Trust in schools: a conceptual and empirical analysis

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The philosopher Annette Baier (1985) observes that trust is so ubiquitous we hardly notice it. “Most of us notice ... trust most easily after its sudden demise or severe injury. We inhabit a climate of trust as we inhabit an atmosphere and notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted” (p. 234). If this is the case, then the quality and quantity of trust within organizations and society is apparently on the decline, because trust has become a subject of study in sociology (Coleman, 1990), economics (Fukuyama, 1995), and organizational science (Gambetta, 1988; Kramer and Tyler, 1996; Shaw, 1997).

Increasingly, trust is seen as a vital element in well functioning organizations. Trust is necessary for the effective co-operation and communication which are the bases for productive relationships (Baier, 1985). It is the “mortar that binds leader to follower”, and forms the basis for leaders’ legitimacy (Nanus, 1989, p. 101). Trust has been described as “a remarkably efficient lubricant” that reduces the complexities of organizational life and facilitates transactions far more quickly and economically than other means of managing (Powell, 1990).

Relationships within organizations tend to be ongoing, in that people expect to continue to relate to the same network of people over time. When this is the case, there is incentive to behave in ways that are trustworthy, to develop a reputation for trustworthiness, and to reap the benefits of trusting relationships. Engendering distrust can be costly. As trust declines the costs of doing business increase, because people must engage in self-protective actions and be “continually making provisions for the possibility of opportunistic behavior” on the part of others (Limerick and Cunnington, 1993, pp. 95-6). In the absence of trust “people are increasingly unwilling to take risks, demand greater protections against the possibility of betrayal, and increasingly insist on costly sanctioning mechanisms to defend their interests” (Tyler and Kramer, 1996, pp. 3-4). As a result, the social network of relationships within an organization can exert both formal and informal control that encourages people to act in a trustworthy manner. On the other hand, people’s propensity for gossip, and the speed with which news of betrayal can spread throughout the organizational grapevine, can also make trust harder to establish.

As life has gotten more complex, as changing economic realities and changing expectations in society have made life less predictable, and as new
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forms of information dissemination have increased both the desire for and availability of gossip, we are beginning to “notice” trust more. The study of trust, though, has been impaired by the lack of a clear definition of trust, and little understanding of the dynamic process that trust entails. Studying trust is like studying a moving target because it changes over the course of a relationship, and the nature of a trusting relationship can be altered instantaneously with a simple comment, a betrayed confidence, or a decision that violates the sense of care one has expected of another. This lack of understanding extends to the dynamics of trust in schools as well. Our analysis is a modest beginning with three purposes: first, to explore the meaning and conceptual underpinnings of trust; second, to measure two dimensions of trust and then examine the consequences of climate and the authenticity of principal and teacher behavior in developing trust; and third, to sketch a research agenda for the study of trust in schools.

Conceptual foundations
Our discussion of the conceptual foundations of trust begins with what has turned out to be a thorny issue, the definition of trust. Next, we examine some of the dynamics of trust – the stages of its development, as well as issues of betrayal, revenge and rebuilding broken trust. Finally, the social context of trust as it plays out in organizations, and more specifically, in schools, is then explored.

Definitions of trust
Trust is a complex concept. It has been difficult to pin down because it is based on many factors, varies with the expectations held in different kinds of relationships, and changes over the course of a relationship. Researchers have varied in the dimensions of trust they have emphasized or included in their definitions. Over the past four decades a variety of definitions of trust have been put forth, and there is still little clarity about the exact meaning of trust.

The empirical study of trust began in the late 1950s with an eye toward resolving the escalating suspicions of the Cold War and the costly arms race that had resulted from those tensions. Morton Deutsch (1958) studied trust using mixed-motive games in laboratory experiments with participants who were strangers to one another. He defined trust in behavioral terms, inferring trust when a player made a cooperative move where there was the risk of greater potential loss if one’s co-operative behavior was exploited by an opponent than the potential gain if both players cooperated. Elaborating on Deutsch’s work, but examining trust in the context of organizations, Dale Zand (1971) also defined trust as a behavior. For Zand, trust consisted of actions that increased one’s vulnerability to another whose behavior was not under one’s control in a situation in which the penalty (disutility) one suffered if the other abused that vulnerability was greater than the benefit (utility) one gained if the other did not abuse that vulnerability.
In the late 1960s, the psychologist Julian Rotter (1967) became concerned with the disillusionment of young adults with what they called “The establishment” and the apparent suspicion with which they regarded the institutions and authorities of society. Rotter defined trust in the context of communication, describing it as an expectancy that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group could be relied upon. He developed an instrument that asked participants to make judgments about the trustworthiness of various societal actors such as politicians, doctors, the media, and parents. These judgments were then combined into an overall interpersonal trust score. Rotter was interested in the extent to which the capacity to trust was a generalized trait, resulting from one’s past experiences with important others (although he also recognized that factors related to a specific individual or situation would play a role in a person’s level of trust or suspicion in a particular context).

While Rotter examined attitudes of trust in a generalized sense, Frost et al. (1978) defined trust as a specific judgment about the character of a trusted person. Trust, in their view, was an expectancy held by an individual that the behavior of another person or a group would be altruistic and personally beneficial. Building on this definition they claimed that an individual was more likely to trust another (a) if he believed the other person had nothing to gain from the untrustworthy behavior, (b) if he perceived that he was able to exert some control over the other person’s outcome, and (c) if there was a degree of confidence in the altruism of the trusted person. These researchers joined Rotter in defining trust as an attitude or judgment rather than as a behavior.

Growing out of the philosophical tradition, Baier (1985) added several new dimensions to an understanding of trust. She defined trust as the reliance on others’ competence and willingness to look after, rather than harm, things one cares about which are entrusted to their care:

Since the things we typically do care about and value include such things as we cannot single handedly either create or sustain ... we must allow many other people to get into positions where they can, if they choose, injure what we care about, since those are the same positions that they must be in in order to help us take care of what we care about (p. 236).

What we care about may be things tangible, such as our children or our money, or it may be something intangible such as the ideals of democracy, or norms of respect and tolerance. Schools look after all of these for our society, and consequently the issue of trust is a vital one in the study of schools.

Changed economic realities resulting in changed expectations of what companies owe their employees, as well as other changes in society, have led to a renewed interest in trust in the 1990s. Most contemporary definitions of trust attempt to capture the complexity of trust with explicitly multidimensional definitions, highlighting the many facets of a trusting relationship. Cummings and Bromil (1996) defined trust as “an individual’s belief or a common belief among a group of individuals that another individual or group (a) makes good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit and
implicit, (b) is honest in whatever negotiations preceded such commitments, and (c) does not take excessive advantage of another even when the opportunity is available”. And Mishra's (1996) definition of trust is multidimensional with respect to the qualities possessed by the trusted person. “Trust is one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is (a) competent, (b) reliable, (c) open, and (d) concerned.”

What is common across these definitions of trust, either explicitly or implicitly, is vulnerability. “Trust by its very nature provides opportunities for malefeasance on the part of those being trusted” (Mishra, 1996, p. 265). Baier (1985) describes trust as “accepted vulnerability to another's possible but not expected ill will”. Where there is no vulnerability there is no need for trust. Where consensus is lacking concerns what is required in order to be able to cope with this vulnerability, and the degree of optimism or positive expectation one must hold in order to describe an action or attitude as trusting. For example, if a parent leaves his or her child with a child care provider with significant misgivings, but out of a perception of having no other alternatives, can the parent be said to have trusted the provider (action) or not to have trusted the provider (attitude)? What is the threshold beyond which an attitude or action can no longer be considered trust? Do those thresholds vary across the various dimensions of trust? What is the consequence of feeling confident in another person along certain dimensions, but not along others? Clearly, much remains to be explored in our understanding of trust.

Stages of trust
Trust is a dynamic phenomenon that takes on different characteristics at different stages of a relationship. Lewicki and Bunker (1996) describe three levels or bases of trust that may emerge at different stages in a relationship. At the start of a relationship the trust that exists is a provisional trust resting on the assumption that the other party desires to maintain the relationship, and that a breach of expectations will result in a severing of that tie. This “deterrence based trust” is strengthened when the deterrent or punishment available if either party breaks trust is clear, possible and likely to occur (p. 119). If continued contact and communication do not result in increased trust, then the relationship may remain at this level. “Knowledge-based trust” takes root as actors get to know one another and come to feel able to predict how the other is likely to behave in a given situation. Communication and courtship are key processes in the development of knowledge-based trust (Shapiro et al., 1992). As a relationship matures further the possibility for a deep identification between partners emerges. Identity-based trust exists when there is complete empathy with the other party's desires and intentions. Each of the parties understands and appreciates the other's desires to such an extent that each can effectively act in the other's stead.

Betrayal and revenge
Trust, then, involves placing something one cares about in the care or control of another, with some level of assurance confidence. But what if one's expectations
are not met? What if the one who is trusted acts opportunistically, taking advantage of the confidence placed in him or her? Or what if the trusted person proves not to be competent to fulfill the obligation? Although trust tends to be extended bit by bit, building incrementally, when a violation occurs trust is shattered, often falling off catastrophically, leaving distrust in its place (Burt and Knez, 1996).

Bies and Tripp (1996) classify trust violations within organizations as stemming from two broad categories: a damaged sense of civic order or a damaged identity. The trust violations that resulted in a damaged sense of civic order had to do with a breach of rules or norms governing behavior and what people owed to one another in a relationship. These included honor violations such as broken promises, lying, shirking of job responsibilities, stealing ideas or credit from others, or the disclosure of private confidences and secrets. A damaged sense of civic order could also result from abusive authority where a boss was intolerable or corrupt. Trust violations that resulted in a damaged identity included public criticism, wrong or unfair accusations, or insults to one's self or the collective of which one was a member.

The way a person understands the cause of a violation affects the likely response. In a study where participants recounted on-the-job experiences of violation Bies and Tripp (1996) found that when a victim concluded that an action was outside the control of the perpetrator revenge was not to be sought. However when the victim perceived the behavior to have grown out of selfishness or malevolence on the part of the perpetrator, or from role expectations that violated the victim's sense of fairness, responsibility was assigned and revenge was sought. Victims also assigned responsibility to the system or organization as a whole for hiring or failing to constrain the perpetrator.

Bies and Tripp (1996) reported that cognitive processes played a prominent and mediating role in revenge. At the time the violation occurred people reported having been stunned and confused, followed by anger. Upon reflection people were likely to “discover” more personalistic causes of the violation, thus enhancing blame, paranoid cognitions, and conspiracy theories. They were likely to seek social support and reinforcement for their perceptions. Victims considered a variety of responses to violation, including engaging in revenge fantasies, arranging a private confrontation, seeking identity restoration, withdrawing socially, perpetrating feuding, offering forgiveness, or doing nothing. Contrary to stereotypic notions of revenge, victims’ choice of revenge strategy was “cool and calculated, ... it appeared to be quite rational in both deliberation and delivery” (p. 259). Bies and Tripp did find, however, evidence of “different arithmetics” between victim and perpetrator in estimating the perceived damage and appropriate response, which played a role in the escalation of a conflict. They also concluded that some harms and violations appear to be irreversible. Trust is no longer a possibility in these circumstances.

Rather than seeing revenge in an altogether negative light, Bies and Tripp (1996) saw revenge as playing a potentially positive role in organizational life.
Not only can revenge act as a constraint against the abuse of power and injustice, it can also promote cooperation, and be a potent motivator for constructive change. Revenge has a way of equalizing some of the power differential in organizations. It gives victims a choice of how to respond to a breach in trust. Because the victim, not the perpetrator, restores trust, there is power in forgiveness.

Trust repair
Repairing trust that has been broken can be a difficult and time-consuming process. Lewicki and Bunker (1996) indicate that trust repair is a two-way process, and that each party must be willing to invest time and energy into the repair process. Each party must perceive that the benefits of repairing the relationship are worth the effort that will need to be expended. The initiative for the repair of trust begins with the violator, who must take four steps. The violator must:

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.
4. Accept responsibility for the effects of one's actions.

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 reestablishing the relationship.
2. Acknowledge forgiveness but specify “unreasonable” acts of reparation.
3. Acknowledge forgiveness and specify “reasonable” acts of reparation.
4. Acknowledge forgiveness and indicate that no further acts of reparation are necessary.

Acts of reparation (whether reasonable or unreasonable) are usually designed to test the sincerity and commitment of the violator in the desire to rebuild the relationship. They demonstrate the perpetrator’s willingness to incur certain amounts of personal loss in the interest of restoring the relationship. They also create the opportunity for the violator to work out any guilt over what has taken place.

The social context of trust
The trust between two individuals is significantly influenced by the social context in which it is embedded. A network of mutual friends and acquaintances can enhance the likelihood that a trusting relationship will develop, and will strengthen trust as it develops, but such a context can also amplify the effects of a breach of trust. The judgment, observations, and gossip
of third parties can tend to “lock in” relationships at positive and negative extremes (Burt and Knez, 1996). “Third parties seem to be more alert to negative information, or prefer negative gossip to positive” (p. 81), so particularly where there are weak ties between actors the involvement of other individuals in the social context will be more likely to interfere with rather than enhance the development of trust.

The social context of groups and subgroups needs to be taken into account when examining the dynamics of trust in schools. Networks of friendship may form on the basis of grade-level or subject taught, around instructional philosophies, veteran teachers as opposed to novices, ties with or against the principal, race, gender, location in the building, time of lunch break, or any number of other factors. The norms of these groups can serve to strengthen trust within the subgroup, but may diminish it for others considered outside the group.

Trust in organizations

Annette Baier (1985) complained that much of the philosophical work on trust and morality had been based on contractual relationships between people of roughly equal power. And yet the reality of life in organizations is that individuals are invested with varying degrees of power and authority. Baier finds these musings about trust based on assumptions of equal power inadequate for many social contexts. “For those whose daily dealings are with the less powerful or the more powerful, a moral code designed for those of equal power will be at best nonfunctional, at worst an offensive pretense of equality as a substitute for its actuality” (p. 249).

Organizations must continually manage extending trust to employees at various levels of the organization with the creation of safeguards against the possibility of opportunistic behavior on the part of participants. Organizations adopt rules and regulations to act as substitutes for interpersonal trust and to restore damaged trust within the organization (Shapiro, 1987; Zucker, 1986). However, Sitkin and Roth (1993) suggest that formal controls instituted to enhance trust by increasing performance reliability can undermine trust and interfere with the achievement of the very goals they were put in place to serve. “Distrust can arise when employees perceive a mismatch between the tasks they perform and the management control systems they must accommodate” (Sitkin and Stickel, 1996, p. 197). Legalistic mechanisms are likely to be effective only when the task requirements are understood well enough to be specified clearly and concisely, and may engender distrust and resentment in situations where workers need a certain amount of discretion in order to function effectively (Fox, 1974).

In a study of superiors and subordinates Kramer (1996) found that persons at different levels in an organization use different criteria in their judgments of trust. Individual in authority evaluated the trustworthiness of a subordinate based on that person’s ability to perform work competently, and to faithfully fulfill the role obligations and duties. The superiors searched for evidence of motivation and values consistent with the norms of the organization in deciding
how much trust to invest in a subordinate. Superiors were willing to expend attention to build trust in order to garner payoffs over time. Subordinates, on the other hand, looked to superiors for openness and benevolence when extending trust. They were “hypervigilant and ruminative information processes” (p. 225) and even relatively minor gestures took on considerable diagnostic import for subordinates. Trust violations were likely to “loom larger” than confirmations of trustworthiness for subordinates.

Trust in schools
Trust has been called the “foundation of school effectiveness” (Cunningham and Gresso, 1993) and yet studies of trust in schools are scarce. Trust allows individuals to focus on the task at hand, and therefore, to work and learn more effectively. Productive relationships build effective schools. Rotter (1967) asserted that being able to trust that others can be believed is an important variable in all human learning. Distrust, on the other hand, causes people to feel uncomfortable and ill at ease, provoking them to expend energy on assessing the actions and potential actions of others (Fuller, 1996).

Wayne Hoy and his colleagues have engaged in over a decade of research on trust in schools. They have found teachers’ trust in their colleagues as well as their principal are important elements of the trust in a school setting. Faculty trust in both colleagues and the principal has been linked to school effectiveness (Hoy et al., 1992; Tarter et al., 1995), as well as to positive school climate (Hoy et al., 1996; Tarter et al., 1989), and principal authenticity (Henderson and Hoy, 1983; Hoy and Henderson, 1983; Hoy and Kupersmith, 1986).

This research has demonstrated that the behavior of the principal and the behavior of teachers make differential impacts on the quality of trusting relationships in schools (Hoy et al., 1992; Tarter et al., 1989; Tarter et al., 1995). Supportive leadership on the part of the principal influenced the degree of trust teachers felt for the principal but did not engender trust among the faculty for one another. At the same time, both collegial and engaged behavior of the teachers helped create trust in colleagues, but did not make a significant contribution to trust in the principal. The authenticity of the principal’s behavior has been positively correlated with both aspects of faculty trust (Hoy and Kupersmith, 1986), however, the authenticity of teacher behavior and trust have not been examined. These studies have provided some intriguing evidence of the significance of trust in the interpersonal dynamics of schools.

An empirical exploration: trust, school climate, and authenticity
We turn to an exploration of correlates of faculty trust in schools: the relationships between school climate and faculty trust, and authenticity and trust. First, we define the elements of trust that will be studied. Next, we sketch the conceptual framework for examining school climate and authenticity in behavior. Finally, we present the procedures and results of this investigation of trust.
Trust
Trust is a general confidence and overall optimism in occurring events; it is
believing in others in the absence of compelling reasons to disbelieve. In the
context of organizations, trust is a work group’s generalized expectancy that
the words, actions, and promises of another individual, group, or organization
can be relied on (Hoy and Kupersmith, 1985). In schools trust can be viewed in
relation to a variety of reference groups – students, teachers, administrators, the
organization. One trusts others, not to simply be consistent in action, but also to
act in one’s best interest. In this research on middle schools, we were concerned
with faculty trust as it was expressed toward the principal and toward fellow
teachers. In particular, two aspects of faculty trust are defined as follows:
Trust in the principal. The faculty has confidence that the principal will keep
his or her word and act in the best interest of the teachers.
Trust in colleagues. The faculty believe that teachers can depend on each
other in difficult situations and that teachers can rely on the integrity of their
colleagues.

Organizational climate
Climate is a general concept that captures an enduring quality of organizational
life and describes the feeling or atmosphere of the school. Organizational
climate has at least four distinctive characteristics:

1. It refers to the entire organization;
2. It is a descriptive rather than evaluative term;
3. It is based on collective perceptions of members, which arises from
   routine organizational practices that are important to the organization
   and its members;
4. It influences members’ behavior and attitudes (Poole, 1985).

In brief, school climate is a relatively enduring quality of the entire school that
is experienced by members, describes their collective perceptions of routine
behavior, and affects their attitudes and behavior in the school (Hoy and Miskel,
1996).

Two contemporary frameworks for examining school climate use the
metaphors of personality and health. Halpin and Croft (1963) were first to
analyze the “personality” of the school in terms of its openness, and Miles (1969)
pioneered the concept of “health” to study organizations. Hoy and his
colleagues (Hoffman et al., 1994; Hoy and Sabo, 1997; Hoy and Tarter, 1997;
Hoy et al., 1997) have expanded and refined both perspectives to study middle
schools. The openness of middle school climate can be measured by the
organizational climate description questionnaire for middle schools (OCDQ-RM)
and middle school health by the organizational health index (OHI-M).

Recent analyses (Hoy and Sabo, 1997; Hoy et al., 1997), however, suggest a
parsimonious perspective on school climate, one that captures the essence of
health and openness in a concise manner consisting of only four general
attributes: collegial leadership, teacher professionalism, internal (academic) press, and external (environmental) press. Openness of teacher-principal relations is embedded in collegial leadership, and openness of teacher interactions is encapsulated in teacher professionalism. Using the Parsonian framework for viewing school health, all three levels of school organization are examined – the institutional (environmental press), the managerial (collegial leadership), and the technical (teacher professionalism). Moreover, the perspective goes beyond these three levels found in all organizations and calls attention to a fourth level found in service organizations such as schools – the client level. Hence, four important linkages exist in schools: community-school (environmental press), principal-teacher (collegial leadership), teacher-teacher (teacher professionalism), and teacher-student (academic press).

Environmental press. Environmental press is strong pressure from the parents and community to change school policy and influence the functioning of the school. The school needs to be able to cope with its environment in a way that maintains the educational integrity of its programs. Teachers are protected from unreasonable community demands.

Collegial leadership. Collegial leadership refers to principal behavior that is friendly, supportive, open, and guided by norms of equality. The principal is approachable, helpful, and genuinely concerned about both the social needs and task achievement of the faculty. He or she attempts to motivate by using constructive criticism, and does not engage in constant monitoring of everything that teachers do. The principal is not rigid nor domineering, and does not burden teachers with busy work, bureaucratic trivia and non-teaching duties. The principal sets the tone for high performance, setting an example of hard work, and letting teachers know what is expected of them.

Teacher professionalism. Teacher professionalism refers to teachers who are committed to students, respect the competence of one another, and take their work seriously. Teachers are friendly and feel good about each other. They provide strong social support for one another and help each other with professional problems. They get along with their colleagues, listen to, and are accepting of one another. Teachers respect the expertise of their colleagues. They are enthusiastic about their work and proud of their school. They find meaning and focus in their professional activities. Teachers are committed to helping their students develop both socially and intellectually. Teachers work hard at helping students and even help students on their own time.

Academic press. Academic press is the extent to which the school is driven by a quest for excellence. A academic press is a combination of teachers setting high goals, students responding positively to the challenge of such goals, and the principal supplying the resources and exerting influence to attain these goals. The principal works well with the superintendent, is persuasive and is able to affect the actions of superiors. The principal is able to secure adequate classroom supplies and instructional resources. The learning environment is orderly and serious. Students work hard and respect those who do well academically.
Authenticity

Authenticity, like trust, has intuitive meaning for most people, but coming up with specific definition has proven difficult. There have been numerous attempts (Brumbaugh, 1971; Halpin, 1966; Henderson and Hoy, 1983; Seeman, 1966) to define the term, with mixed success. For purposes of this study the framework developed by Henderson and Hoy (1983) is used. Authentic behavior consists of three basic aspects – accountability, non-manipulation, and salience of self over role.

Accountability is the willingness to accept organizational and personal responsibility for mistakes as well as negative outcomes; there is no passing the buck, scapegoating, or blaming others. Responsibility is accepted.

Non-manipulation reflects the perception of individuals that their superiors and colleagues avoid exploiting or using them. Authentic individuals treat others as people not pawns to be moved around.

Salience of self over role refers to the ability to break through the barriers of role stereotyping and behave in ways that are consistent with one's personal self. Role is subordinated to self; basic personality is a prime motivator of behavior, not some prescribed role.

In this paper, we examine authenticity with respect to the behavior of the principal and the behavior of teacher colleagues as they relate to faculty trust in middle schools.

Method

Sample

The unit of analysis for climate studies should be the school because the variables reflect organizational properties (Hoy et al., 1991; Sirotnik, 1980). A sample of 86 middle schools, which included responses from 2,741 teachers, was used to examine the relationships of this study.

Although it was not possible to select a random sample of middle schools, care was taken to select urban, suburban, and rural schools from diverse geographic areas of a northeastern state as well as from all socio-economic levels in the state. Only schools that called themselves middle schools and had a 5-8, 6-8, or 7-8 configuration were included in the sample. Extremely small middle schools were not part of the sample; in fact, only schools with 15 or more faculty members were considered candidates for the sample.

Using the state's measure of socio-economic status, 28 percent of the schools came from the lowest levels, 37 percent came from the middle levels, and 35 percent came from the highest levels. Fifteen of the 21 counties in the state were represented in the sample.

Measures

Trust scales. Two aspects of trust, faculty trust in the principal and faculty trust in colleagues, were measured using scales developed by Hoy and Kupersmith (1985). Each is composed of seven Likert items. Subjects respond along a six-point scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Example items for
trust in principal are: “The teachers in this school have faith in the integrity of the principal” and “The principal takes unfair advantage of teachers in this school” (score reversed). Example items for trust in colleagues include: “Even in difficult situations, teachers in this school can depend on each other” and “Teachers in this school are suspicious of each other” (score reversed). The alpha coefficients of reliability for the scales were 0.95 for trust in colleagues and 0.94 for trust in the principal. Construct and predictive validity of the scales has been demonstrated in a factor-analytic study by Hoffman (1993) and Hoy and Kupersmith (1985).

Climate measures. To measure the organizational climate of schools, two instruments were used. The organizational climate description questionnaire (OCDQ-RM) measures aspects of the openness of middle school climate and the organizational health inventory (OHI-RM) taps dimensions of the health of middle school climate.

The OCDQ-RM is a 50-item Likert descriptive questionnaire that measures six dimensions of the openness of the climate. Three subtests describe the openness of principal-teacher interactions – supportive, directive, and restrictive behaviors, while three scales, collegial, committed, and disengaged, measure the openness of teacher-teacher interactions. The reliability coefficients for all six subtests are high; alpha coefficients of reliability for the current sample were as follows: supportive (0.96), directive (0.88), restrictive (0.89), collegial (0.90), committed (0.93), and disengaged (0.87). The stability of the factor structure provides construct-related evidence for the six dimensions of climate. In the current study, six hypothetical dimensions of school climate were postulated and empirically demonstrated. The items measuring each climate dimension were systematically related to each other as expected in the factor analysis of the OCDQ-RM. The strong loadings in the predicted six factor solution and the high reliabilities of the subtests suggest that the OCDQ-RM is a valid and reliable measure of school climate. The details of the factor analytic study of the instrument are found elsewhere (Hoy et al., 1996).

The OHI-M is a 45-item Likert descriptive questionnaire that measures six dimensions of the health of middle schools. The academic emphasis and teacher affiliation scales depict teacher-student and teacher-teacher relationships; the principal influence, collegial leadership, and resource support subtests describe the leadership of the principal; and the institutional integrity scale measures the degree to which teachers perceived they are protected from hostile forces in the community. The reliability coefficients for all six subtests are high in the current sample; alpha coefficients of reliability were as follows: academic emphasis (0.94), and teacher affiliation (0.94), principal influence (0.92), collegial leadership (0.94), resource support (0.96), institutional integrity (0.93). Moreover, in a factor analytic study of the OHI-M for the current sample (Hoy et al., 1996), the items measuring each climate dimension were systematically related to each other as predicted; thus, the reliability and validity of the instrument were supported.
A secondary factor analysis (Hoy and Sabo, 1997) was conducted on the twelve climate subscales included in these two measures of climate. As anticipated, the four factors described above emerged: external (environmental) press, collegial leadership, teacher professionalism, and internal (academic) press.

Authenticity scales. The authenticity scales were drawn from the work of Henderson and Hoy (1983) and Hoy and Henderson (1983). A short-version of their leader authenticity scale (LAS) became the model for a teacher authenticity scale (TAS). Items were constructed to capture the aspects of authenticity proposed by Henderson and Hoy—accountability, non-manipulation, and salience of self over role. Examples of items included the following:

- The principal is willing to admit to mistakes when they are made.
- The principal manipulates teachers.
- The principal’s beliefs and actions are consistent.
- Teachers here manipulate other teachers.
- The teachers’ beliefs and actions are consistent.

Factor analysis of the 32 items designed to measure teacher and principal authenticity supported the two separate aspects of authenticity. All 16 items on the Henderson and Hoy’s LAS were confirmed and remained an independent measure of leader authenticity of the principal. The 16 parallel items written to measure teacher authenticity loaded on a separate factor (teacher authenticity). The reliability coefficients for the two scales were 0.92 for the principal authenticity and 0.88 for teacher authenticity.

Data collection
Climate data were collected from all teachers at regularly scheduled faculty meetings. The purpose of the study was explained in general terms, anonymity was guaranteed, and the importance of candid responses was emphasized. Teachers at the meeting were divided into random groups with one group responding to the OHI-RM and another to OCDQ-RM, and a third to the trust scales. This procedure was used because the unit of analysis was the school (data were aggregated at the school level), because it ensured methodological separation of the variables, and because it was an efficient method to collect a large amount of data without overburdening the teachers. Virtually everyone in attendance responded to one of the instruments.

Results
An examination of the correlations between the climate measures and the measures of authenticity confirmed that they were highly intercorrelated. In order to avoid the problem of multicollinearity, separate regressions were run with the four climate measures and two measures of trust and between the two measures of authenticity measures with the two measures of trust. Results of
the multiple regression between the four climate measures and the two aspects of faculty trust, trust in colleagues and trust in the principal are displayed in Table I. Nearly 40 percent of the variance in teacher trust in colleagues is explained by the four climate measures. However, only teacher professionalism (Beta = 0.635, p < 0.01) makes a significant independent contribution. Nearly 60 percent of the variance (R² = 0.584) in faculty trust in the principal is explained by the four measures of school climate. Collegial leadership (Beta = 0.677, p < 0.01) makes a strong and significant contribution to faculty trust in the principal. Teacher professionalism (Beta = 0.195, p < 0.05) also makes a small, but significant contribution to faculty trust in the principal.

Results of the multiple regression between the two measures of authenticity and the two measures of trust are shown in Table II. Sixty percent of the variance in faculty trust in the principal (R² = 0.601) is explained by the authenticity of the teacher and principal behavior, however, only authenticity of principal behavior (Beta = 0.828, p < 0.01) makes a significant independent contribution. Likewise, only authenticity of teacher behavior (Beta = 0.528, p < 0.01) makes a significant contribution to teachers' trust in their colleagues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trust in the principal</th>
<th>Trust in colleagues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beta</td>
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<td>Collegial leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher professionalism</td>
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<td>2.230</td>
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<td>-0.553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental press</td>
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</table>

**Notes:**
R = 0.777 – Adjusted R square = 0.584; R = 0.649 – Adjusted R Square = 0.393
* p < 0.05;
** p < 0.01

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Trust in the principal</th>
<th>Trust in colleagues</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader authenticity</td>
<td>0.828</td>
<td>9.369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher authenticity</td>
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<td>0.877</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
R = 0.781 – Adjusted R square = 0.601; R = 0.514 – Adjusted R Square = 0.247
* p < 0.05;
** p < 0.01

Table I.
Faculty trust and school climate

Table II.
Faculty trust and authenticity
Discussion

The results of this exploratory study in middle schools are consistent with several earlier studies that examined trust in the principal and trust in colleagues (Hoffman et al., 1994; Hoy and Kupersmith, 1985; Hoy, Hoffman, Sabo and Bliss, 1996; Hoy, Sabo and Barnes, 1996; Tarter et al., 1989). The general finding is that aspects of climate and authenticity are related differentially to faculty trust. Trust in the principal is determined primarily by the behavior of the principal. In other words, the principal controls his or her own destiny by acting in ways that engender trust or distrust. Moreover, faculty trust in colleagues is basically determined by the behavior of teachers in relation to one another. The principal's impact in generating trust in colleagues seems quite limited; that is, principal behavior has little influence on the trust that teachers have with each other.

Although trust in the principal comes directly from the principal's collegial behavior, a climate of teacher professionalism supports that trust in general. Teacher professionalism combines with collegial leadership to generate a strong trust in the leader. It is interesting to speculate on this finding. The faculty as a collective is the essence of the school climate. Individuals, including the principal, come and go, but it is the collective that ultimately provides the distinctive identity of the school climate. A principal who comes into a professional environment may feel compelled to behave in ways that engender trust. A principal coming into an environment that is rife with conflict may resort to behavior that provokes distrust in an attempt to gain control.

Highly professional teachers' tendency to extend respect and have faith in the principal, may also be a general property of professionals, that is, to trust other professionals unless or until there is reason not to. We suspect that such faith is influenced by the constructive leadership of the principal. However, the interaction between the leadership of the principal and the professionalism of teachers is an area that needs further study and specification. We were a bit surprised, however, that two aspects of climate, academic press and environmental press did not play a role in generating either trust in the principal or trust in colleagues.

Teacher and leader authenticity are concepts that capture the openness in interpersonal relations. It is not surprising that leader authenticity is highly correlated with trust in the principal, and teacher authenticity is substantially correlated with trust in colleagues. Teacher authenticity has virtually nothing to do with trusting the principal, and likewise, leader authenticity is unrelated to teachers trusting each other. Various definitions of trust either explicitly (Mishra, 1996) or implicitly (Cummings and Bromily, 1996) link trust with openness. In addition, in the definition of trust used here, non-manipulation and acting in one's best interest, seem to describe both authentic and trustworthy behavior. Openness and authenticity themselves are likely key ingredients of trust relations. Finally, we see once again, that the behavior of the principal influences only trust in the principal, and the behavior of teachers is the
primary influence on trust in colleagues. It appears that trust requires a direct connection between actors. Indirect influence of trust is tenuous at best.

The empirical results of this study of middle schools are not surprising; they support existing findings that underscore the pivotal nature of faculty trust in school organizations. Much remains to be done, however. Our review of the literature suggests many avenues of research about trust in schools have been neglected and need attention. We sketch only a few of those areas to demonstrate the importance and significance of trust in schools.

**Future research**

Most studies of trust in schools, like the current one, are circumscribed and deal only with a narrow segment of trust. For example, faculty trust in principals and faculty trust in colleagues are important elements of organizational life, but they represent only part of the complex of trust relationships found in schools. Faculty trust in students and in parents are two related constructs, which have not received adequate attention. Similarly, the complementary concepts of parental trust in teachers and administrators, as well as student trust in teachers and in administrators, have been virtually ignored in our studies. Yet both theory and common sense point to the saliency of these concepts in the dynamics of productive schools.

Longitudinal studies of the formation of trust in schools are also required. For example, Lewicki and Bunker's (1996) stages of trust provide a fruitful framework for such an effort. How does deterrence-based trust develop into knowledge-based trust? And what are the steps that move one from knowledge-based trust to identity-based trust? These are questions related to the elaboration of teachers' trust in students as well as administrators' trust in teachers.

Probably one of the most serious issues that most schools face is the problem of broken trust. When trust is broken between the teacher and student, suspicion and punishment are the likely consequences, factors that are dysfunctional to cognitive and social-emotional development. Likewise, when trust is broken between the principal and teacher, the probable consequences are hypervigilance, punishment, and getting even, typically destructive forces that undermine the effectiveness of the school. Revenge does have a way of equalizing power differentials in the school, but it also can lead to escalation of the conflict and produce harm and violations that may be irreversible. Both administrators and teachers need to be aware of the dramatic costs of broken trust and use that knowledge to prevent abuse of power and to encourage openness and cooperation. What school conditions produce such knowledge? How can such knowledge be transformed into positive outcomes?

The process of repairing broken trust is difficult and costly in schools as it is in all organizations. Studies that examine the process of rebuilding broken trust in schools are essential if we are to begin to break through the barriers of building more trustful school cultures. Increasingly schools need to personalize work relationships, and that means teachers need freedom to negotiate their
roles and to express their talent. Teachers are dependent on principals, but so too are principals dependent on teachers; it is the interdependency that makes both parties vulnerable and in need of trusting relationships. Without trust, openness is likely to give way to inauthenticity and initiative turns to cynicism (Hirschhorn, 1997). An understanding of the conditions and processes that enable teachers and administrators to learn to trust and cooperate is critical as schools increasingly are faced with changing expectations.

Summary and conclusion
There is a growing interest in the importance of trust in interpersonal relationships to well-functioning organizations. Transaction costs increase in a climate of distrust, as actors seek to protect their interests and guard against opportunistic behavior on the part of other actors. The topic of trust is burgeoning and there seems to be no one commonly accepted definition of trust. What seems apparent is that more contemporary definitions of trust stress the complexity and multidimensionality of the concept.

Our empirical results demonstrate that trust is related to a climate of openness, collegiality, professionalism, and authenticity. Although open and authentic principal behavior creates trust in the principal, it does not seem to influence the trust that teachers have for each other. For the most part, teacher trust is closely linked with how individual teachers of a school treat each other. In brief, faculty behavior produces faculty trust in colleagues and principal behavior produces trust in the principal.

A literature of organizational trust is beginning to emerge. What is needed is a concerted research effort to study trust in schools, a topic that has been neglected far too long. This paper attempts to sketch in rough strokes the beginnings of a systematic program of the study of trust in schools. Our analysis began with an examination of the conceptual foundations of trust, then demonstrated the critical and complex nature of faculty trust in schools with an empirical analysis of faculty trust in principals (a vertical relationship) and faculty trust in colleagues (a horizontal relationship). The study of trust in schools needs to continue so that we can learn more about this vital element of school functioning.

References


Halpin, A.W. and Croft, D.B. (1963), The Organization Climate of Schools, Midwest Administration Center of the University of Chicago, Chicago, IL.


