The lifecycle of trust in educational leadership: an ecological perspective

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As establishing and fostering trust are imperative activities for school leaders, cognizance of the fundamental importance of trust is essential for the leader's moral agency and ethical decision-making. In this article, we use an ecological perspective to uncover the dynamics of the lifecycle of trust as evident from extant literature on leadership in general and educational leadership in particular. Upon describing the role of trust in leadership and moral agency, we outline the importance of trust in school organizations and describe its fragile nature. Furthermore, we review the pertinent literature with respect to lifecycle stages (most often overlapping and without any set boundaries) of establishing, maintaining, sustaining, breaking and restoring trust in educational settings. We conclude that understanding the dynamic nature and ecological lifecycle of trust is an important undertaking for school leaders because they, as moral agents, are called to model and mediate the pervasive trust-related processes in schools.

Introduction

As we interact with school leaders about the social and relational dynamics of their lifeworlds, we are struck by the ebb and flow patterns, the comings and goings, the seasons, the crises and calms, the times when relationships seem seamless, casual and taken for granted, and the times when relationships demand full and even disproportionate attention. The lifeworld of leadership (Sergiovanni, 2000) is a world of purposes, norms, growth and development; it is about the essence of values and beliefs, expressions of needs, purposes and desires of people, and the sources of deep satisfaction in the form of meaning and significance in schools. In this sense, school organizations are living and breathing systems or, as we prefer to say: 'ecosystems'. School ecosystems are not merely problems to

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be solved or mechanically tuned, but rather, they are mysteries to be embraced. School ecosystems are wonderfully complicated and intricate settings, where the addition of each unique person will exponentially and beautifully complexify the lifeworld of those the school organization hosts (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). In our work, we have often invited school leaders to consider two pictures: one of a bicycle and the other a frog. First, we invite these colleagues to imagine taking a bike apart, piece by piece, and then to consider the reassembly process; we then ask if the same approach might be taken with the frog. In some ways, this is a ridiculous proposition; but we wonder if sometimes we misorient our 'fixing' of schools using a bike approach. School organizations, like frogs or other living systems, consist of interdependent parts and are infinitely complex and fragile.

Utilizing this ecological perspective, we view schools as living systems —inherently unstable, interdependent networks that cannot be understood through mechanical analytical processes, but through a holistic interpretation of how a school's social systems, created by the people within it, interconnect, develop and progress (Clarke, 2000; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011; Wheatley, 1999). In the ecological view, no one aspect of a system can be thought of as a separate entity from any other part; instead, there is an emphasis on connectedness, relationships and contextual interdependency. Furthermore, such an ecological perspective regards relationships amongst the members that comprise the school organization as essential to creating the sustainability of the learning community and its members. One construct that seems vital to the well-being of the living system of a school is trust. Trust acts as an anti-toxin, a health-giving ingredient for the fostering of good will, excellent working conditions, and enhanced learning experiences. Of course, trust can be built, brokered and bolstered, as well as breached, broken and betrayed.

It seems to us that establishing, sustaining and fostering trust are imperative activities for educational leaders and that cognizance of the fundamental importance of trust is essential for their moral agency and ethical decision-making. In this paper, we use this ecological perspective to convey the dynamics of the lifecycle of trust as evident from extant literature on leadership in general and educational leadership in particular. Upon describing the role of trust in leadership and moral agency, we outline the importance of trust in school organizations and describe its fragile nature. Furthermore, we review the pertinent literature with respect to lifecycle stages (most often overlapping and without any set boundaries) of establishing, maintaining, sustaining, breaking and restoring trust in educational settings.

Trust and moral agency in leadership

Trust has been recognized as an important factor in leadership (Bracey, 2002; Csorba, 2004; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Galford & Drapeau, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). The importance of trust is founded upon the very nature of leadership, as a process whereby an individual influences a

group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2013). One's leadership is considered trustworthy based on the leader's conduct, integrity, use of control, ability to communicate and ability to express interest for members (Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998). Moreover, some types of leaders (e.g. servant, ethical, authentic, charismatic and transformational) are considered to be more effective than others in promoting trusting relationships with their followers (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, & May, 2004; Hassan & Forbis, 2011; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Norman, 2006). Overall, trust is the lubricant that enables a leader in an organization to bring about transformational change (Browning, 2014).

Fundamentally, leaders are moral agents in their organizations, responsible for choosing a certain course of action from alternatives. The use of the notion of moral agency varies across sectors but typically a leader (agent) acts on behalf of another person or an organization. Moral agency is a person's ability to make moral judgments based on some commonly held notion of right and wrong and to be held accountable for these actions (Angus, 2003). Moral agency is characterized by consistent ethical living, the development of one's moral character, the cost of following the principles of ethics and the care one has for others (Hester & Killian, 2011). Agents are morally bound to pursue the aims of their 'principal' and to superordinate their own interests such that they do not violate the rights of others or doing anything immoral (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2013). Moreover, leaders are not only faced with right vs. wrong dilemmas (where there is potential for the violation of a certain core moral value), but also with a right vs. right dilemmas (where different core moral values come in conflict) (Kidder, 2005). These dilemmas test the integrity and trust quotient of leaders with their constituents. In school settings, trust is both a means and measure of manifested moral agency, and therefore, it is important to recognize the central role of a leader as a trust broker for themselves and others in a school organization.

The trust imperative and fragility

Despite the fact that scholars have studied the construct of trust for many years, there is no apparent consensus on a best definition of trust, mainly due to its complex, situated and multi-faceted nature. What is common across most definitions of trust, either explicitly or implicitly, is the willingness to risk in the face of vulnerability; it might be said that where there is no vulnerability or risk, there is no need for trust (Currall & Epstein, 2003). Of course it is unimaginable, within the social ecosystem of a school learning community, that there would ever be a point of time or set of conditions where there was no vulnerability of persons and no risk. Commonly, school leaders (formal and informal) take large and small risks, without a guarantee of success, and, in doing so, become vulnerable without knowing whether this vulnerability will be respected, reciprocated or exploited (Lencioni, 2005). Through the synthesis of

common definitions of trust, we have come to understand trust as the extent to which one engages in a reciprocal interaction and a relationship in such a way that there is willingness to be vulnerable to another and to assume risk with positive expectations and a degree of confidence that the other party will possess some semblance of benevolence, care, competence, honesty, openness, reliability, respect, hope and wisdom (Daly, 2009; Day, 2009; Mishra, 1996; Mishra & Mishra, 2013; Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

It is well known that trust is essential for the well-being of organizations (Donaldson, 2001; Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998). Currall and Epstein (2003, p. 203) emphasized the centrality and fragility of trust in an organization: 'If properly developed, trust can propel [organizations] to greatness. Improperly used, trust can plant the seeds of collapse.' A dilemma of trust is that 'trust, an essential element in all satisfying relationships, is a fragile thing, easier to break than to build' (Govier, 1998, p. 204). The fragility of trust lies in its specific nature, built on two conditions: interdependence and risk (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). Both interdependence and risk are afforded within the ebb and flow of a social ecosystem. Accordingly, trust matters most in symbiotic situations of interdependence, in which the interest of one party cannot be achieved without reliance upon another. Trust plays a critical role in collaborative contexts where parties are dependent upon each other for something they care about or need (Coleman, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Interdependence, however, brings with it vulnerability and trust may be understood to be the extent to which one is willing to rely upon and make oneself vulnerable to another (Baier, 1994). In other words, where we have guarantees or proofs in relationships, the requirement of certain trust thresholds is minimized and even considered redundant (O'Neill, 2002). At the same time, however, we know that trust is often broken or violated and that relationships are not stable, linear and absolutely predictable. Because there are no iron clad guarantees in relationships and, certainly, not within the constellational complexities of a school learning community, trust sometimes can be misplaced or displaced by one or the other of the parties, letting each other down. In such cases, trust is diminished and relationships can be damaged. When a violation occurs, trust can be shattered, leaving distrust in its place (Burt & Knez, 1996). Slovic (1993) argued that broken trust requires a long time to rebuild and that, in some cases, lost trust may never be restored. However, as O'Neill (2002) summarily observed, trust is hard earned and easily dissipated, but it is nonetheless valuable social capital and must not to be squandered.

The lifecycle of trust stages

Trust 'operates within the cognitive and psychological domain as a motive for behaviour, at the interpersonal level to shape social exchanges, and within organizations to influence collective performance' (Adams, 2008, pp. 29–30). A question that begs our response is: how is this pervasive,

multidimensional, and dynamic phenomenon established, maintained, sustained, broken, and restored? Tschannen-Moran (2004) argued that the way trust unfolds will not be the same at all times and in all places, as it takes on different characteristics at different stages of a relationship. In this and the following sections, we will examine a few ways that trust can develop, with special reference to the dynamics of trust within particular school ecosystems.

Establishing trust

Increasingly, the establishment and building of trust is acknowledged as a key capability for educational leadership (Gronn, 2011). We realize that trust cannot be established overnight; the process of establishing trust is time consuming and is co-dependent on a multitude of interrelationships within a school ecosystem. Trust is also a phenomenon that requires certain intentions, efforts and work on the part of those involved in the process. A state of trust is not automatic, but, rather, trust is created by the things one does (or fails to do): 'trusting is something that we individually *do*; it is something we make, we create, we build, we maintain, we sustain with our promises, our commitments, our emotions and our sense of our own integrity' (Solomon & Flores, 2001, p. 5). Moreover, sustainable trust does not just happen; trust is essentially a co-learned and situated set of behaviours. Like love, trust is also an emotional skill: 'It requires judgment. It requires vigilant attention. It requires conscientious action. It involves all of the intricate reciprocities of a human relationship (even in cases where it remains "unrequited")' (p. 6). Engendering trust may be seen as rooted in a human virtue, with which the leader works to cultivate and habituate positive relationships and conditions through speech, conversation, commitments and action.

Leaders can facilitate or nurture trust through employing various *facets of trust* around which individuals base their trust judgments in relationships: benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, openness, hope and wisdom (Day, 2009; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Norman, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Perhaps the most essential ingredient and commonly recognizable facet of trust is the sense of caring or benevolence, or the confidence that one's well-being or something one cares about will be protected by the good will of a trusted person or group. Reliability is the extent to which one can count on another to come through with what is needed or the sense that one is able to consistently depend on another (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Reliability combines a sense of predictability with benevolence. Predictability, alone, is insufficient because a person might be consistently malevolent and, therefore, untrustworthy. There are times when good intentions are not enough. When a person is dependent on another and some level of skill is involved in fulfilling an expectation, then a person who means well may nonetheless not be trusted. Thus, competence, as the ability to perform a task as expected, becomes important and is accorded appropriate standards or measured expectations. Honesty is a fundamental facet of trust (Cummings & Bromily, 1996). Honesty concerns a person's

character, their integrity and their authenticity. Trusting another means that one can expect that the word or promise of the other person, whether verbal or written, can be relied upon. Openness is the extent to which relevant information is not withheld or exploited to ensure reciprocal trust and confidence. Other facets include hope that is nurtured, realized and renewed by the leader, and wisdom, or the extent to which the leader makes prudent, rightly discerned and timely decisions (Day, 2009).

At its core, trust is about continuous and sustained relationships (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Helstad & Møller, 2013; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Maister, Green, & Galford, 2004). In the context of a dynamic social ecosystem (a school), trust is derived from repeated interactions between trustor and trustee (Rousseau et al., 1998), with literally hundreds of moderating or mediating variables that bombard and benefit the state of the relationship. Social relations and the obligations inherent in such relations are mainly responsible for the production of trust. In the broad sense, relational trust grows from social respect and diminishes when individuals perceive that others are behaving in ways that seem inconsistent with their expectations about the other's role obligations to do the right thing in a respectful way for the right reasons. It has been said that 'central to the concepts of trust, seen as embodied in structures of social relations, is uncertainty about other people's motivations' (Misztal, 1996, p. 21).

As trust develops in newly established work relationships, an initial period of impression making is followed by a period of more intense exploration. It would seem that 'trust is established through a commitment period during which each partner has the opportunity to signal to the other a willingness to accept personal risk and not to exploit the vulnerability of the other for personal gain' (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p. 42). Shapiro, Sheppard, and Cheraskin (1992) described this type of trust as knowledge-based trust, wherein regular communication and courtship are used by the parties to determine if they can work well together, by being careful not to violate the other's developing trust. This trust is based on the other's predictability (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996) and reputation (Ensminger, 2001). At the same time, although it is intuitive that trust may grow gradually and over time, scholars have been surprised to find higher levels of initial trust than expected between parties who had little knowledge of each other (so-called 'swift trust'). Tschannen-Moran (2004) argued that provisional trust is extended in these cases until evidence surfaces to suggest that the other is untrustworthy; subsequently, triggering defensive action. In other words, the default condition is trust, and it only changes when there is a reason or feeling that the trust is misplaced by the actions of the trusted one.

In addition to social processes and exchanges, trust may result from calculation or from shared values (Liebskind & Oliver, 2000). Process-based trust is built up over time; as actors have interactions, they will update their information about each other's capabilities and character will recalibrate their trust or distrust of one another. Calculative trust is based on estimates of another's motives and interests; these comprise both the gains from behaving in a trustworthy manner (or not), and the costs that

may result from trustworthy or otherwise behaviour. Value-based trust is predicated on the understanding that the actors share norms and continue to share norms of what constitutes trustworthy behaviour in relation to particular types of exchange, in particular social ecosystems.

Maintaining trust

Establishment of trusting relationships is only the beginning of the trust development process. Trust is only as durable as the proximal conditions and socio-ecological dynamics that support it (Messick & Kramer, 2001). If empathy disappears, trust may also dissipate. If positive affect evaporates, the behaviours that depend on the affect will also change. People continually, consciously and perhaps unconsciously monitor relationships and evaluate them both in terms of the relative value of the outcomes and in terms of procedures. In other words, 'people ask whether what they get out of a relationship is commensurate with what they think others are getting out of relationships, and they also ask whether the rules of the relationship are fair' (Messick & Kramer, 2001, p. 101). Therefore, trusting relationships between leaders and followers need to be constantly maintained in order to ensure trusting relationships within the school organization's ecosystem.

Once initiated, trust relationships tend to be maintained in two broadly defined ways: 'through direct recognition of the value of the relationship and through indirect feedback, which stimulates continuation or iteration of the reciprocal dealings that constitute the relationship' (Hardin, 2002, p. 145). The mode of direct recognition may be the whole story for many dyadic trust relationships, as people involved know that continued interaction with each other will benefit them.

Modelling and extending trust are pivotal activities for leaders not only to establish but also to maintain the reciprocal nature of trust in their respective settings. Trustworthy behaviour can cultivate trustworthy norms of behaviour among the staff and employees. In fact, one of the most powerful actions of a leader is to articulate and enforce norms of behaviour that will foster a greater level of trust within the organization. Typically, 'enforcing the norms means calling people who break those norms to account for their actions, doing so in ways that do not embarrass, humiliate, or demean them but that challenge them to behave better in the future' (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p. 59). However, according to Annison and Wilford (1998), one should always be aware of rights and responsibilities: 'Developing trusting relationships—in our personal lives and at work—requires that we understand the balance between rights—what we think we are entitled to—and responsibilities—our obligations to the people around us and the community or which we are part' (p. 98).

The most effective means to maintain trust is openness in communication. According to Govier (1998), trust is 'a presumption of meaningful communication' (p. 8). In our view, the greatest challenge to communication is that it is too often assumed to have taken place. Similarly, the belief that communication has occurred at one point may lead to the

perception of sufficiency for the trust it engenders to be automatically maintained. We listen to others because we assume we can believe what they say; we speak to others because we assume they are able to understand what we say. Shurtleff (1998) argued that open and direct communication is necessary for the maintenance of an ecosystem of trust. Similarly, Gabarro (1990) found that 'mature and stable relationships are characterized by greater multimodality [of communication] than casual or less intense relationships' (p. 84). Therefore, trust is maintained through the facilitation of ongoing communication, whereas 'access to information and the shared perception of openness in decision-making support[s] an ongoing commitment to collective action and the mutual trust required to proceed' (Fauske, 1999, p. 12). Gimbel (2003) suggested the following trust enhancers in the form of supportive and communication behaviours: maintaining confidentiality, consistency, reliability, admitting mistakes, showing respect and care for others, timely and accurate communication, empathy, shared decision-making, conflict resolution and availability to others.

Bennis (1999) described five 'C' factors that not only help the leader generate but also maintain trust: competence, constancy, caring, candour and congruity. Beginning with congruity, Bennis viewed this construct as closely related to 'authenticity', which he thought reflects character. But congruity goes beyond simply knowing oneself; it requires constancy, presenting the same face at work as at home, or presenting the same face at home as at church. Candour is fundamental to maintaining trust, because by acknowledging our shortcomings, we earn both the understanding and trust of the followers. Caring leader proactively engages and invests himself in the professional lives and, occasionally, in the personal lives of his followers. Last and perhaps the least vital characteristic of trust maintenance is competence. While essential, it has been vastly overemphasized at the expense of the other more enduring trust-engendering characteristics of candour, caring, constancy and congruity.

Sustaining trust

If organizational ecosystems are to reap the rewards of a trusting work environment, it is the leader's responsibility to not only generate but also to sustain trusting relationships (Whitener et al., 1998). We would suggest that maintaining trust is present-focus and sustaining trust is future-focused. One of the most challenging tasks for school leaders is to create strategies, ethos and mechanisms to preserve and improve the trust once it is established and to do so in a fashion that makes this trust last. This challenge is more easily well intended and said than it is done. Tschannen-Moran (2004) viewed sustaining as development of authentic and optimal levels of trust, characterized by deep and complete interdependence and vulnerability without anxiety. Sustainability of relationships puts trust squarely in a place of resonance with the metaphor of ecological language. According to Hardin (2002), a leader's trustworthiness is the foundation for enhancing trust:

> If my trust in you is well placed, that is because you are likely to have the motivation to do what I trust you to do. That is to say, you are likely to be trustworthy. In the encapsulated-interest account, trustworthiness is just the capacity to judge one's interests as dependent on doing what one is trusted to do. In virtually all accounts, the central problem in your trustworthiness is your commitment to fulfill another's trust in you. (p. 28)

In general, one can imagine that enhancing trustworthiness will increase levels of trust because people will tend to recognize the level of trustworthiness in others, which in turn leads to more productive cooperation in organizations (Hardin, 2002). Furthermore, trustworthiness builds social capital:

> There might be some feedback between trust and further development of trust. I cooperate with you, discover your trustworthiness, and therefore cooperate even more or on even more important matters with you. If I trust most of the people with whom I interact, I might also begin to take the risk of cooperating with almost anyone I meet, at least if they are likely to remain in my ambit. Hence my general optimism about others is a benefit to those others when they might wish to cooperate with me (or even to abuse my optimistic expectations). (p. 84)

However, according to Hardin, it is the high level of trustworthiness of people in the network or ecosystem that generates this benefit. On the encapsulated interest accounting of this, their trustworthiness is the result of their having an interest in being trustworthy toward those with whom they have ongoing interactions that are beneficial and are likely to continue to be.

A few decades ago, Kouzes and Posner (1993) discussed the importance of 'value-added competence' for leaders to sustain the trust of their followers. What this means is that we are more likely to have confidence in well-meaning people who can perform their technical, professional and people-oriented functions well. This account calls upon more than trusting those who are merely well intended. Leader-watchers expect a certain level of performance from their leaders. Over half the respondents in their study said that leaders who have a sense of direction and convictions about how to move closer to preferred futures garnered their confidence. Finally, Kouzes and Posner's study pointed to the importance that followers place on the ability of leaders to communicate, encourage and inspire the confidence of people towards worthwhile goals. Personal conviction, passion, commitment and enthusiasm for the cause of the organization or community were cited as key attributes of leader trustworthiness.

Breaking trust

Trust in school organizations is often taken for granted; as a rule, when the people one trusts do as expected, then one barely notices its erosion or incremental disruption. Perhaps, one reason for this is that 'we underrate the significance of trust in our strong tendency not to notice it until it breaks down' (Govier, 1998, p. 5). The general expectations and assumptions for smooth functioning, reliability and loyalty as routine aspects of our social and institutional lifeworlds mean that people are especially shocked when things go wrong. Situations inevitably arise when

what is cared for is harmed, even if by accident, or the trusted person betrays the trust and exploits the other to personal advantage (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). A failure to follow up with what one has promised to do will threaten to break the trust or completely arrest its development (Simons, 2002). School leaders are not exempt from being the trust breakers; in addition to observing trust betrayals and broken bonds of trust, they can be the trust violators and/or victims of trust breakdowns.

Most often, trust in organizations is broken by betrayal, breach of confidentiality, deception, dishonesty, breach of integrity, corruption, coercion, overuse of power, exclusion of others or divisiveness among staff (Bies & Tripp, 1996; Cooper, 2004; Gimbel, 2003; Marshall, 2000; O'Neill, 2002; Reina & Reina, 1999; Solomon & Flores, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

The most commonly discussed breach is *betrayal*. Reina and Reina (2006) referred to betrayal as an intentional or unintentional breach of trust or the perception of such a breach. They noted, 'intentional betrayal is a self-serving action committed with the purpose of hurting, damaging, or harming another person. Unintentional betrayal is the by-product of a self-serving action that results in people being hurt, damaged, or harmed' (p. 109). Whatever its cause, betrayal disrupts trust and damages relationships within a social ecosystem. Despite the fact that most betrayals are minor, the effects of betrayal can be lasting and aggregate to reach a critical mass or tipping point. Subtle betrayals may seem innocent and unimportant, yet can morph into more severe hurts and contribute too much to the negative feelings that employees have toward their bosses, to each other and to their organizations. Not keeping one's promises, gossiping and hoarding pertinent information are everyday occurrences that translate into the sense of betrayal. It is not uncommon for minor betrayals to escalate into major betrayals if they are not addressed and resolved (Reina & Reina, 2006). Minor betrayals seem to stay alive in people's minds; these root and grow bitterness and enmity.

In organizations, betrayals often take two forms: damage to the civic order or damage to one's sense of identity (Bies & Tripp, 1996). Violations of trust that result in a damaged sense of civic order involve a breach of rules or norms of governing behaviour and expectations of what people owe to one another in a relationship. These include honour violations such as broken promises, lying or stealing ideas or credit from others. Violations may also involve a *breach of confidentiality*. Damage to a person's identity can result from public criticism, wrong or unfair accusations, blaming of employees for personal mistakes or insults to one's self or the collective (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

Currall and Epstein (2003) posited that when trust-destroying events occur, the overall level of trust plummets quickly into the domain of distrust. The speed with which trust can be destroyed depends on the magnitude of damage from the act of untrustworthiness and the perceived intentionality of the untrustworthiness. They have said, 'In cases when the loss is particularly great, trust can evaporate almost immediately' (p. 197). Moreover, if seen as intentional, the destruction of trust is

particularly severe, as intentional untrustworthiness reveals malevolent intentions (which are seen as highly probable of predicting future untrustworthiness as well). Barber (1983) noted, 'when trust fails or weakens in small or informally organized communities, the members may use various means of informal social control—ridicule, ostracism, unhelpfulness, and the like—to bring an untrustworthy actor into line' (p. 22).

Restoring of broken trust

Reparation of broken trust is not an easy undertaking; it can be a long, arduous and difficult process of restoring the previously healthy and thriving trusting relationships between the violator and the victim (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Lewicki & Wiethoff, 2000; Slovic, 1993). When a social environment is spoiled or polluted, it may take a great deal of time to restore the well-being of that environment to its previous state. In some cases, permanent and irreparable damage can be done. We know that the pathways to restoration of trust are as complex as the pathways into the breakdown of trust, and step-by-step approaches to trust brokering are not always the best solutions in various situations. However, some authors have provided helpful linear guideposts for the journey of restoration. We provide these to our readers along with our commentary, which will unearth the principles that underlie these more mechanical expressions.

Repairing trust is a two-way process in which each side must perceive that the short- or long-term benefits to be gained from the relationship are sufficiently valuable to be worth the investment of time and energy required by the repair process (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Each party must perceive that the benefits of repairing the relationship are worth the effort. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) argued that the initiative for the repair of trust begins with the violator, who must take the following steps: (1) recognize and acknowledge that a violation has occurred; (2) determine the nature of the violation and admit that one has caused the event; (3) admit that the act was destructive; and (4) accept responsibility for the effects of one's actions. The violator may also engage in the 'four A's of absolution' (Tschannen-Moran, 2004): 'admit it, apologize, ask forgiveness, and amend your ways' (p. 155). There are then four alternative courses of trust repair to be chosen by the victim. The victim can: (1) refuse to accept any actions, terms or conditions for re-establishing the relationship; (2) acknowledge forgiveness but specify 'unreasonable' acts of reparation; (3) acknowledge forgiveness and specify 'reasonable' acts of reparation; and (4) acknowledge forgiveness and indicate that no further acts or reparation are necessary (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998).

In addition, the repair of trust may be initiated by the victim. Reina and Reina (1999) identified seven steps for healing from betrayal on behalf of the victim. The first step is to observe and acknowledge what has happened. Moving from betrayal to trust starts with self-discovery. We must consciously observe and acknowledge our thoughts and feelings before we can do something about them. The second step is to allow

one's feelings to surface. The third step is to get support. Healing from major betrayal is like any major change process: it is difficult to do alone. Fourth, one needs to reframe the experience and put it in a larger context. The answers will allow the victim to gain clarity regarding the feelings, think about things in a different way and reframe past experiences. Step five is to take responsibility for personal role in the process. It is far more productive to accept responsibility for working things through than to place blame. The sixth step is to forgive oneself and the others: 'Forgiveness,' they say, 'provides us with an opportunity to heal our wounds more rapidly' (p. 56). And finally, step seven entails reflecting on the experience, letting go and moving on.

For school leaders as moral agents, rebuilding of trust, first and foremost, goes hand in hand with rebuilding of truth, promise-keeping and supporting the followers (Navran, 1995). Trust repair may be facilitated by working towards establishing or re-establishing good communication, being meticulously reliable and using persuasion rather than coercion. Overall, restoration is 'facilitated by constructive attitudes, clear boundaries, communication of promises and credible threats, and constructive conflict resolution strategies' (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p. 161). A leader may also restore trustworthiness through behavioural consistency, behavioural integrity, sharing and delegation of control, communication and demonstration of concern (Whitener et al., 1998). Similarly, Galford and Drapeau (2002) suggested that trust can be repaired through recognition of the loss of trust, examination of the breach and damages, communication, acknowledgement of the impact, identification of trust-rebuilding steps and reflection.

We would reiterate that as one looks at school learning communities as ecosystems, it is necessary to appreciate that formula-based, linear and mechanical re-assembly is not easy and nor straightforward. The damage can be deeper and wider that first imagined. There are no quick fixes. Therefore, the guidance, above, provides only general insight into productive and reconstructive trust-brokering efforts. As Tschannen-Moran (2004) argued, there is both good and bad news in the process of trust brokering: the good news is that in many instances, the trust that has been damaged can be repaired; the bad news is that restoration of trust is an arduous process that requires humility and effort and may extend over a long period. School principals as leaders and moral agents are called to model trust-brokering efforts in their schools, whether in a situation when they are rebuilding their trusting relationships with other stakeholders or when they help others in this process. In doing so, they often find themselves between a rock and a hard place, seemingly having to play the needs of one constituent off those of another (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Therefore, embracing the moral agency role by school administrators in brokering low trust situations is pivotal for the well-being of all stakeholders within the interdependent school ecosystem.

Conclusions

We conclude that seeking to understand the dynamic nature and ecological lifecycle of trust is an important undertaking for school leaders because they, as moral agents, are called upon to model and mediate the processes underpinning the establishing, maintaining, sustaining, breaking and especially restoring of trusting relationships in schools. Modelling values through demeanour and actions is a way to foster trusting relationships and project hope in uncertain times. We believe school leaders need to be able to stand back and see the large picture with respect to human relationships. While naively assuming the steady state of trust within a school learning community is problematic, so is the presumption that the state of trust can be controlled or manipulated by certain formula geared to engender trust. Trust is a multi-splendoured phenomenon and, we think, is best seen in the context of a living ecosystem. One of the key roles of a school leader is to bring attention and action to foster harmony and hope in the ecosystem. A school environment is most productive when the good will of its members is fully engaged and relationships are in the best of condition. States of equilibrium and disequilibrium, change and constancy, chaos and order are natural for the social systems of schools. The role of a school leader as a broker of trust is an important one, together with the role of reminding the learning community of its purpose and giving each member a sense of efficacy and agency in the attaining of the greater ends. As Gardner (1990) asserted, 'the first and the last task of a leader is to keep hope alive' (p. 195). Similarly, Walker (2006) argued, 'hope is a necessary element for leaders since it has implications for action visioning, planning, and the practical outworking of such plans—and for interpersonal relatedness and community building' (p. 564). Agentic leaders build capacity through engendering trust and by fostering 'warranted hope' (Walker & Atkinson, 2010), grounded in leaderful diligence, mindful practice, prophetic sense making and adaptive confidence. Therefore, further exploration of the ecological conditions and processes that enable leaders and followers to learn to trust and cooperate is critical as schools increasingly face changing expectations.

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