tendency has been deemed “dark” perception, as that perception of the internal motivations of other person in the current relationship is negatively influenced by actions of a third party from a previous relationship.

These “findings” suggest that potential relationships exist between the elements of optimism/expectation, disappointment, and caution in long-term personal relationships. In particular, the degree of optimism/expectation in a new relationship may be directly related to the degree of disappointment felt by an individual following a trust violation event. For example, if the amount of trust invested in the new relationship was low, possibly due to a trust violation in a prior relationship thus implicating low optimism/low expectation, then the disappointment felt may also lower. However, if the investment is high, then the disappointment may also be high. The level of disappointment may also be modified by the severity of the trust violation. If the severity of the trust violation is high, the level of disappointment may also be high when the optimism/expectation is relatively low.

Subsequently, the degree of disappointment may be related to the degree of caution in that current relationship and subsequent relationships. For current relationships, increased caution may lead to a reduced level of optimism or lower expectations. For subsequent relationships, degree of disappointment in a prior relationship may lead to caution and therefore lower expectations in subsequent relationships.

Additionally, the degree of disappointment following a trust violation may induce an effect on subsequent relationships through an unintended “dark” perception. The individual may be cautious in a subsequent relationship even though the other person has not violated his or her trust. A series of trust violation events over the course of years and multiple relationships may also induce this “dark” perception. Such “dark” perception, thus influences the degree of optimism or level of expectations in subsequent relationships. Figure 1 below illustrates the potential relationships

between optimism/expectation, disappointment, caution, and “dark” perception following trust violations in personal relationships.



**FIGURE 1. TRUST VIOLATION CONCEPT MAP**

Finally, these potential relationships between these four concepts may be further modified by the age and/or experience of the individuals involved. To be sure, individuals with more experiences in relationships, have more opportunities to experience trust violations and their consequences. These experienced individuals may have developed more sophisticated ways to cope with such events compared to relatively relationally inexperienced individuals.

As described in the review of literature, previous research has shown that perceptions of risk in a relationship negatively influences relational quality (see Brunell, et al., 2007; Rempel, et al., 1985). In this sense, the first experience of intimate trust violation can have lasting effects on the relational outcomes of subsequent relationships, even if those relationships are not marked by trust violations. Thus, the creation of “dark” perception can negatively impact the outcomes of current relationships. In determining the source of “dark” perception, scholars and practitioners may offer guidance for improvement on relational outcomes.

Future studies might investigate from different methodological perspectives the nature of the relationships between these constructs. Additionally, future studies might look more closely at the relationship between “dark” perception and relational outcomes including relational quality and satisfaction.

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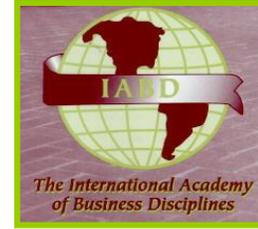
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## APPENDIX

### Trust and violation in close relationships

#### Interview protocol:

1.
  - a. Describe your experience of being in a close relationship.
  - b. Can you visualize specific instances where trust was important?
2.
  - a. What does a trust, in that relationship, look like?  
Describe an experience of trust which involved the other.
  - b. How does that experience feel?  
Describe an experience in which you felt unable to trust the other person.
3.
  - a. What does a violation of trust look like?  
Describe an experience when your trust in the other person was violated.
  - b. How does having your trust violated by the other person feel?  
Describe an experience in which you felt distrustful toward the other.
4.
  - a. What did trust in a previous relationship look like?  
Describe an experience when your trust in that other person was violated.
  - b. How was that experience different/or the same/as the more recent experience?  
Describe an experience in which your current relationship seemed like/or different from/a previous relationship.
5.
  - a. What is your belief regarding the importance of trust in close relationships?  
Describe an experience in which your belief was confirmed.
  - b. How might your previous experiences in relationships influence your current beliefs?  
Describe an experience in which your belief may have been challenged in your current relationship.



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