

AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF RELATIONSHIP REPAIR: REINTRODUCING THE ROLES OF FORGIVENESS AND TRUST

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ABSTRACT

Communication and management scholars have only recently begun to examine the processes of relationship repair and forgiveness. However, due to the current social and political climate of hostility and volatility, awareness of its importance is growing quickly. The amount of research on trust repair and forgiveness has increased dramatically over the past decade, but the conceptual framework for these constructs has not kept up with empirical research on the topics. In this paper, I summarize the work that has been done on relationship repair, trust repair and forgiveness, discuss several areas of opportunity, and propose an updated conceptual model that integrates the three domains.

Keywords: Relationship Repair, Trust Repair, Forgiveness, Trust.

INTRODUCTION

The presence of trust between employees and organizational actors is crucial on account of the high transaction costs and impracticality associated with formally contracting all aspects of workplace relationships (Arrow, 1973). However, despite the benefits provided by trust in professional interactions, trust violations are very common (Tomlinson, Dineen and Lewicki, 2004). Even more troubling, according to Robinson and Rousseau (1994), is that violations of trust at work are associated with reduced organizational commitment, lower citizenship behavior, and an increased likelihood of turnover (Robinson, 1996). They can also generate resentment, anger, and hostility that may linger well beyond the transgression and manifest as anxiety and stress that interferes with employee performance and productivity (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Dutton, Ashford, Wierba, O'Neill & Hayes, 1997; Heimer, 1992). Therefore, due to the serious consequences that damaged trust, negative affect and the resulting negative interpersonal exchanges have on work outcomes, there is growing scholarly interest in understanding when and how trust is restored after a transgression or negative interaction (Barclay, Skarlicki & Pugh, 2005; Tomlinson & Mayer, 2009; Kim, Dirks & Cooper, 2009; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010).

Management scholars have only recently begun to examine the processes of relationship repair (Ren & Gray, 2009; Kim, Dirks & Cooper, 2009), trust repair (Ferrin, Kim, Cooper & Dirks, 2007; Kim, Ferrin, Cooper & Dirks, 2004; Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005) and forgiveness (Fehr & Gelfand, 2010; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2004). However, due to the growing awareness of its importance, as well as the relative lack of theoretical and empirical work in the domain (Ferrin, 2002; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Petriglieri, 2015 for exceptions), the amount of research on trust repair and forgiveness in recent years has increased dramatically (van der Werff & Buckley, 2017; Bachmann, Gillespie & Priem, 2015;

Dirks, Lewicki & Zaheer, 2009; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010). However, despite that it is gaining momentum, a number of unanswered questions still remain.

Specifically, the development of a conceptual model which articulates the factors that affect relationship repair and accurately describes the process of forgiveness after a transgression is needed. To date there has been little conceptual or theoretical work done on trust repair and only a few proposed conceptual frameworks that organize and categorize organizational and institutional trust repair. Therefore, in this paper, I seek to extend existing work by proposing a model of relationship repair that integrates our knowledge of forgiveness and includes an explanation of the proposed interplay between repair mechanisms and how these mechanisms can be combined to reestablish trust after a transgression.

RELATIONSHIP REPAIR

Relationship repair is conceptualized as occurring “when a transgression causes the positive state that constitutes the relationship to disappear and a negative state to arise, as perceived by one or both parties, and then activities by one or both parties substantively returns the relationship to a positive state” (Dirks, Lewicki & Zaheer, 2009:69; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010). Thus, it consists of restoring the damaged connection between individuals after trust has been violated. As reported by Dirks, Lewicki and Zaheer (2009), the majority of existing theoretical and empirical work on this topic views relationship repair as involving the movement of the damaged relationship components (i.e. trust, affect and exchange) from a negative to a positive state along a continuum. In addition, although the relationship repair process can be initiated by either the victim or transgressor, it is thought to require the participation of both parties to be successful (Goffman, 1967; Ren & Gray, 2009). Existing work has mostly presented relationship repair as a temporal process, usually initiated by the transgressor, for the purpose of ‘righting a wrong’ inflicted by a past transgression.

However, despite some general consensus about its importance for organizational outcomes, there is little agreement regarding other aspects of the construct. In fact, a number of different views exist about what relationship repair entails and how it might be measured. For instance, Schweitzer, Hershey and Bradlow (2006) measure relationship repair in terms of trust perceptions and risk-taking behaviors that are rectified following a transgression. Bradfield and Aquino (1999), on the other hand, view it as the release of negative affect and the choice to forego revenge. Whereas Bottom, Gibson, Daniels & Murningham (2002) perceive the presence of positive affect and cooperation as indicative of relationship repair. Yet, others argue that prior work on individual-level and interpersonal trust repair provides an inadequate and insufficient foundation for the development of an organizational-level trust repair framework (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009) because many of the assumptions do not translate well to the organization level. I aim to rectify this problem by blending our existing knowledge of organization-level trust repair with perspectives and insight garnered from the forgiveness domain.

In sum, although there is general agreement that relationship repair involves a reconciliation mechanism, the restoration of trust, a reduction in negative affect toward the transgressor and a willingness on the part of the victim to be vulnerable again, few studies have attempted to explain how these components fit together (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Bachman, Gillespie & Preim, 2015 for exceptions). In fact, Dirks, Lewicki and Zaheer (2009: 69) state outright that, “there currently are no unifying conceptual foundations or theoretical frameworks that...facilitate analysis directed at the broader problem of relationship repair.” This paper aims

to fill this gap in the literature and proposes a model that integrates existing frameworks of trust repair with what is known about forgiveness.

THE ROLE OF FORGIVENESS

Closely related to relationship repair is the topic of forgiveness. Humans have been interested in forgiveness for thousands of years. In fact, the notion that forgiveness is necessary due to “Original sin,” is one of the central tenants in Christianity and the impetus behind the ritual of Baptism. Evidenced by the billions of people throughout time who have sought forgiveness through some form of religion, humans undoubtedly feel a deep need to have access to a mechanism that allows them to be absolved of past wrongs and “given a second chance.” Yet, despite its pervasiveness throughout history, the study of forgiveness in the social sciences has only been undertaken within the last thirty years or so (Cordova et al., 2006), and only within the last fifteen years or so has it emerged as a topic of serious scholarship among management scholars (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010). Bradfield and Aquino (1999) suggest that one reason the concept of forgiveness has been “almost totally ignored” in the organizational literature may be because of its traditional connection to theology and not science (McCullough & Worthington, 1995; Pingleton, 1989). During the past decade, however, research on forgiveness has begun to uncover the many ways in which it speaks to, builds upon, and enhances our understanding of the cognitive and affective processes that shape the behavior of individuals in the workplace.

Forgiveness is defined as, “a deliberate decision by the victim to relinquish anger, resentment and the desire to punish a party held responsible for inflicting harm” (Aquino, Tripp & Bies, 2001: 53). From a philosophical perspective, forgiveness involves resigning negative and vengeful feelings not by denying one’s right to these types of negative affect and judgment, but by forgoing that path and instead viewing the offender with benevolence and compassion (Enright, Gassin & Wu, 1992). It is a complex phenomenon that involves affective, cognitive, and behavioral components (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999) and is conceptualized as a process which incorporates the resignation of negative affect and judgment toward the offender, which includes a willingness to reconcile and begin rebuilding trust. Forgiveness itself has been found to have important implications for individual and interpersonal outcomes such as well-being (Bono, McCullough & Root, 2008), stress (Witvliet, Ludwig & Vander Laan, 2001), and helping behavior (Karremans, Van Lange, & Holland, 2005), which inevitably impact organizations and their participants.

Based on their model of the evolution of trust in relationships, Lewicki and Bunker (1996) propose that there are two categories of antecedents that affect a victim’s willingness to reconcile a professional relationship: (1) the characteristics of the relationship, and (2) the offender’s choice of reconciliation tactic(s). First, the characteristics of the relationship include the nature of the past affiliation and the perceived likelihood of future violations (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Tomlinson et al., 2004). According to Kramer (1986), individuals are “intuitive auditors” constantly reviewing past transactions and searching for evidence that justifies future decisions to trust. Thus, Tomlinson et al. (2004) propose that a victim will search for social cues that provide information about whether future violations are probable before making a commitment to reconcile the relationship.

Subsequently, in order for reconciliation to begin, a repair tactic must be used by the offender. There are several reconciliation tactics that can be used to initiate restorative action. These include: formal apologies, accounts, denial and demonstration of concern, compensation,

and penance. Accounts can be thought of as an offender's explanation of the conflict inducing actions that are intended to deny, reduce, or explain an offender's responsibility for the transgression (Schlenker, Pontari & Christopher, 2001). A formal apology, on the other hand, consists of the offender's admission of responsibility and regret accompanied by a stated desire to reconcile and continue the relationship (Goffman, 1972). Demonstration of concern involves the display of prosocial behavior on the part of the offender that is intended to signal positive intentions and that they are again worthy of trust (Goffman, 1967). Finally, penance is when the offender willingly subjects themselves to punishment in the form of compensation or restitution to symbolize their guilt and regret to the victim (Bottom, 2002; Cropanzano, Goldman & Folger, 2003; Ren & Gray, 2009).

As with relationship repair, there are a number of issues within the domain of forgiveness that still need to be resolved. For instance, there is inconsistency in the literature regarding the typology for the classification of reconciliation tactics and restorative action. Some scholars have argued that there are four tactics: accounts (or explanations), apologies, demonstration of concern, and penance (Ren & Gray, 2009), whereas others leave out demonstration of concern and maintain that there are only three methods of action (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010) and yet others hold that there are six reconciliation tactics in all (Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2004). This indicates that empirical research needs to test and determine whether these tactics are in fact separate in the minds of individuals and whether discriminant validity can be established, or if the number of separate factors can be reduced.

Another issue that plagues the domain is that forgiveness has been examined primarily as an outcome variable in studies of trust and relationship repair as well as in the apology literature (Fehr & Gelfand, 2010), but only a handful of studies have actually focused on understanding its functioning outright. Thus, the field lacks knowledge about the complexity of the forgiveness process, what its antecedents and consequences are, and how it informs the broader concept of relationship repair. Most notably there is a serious lack of research on the contextual and environmental factors that impact an individual's willingness to forgive. Scholars have suggested that forgiveness depends on the national culture of the involved parties (Ren & Gray, 2009), certain Big Five personality traits such as conscientiousness and agreeableness (Balliet, 2010), implicit beliefs (Haselhuhn, Schweitzer & Wood, 2010), and characteristics of the relationship (Thompson & Ravlin, in press), but the influence of climate, status, power and dependence, and organizational culture have not yet been addressed. Thus, the topic of forgiveness has promise and a solid conceptual foundation, but the field is clearly in its infancy with many important unanswered questions that remain.

TRUST REPAIR

Despite that trust has been a central topic of interest to management scholars for several decades (Barber, 1983; Mayer, Davis, Schoorman, 1995), scholarly interest in trust repair has only begun to gain momentum during the last decade (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009). Trust repair consists of the process through which "trust, or the psychological state comprising the intention of an individual to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another...is restored after a violation" (Tomlinson et al., 2004: 167; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998: 395). Thus, Kramer and Lewicki (2010) argue that trust repair has to do with restoring the damaged expectations of the victim and engaging in activities that will prompt them to be vulnerable again in the future. Research suggests that broken trust can be

repaired (Mishra, 1996; Bottom, Gibson, Daniels & Murningham, 2002; Tomlinson & Mayer, 2009; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009); however, research in this area is fragmented and lacks a cohesive theoretical understanding of how the process works.

In their extensive review of the trust repair literature to date, Kramer and Lewicki (2010) as well as Dirks, Lewicki and Zaheer (2009) identify three different conceptual perspectives that have been proposed for understanding how trust can be restored after a violation. First, trust repair can be considered from an attributional perspective (Kim, Ferrin, Cooper & Dirks, 2004; Kim, Dirks, Cooper & Ferrin, 2009; Rhee & Valdez, 2009, etc.). This view maintains that trust repair needs to provide positive information (by way of attributions) that offset the negative inferences initiated by the transgression. It is based on psychological attribution theory (Heider, 1958) and focuses on trust repair as a mechanism intended to change the victim's perceptions of the transgressor from negative to positive (Kim, Ferrin, Cooper & Dirks, 2004). The second perspective views trust repair as a function of the structural environment of the relationship (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Sitkin & Roth, 1993; Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005). More specifically, from this view, structural features such as systems, incentives and legalistic remedies need to be put in place following a transgression to protect the vulnerability of the victim from a future violation (Sitkin & Roth, 1993). Finally, the third perspective holds that a transgression "disrupts the social order...and calls into question the norms that govern the interaction" thus, it leads to a disequilibrium in the dyadic state of the relationship. Repair, then involves engaging in rituals to restore the social balance (Goffman, 1967; Ren & Gray, 2009). Although the three views provide different perspectives about the concept of trust repair, and each make an insightful and unique contribution to the literature, they also make different assumptions and have distinctive implications for the theoretical process. Thus, they likely further fragment the body of knowledge in this domain.

INTEGRATING TRUST REPAIR & FORGIVENESS

There are a number of research areas of opportunity within the topics of trust repair and forgiveness, and relationship repair. For example, Kramer and Lewicki (2010) argue that most approaches to trust and relationship repair have only focused on the cognitive aspects of the construct and have largely neglected the emotional and behavioral elements that also undergo change. Another point of contention in the area has been that research has largely viewed relationship repair as the movement of the damaged relationship components (trust, affect and exchange) along a continuum from negative to positive, however, recently this view has been called into question. Based on Lewicki et al. (1998) and the conceptualization of trust and distrust proposed in their research, which views the two as separate constructs. Research has also proposed that both positive and negative cognitive, affective and behavioral states may be able to coexist (Dirks, Lewicki and Zaheer, 2009). Models of trust repair and forgiveness also largely do not account for the numerous environmental factors and contextual contingencies that affect a victim's willingness to reconcile. In addition, empirical tests of the theoretical propositions also seem to be lacking. Recent research has largely focused on proposing several new ways to conceptualize relationship repair, yet very few studies exist that actually test these models.

Finally, in my assessment, what seems to be the most important potential contribution to this domain is an organization and integration of the concepts. In my review of the literature, there is little to no consensus about the use of terms and how they relate to one another. For instance, in some work, trust repair is used to refer to a stage in the process of relationship repair (Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2004), whereas in other research, it is used as a synonym for

relationship repair itself (Dirks, Lewicki & Zaheer, 2009; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010). Also, despite that the majority of the existing work in this domain recognizes that relationship repair, trust repair, and forgiveness are related, there is currently no framework that addresses how the three are linked and fit together. Thus, the development of a model that organizes and integrates these ideas is crucial.

I propose a framework that organizes these constructs and links the interconnected processes of relationship repair, forgiveness and trust-repair. According to Tomlinson et al. (2004) because trust violations go beyond the substance of the transgression and call into question the foundation of the relationship itself (Lewis & Weigert, 1985), relationships need to be reconciled before trust can be rebuilt (Fuller & Mayer, 2002; Tomlinson, Lewicki & Dineen, 2002). In fact, Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki (2004: 169) view reconciliation as, “the behavioral manifestation of forgiveness.” Therefore, I propose that relationship repair can be thought of as consisting of two sequential stages that follow a trust violation; the first being forgiveness and reconciliation, and the latter being the rebuilding of trust. In Figure 1, I offer an integrated theoretical model as a starting point for future theoretical and empirical work that seeks to incorporate these three domains.

The conceptual model proposed here, explicates how three processes that are currently discussed and studied in isolation, can be combined and integrated to create a more complete process model of relationship repair. Specifically, the model depicts forgiveness as the antecedent to trust repair, and illustrates how forgiveness must occur after a trust violation in order to achieve reconciliation and ultimately trust repair. Each of these components individually, has been proposed by other scholars (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Bachman, Gillespie & Preim, 2015), however, to my knowledge, they have not yet been combined.

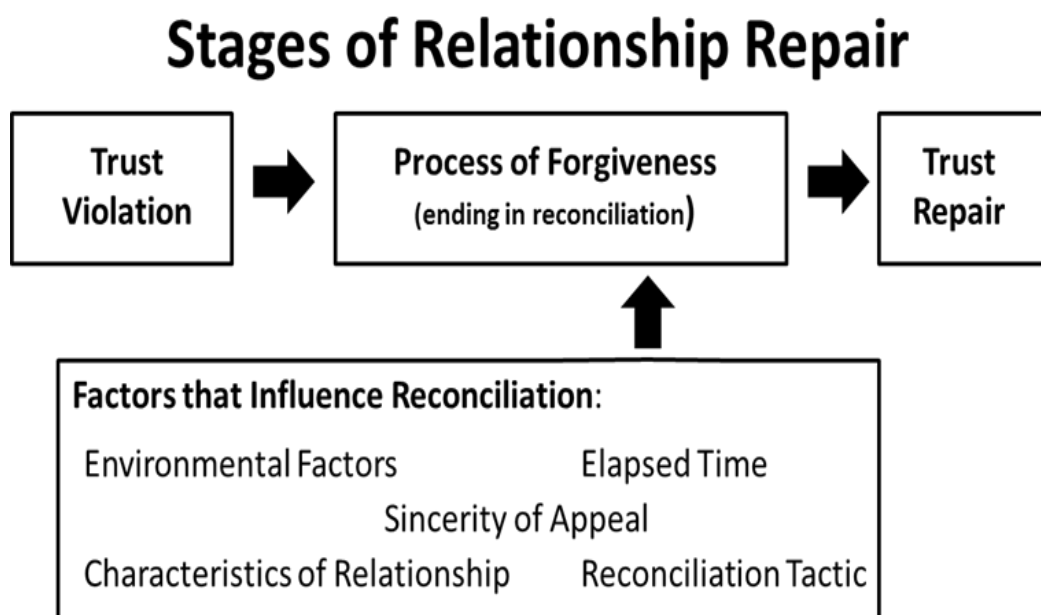


Figure 1
STAGES OF RELATIONSHIP REPAIR

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE RECONCILIATION

The integrated model of relationship repair proposed and illustrated above suggests that the process starts with a trust violation, and moves through the stages toward a potential reconciliation, to end in relationship repair, if successful. Further, five components of reconciliation exist that moderate the process of reconciliation, that is, affect the extent to which reconciliation is likely. I propose that each of these five factors is moderators that will affect the extent to which an individual who has been harmed is likely to reconcile with the transgressor. In the following sections, each of the five proposed moderators is discussed.

Sincerity of Appeal

The sincerity of the appeal to reconcile is likely an important factor in the process of reconciliation after a violation of trust. Specifically, sincerity describes the degree of perceived honesty or genuineness of the appeal for forgiveness (Shapiro, 1991). This characteristic of the appeal is crucial because demonstrating truthfulness and authenticity influences the likelihood of renewed trustworthiness. According to Lewicki et al. (1998), sincerity is one of the most essential behaviors that actively demonstrate goodwill, benevolence, and integrity. Perceived sincerity has to do with the victim perceiving repeated, clear and consistent signals from the transgressor during an apology or other type of appeal, that the emotions or words stated are true to the emotions actually felt by the transgressor. In other words, sincerity is one's determination of truth or truthfulness of the appeal for forgiveness. High perceived sincerity is associated with positive conduct and desirable future actions from the transgressor, resulting in a sense of hope, faith and assurance from the individual whose trust has been violated (Lewicki et al., 1998: 444-445). Whereas, insincerity, and dishonestly on the part of the transgressor, results in the opposite. Namely, an unwillingness to relinquish negative emotions associated with the transgression, a lack of hope, and a reduced likelihood of reconciliation. Thus, I would expect:

Proposition 1: Perceived sincerity will moderate reconciliation; such that perceptions of sincerity will increase the likelihood of successful reconciliation.

Characteristics of the Relationship

Another factor that is expected to affect the likelihood of reconciliation involves the characteristics of the relationship prior to the transgression. The conceptualization proposed here is consistent with that proposed by Lewicki & Bunker (1996), which states that the characteristics of the relationship include the nature of the past connection between the two parties (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Tomlinson et al., 2004). In other words, if the relationship was positive and closes prior to a transgression, reconciliation is more likely to occur. In contrast, a relationship that was strained and distant prior to a transgression, is less likely to result in reconciliation. According to Kramer (1986), individuals also consider the characteristics of the relationship prior to the transgression to determine the perceived likelihood of another future trust violation, which likely contributes to the victim's decision to reconcile or not. Thus, the characteristics of the relationship before the transgression will moderate the likelihood of

reconciliation, with positive characteristics increasing the likelihood of reconciliation and negative characteristics decreasing the likelihood. Thus, I would expect that:

Proposition 2a: Characteristics of the relationship will moderate reconciliation; such that positive relationship characteristics will increase the likelihood of successful reconciliation.

Proposition 2b: Characteristics of the relationship will moderate reconciliation; such that negative relationship characteristics will decrease the likelihood of successful reconciliation.

Choice of Reconciliation Tactic

Reconciliation tactics are tools or methods that an offender can adopt with the goal of attempting to reconcile the relationship after a trust violation. There are several different types of reconciliation tactics that are possible to employ, these include making a formal apology, attempts to placate the victim through prosocial behaviors (i.e., favors, compensation, kindness, etc.), as well as statements of remorse or regret, denial, demonstration of concern, compensation, and penance. Each of these tactics has implications for the offender's inclination to recognize and take responsibility for the wrongdoing; the amount of concern the offender is willing to demonstrate toward the victim for the offense, and the victim's subsequent motivation to reconcile the relationship.

A formal apology includes an explicit statement of remorse accompanied by an attempt by the offender to reshape the impressions of the victim's intent and motives (Goffman, 1972). An apology is usually considered the most effective reconciliation tactic (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). Research has shown that apologies are very useful in reducing aggression and vengeful behavior in people who have been harmed (Ohbuchi, Kameda & Agarie, 1989). However, it is also evident that more extensive apologies are required to resolve violations to more serious offenses (Tomlinson, Dineen, Lewicki, 2004; Sitkin & Bies, 1993). In contrast, reconciliation tactics that lack one or more of the components of a formal apology are far less effective. For instance, when a victim perceives that they are being placated or pacified with disingenuous appeals for sympathy by the transgressor, that excuses are being made, or that the transgressor is failing to take sufficient blame for the violation, the consequences of reconciliation can actually be deleterious (Schlenker, Pontari & Christopher, 2001). Thus, I would expect:

Proposition 3a: The choice of reconciliation tactics will influence reconciliation, such that a formal apology will increase the likelihood of successful reconciliation.

Proposition 3b: The choice of reconciliation tactics will influence reconciliation, such that any tactic other than a formal apology will decrease the likelihood of successful reconciliation.

Elapsed Time

Another proposed factor that affects the likelihood of reconciliation is the amount of time that passes between the transgression or trust violation and the transgressor's reconciliation attempt. Because trust violations often involve negative emotions and stress for the victim (Aquino, Tripp & Bies, 2001), the incident is more likely to provoke rumination and worry the longer the victim is left without an explanation. I would expect passing time to exacerbate the negative consequences of the transgression and make reconciliation less likely. This is similar to

the view of Tomlinson et al. (2004), who found that victims were more willing to reconcile if the offender engaged in swift restorative action. In their study of the factors that predicted forgiveness, they argue that when individuals make sense of ambiguous situations when no explanation for the transgression is given, they tend to rely on contextual cues or prior information (Griffin & Ross, 1991). This subjective interpretation of the violation usually does not result in a favorable determination for the transgressor from the victim's perspective (Tomlinson et al., 2004: 170). I agree with this logic and therefore predict that elapsed time will negatively impact reconciliation, such that more elapsed time will decrease the likelihood of successful reconciliation. Therefore, I propose that:

Proposition 4a: Elapsed time will influence reconciliation, such that more time between transgression and appeal will decrease the likelihood of successful reconciliation.

Proposition 4b: Elapsed time will influence reconciliation, such that less time between transgression and appeal will increase the likelihood of successful reconciliation.

Environmental Factors

Factors of the environment likely play an important role in a victim's perceptions of the situation and thus influence willingness to reconcile with the transgressor. In other words, aspects of the situation, such as stress and urgency, likely add to the negative psychological toll of the encounter and make reconciliation less likely. Although existing research on the role of environmental factors in relationship repair is lacking in terms of specific evidence of its effects, a large body of research on stress suggests that its consequences for interpersonal interactions are almost always negative (Lazarus, 1991). Specifically, the experience of stressful situations results in the release of cortisol, a hormone linked to increased feelings of distress, aggression, and fear (Lovallo & Thomas, 2000). Prior research also shows a clear association between frustration and the violation of social norms, and a range of negative cognitive, affective and arousal reactions, including aggression (Neuman & Barron, 1997). In a study of the impact of stress on interpersonal workplace relationships, Glomb (2002) found that increased levels of stress, led to a higher likelihood of interpersonal conflict among coworkers and subsequently, heightened feelings of interpersonal hostility. Thus, in relation to reconciliation efforts, a stressful situation will most likely have adverse consequences. Similarly, situational urgency or a feeling of panic and anxiety (Kellerman & Park, 2001) will likely affect reconciliation in the same negative way. Therefore, I expect that:

Proposition 5a: Environmental factors will influence reconciliation; such that situational stress will decrease the likelihood of successful reconciliation.

Proposition 5b: Environmental factors will influence reconciliation; such that situational urgency will decrease the likelihood of successful reconciliation.

In sum, the conceptual model proposed here is the first to integrate the three processes of trust repair, relationship repair, and forgiveness, which are currently conceptualized in isolation. However, as explained above, they can effectively be combined and integrated to create a comprehensive process model of relationship repair that includes the other two processes. Specifically, the new model represents forgiveness as an antecedent to trust repair, where it must occur prior to reconciliation and trust repair as the conclusion of the process of relationship

repair. Further, the model includes five factors which are likely to moderate reconciliation; sincerity of appeal, characteristics of the relationship, choice of reconciliation tactic, elapsed time, and environmental factors. Each of these five factors likely affects the extent to which an individual who has been harmed is likely to reconcile with the transgressor. Thus, the development of a model, such as the one proposed above, that organizes and integrates these ideas into one conceptual process is an important contribution to a domain that is otherwise fragmented and disjointed.

Further, given the well-known importance of trust in organizational relationships and the serious consequences that damaged trust and the resulting negative interpersonal exchanges has on work outcomes, there is immense interest and need to understand when and how trust can be restored after a transgression or negative interaction. This paper also bridges an important gap by blending our existing knowledge of organization-level trust repair with perspectives and insight garnered from the forgiveness domain, thus bringing the two separate domains of organizational-level and individual-level relationship repair closer together. Finally, although the model proposed here is a step in the right direction, the field is clearly in its infancy with many important unanswered questions and fruitful research inquiries that still remain. This model should be thought of as merely a starting point for future theoretical and empirical work that seeks to further incorporate and unite these three domains.

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