Chapter 5

UNDERSTANDING ACTS OF BETRAYAL: IMPLICATIONS FOR INDUSTRIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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> Because it is an air of all-pervading bitterness that lingers over what has been one of Asia's most successful brokerage operations following the June departure of five of Morgan Grenfell Asia's (MGA's) top six Singaporean directors including Chairman NG Soo Peng and managing director Hsieh Fu Hua). Accusations of betrayal from the Singaporeans and counter-accusations from MGA's London-based parent Morgan Grenfell are still flying with stinging ferocity (Shale, *AsiaMoney*, 1993).

As interest has grown in complex organizational forms and contractual arrangements, industrial/organizational (I/O) psychologists throughout the world have directed their attention to interpersonal relations as the foundation for successful organization. As the above quotation illustrates, when these relationships flounder, feelings of betrayal often follow. In today's more fluid organizational environment trust has become both more important and more problematic. Trust is more important because it cannot rest on stable hierarchies and functional relationships among people who work together their entire careers. Trust is more difficult because the growth of international networked organizations, cross-cultural teams and new forms of contingent employment make building and sustaining such relationships more difficult. We believe that for a better understanding of interpersonal relations in complex forms of interdependent organizations we can better understand these relationships by knowing more about betrayal. Our own interest reflects others' growing interest: industrial and organizational psychologists increasingly talk of betrayal. Reflecting this burgeoning interest, betrayal appears in scattered subdisciplines, for example, betrayal has been mentioned by scholars of trust, workplace justice and by those studying violations of psychological contracts. We also find that betrayal is at the intersection of several important scholarly trends in I/O psychological research; yet it is an ill-lit crossing.

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This is so for two reasons. First, the concept of betrayal is being used in a multitude of ways, most of them quite narrow, some of them implicit, and with differing implications for theory and practice. In part this reflects the study of betrayal in the larger world of behavioral and social science, where the term has many meanings and uses. The growth of interest in topics of networks, trust, justice and psychological contracts, matters in which a betrayal is a key feature, suggests that there is need to clarify and organize what we do know about betrayal in its workplace forms. Second, a closer examination of betrayal helps illuminate other contemporary concerns in the field of I/O psychology. These include questions about intra-psychic processes, assumptions that more explanation will mitigate unwelcome organizational acts, how emotions affect behavior at work, and cross-national differences in interpretations of others' actions. This chapter begins with a wide-ranging review of the social and behavioral science conceptualizations of betrayal. Then we discuss several contentious issues from the literature that are most relevant to workplace psychology. We conclude by summarizing the implications of our discussion for several of those contemporary conceptual issues in international I/O psychology.

BETRAYAL IN INDUSTRIAL/ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Betrayal is a difficult topic to embrace adequately because it has been touched on in work as old as the I/O field itself. In Roethlisberger and Dickson's (1939) classic Hawthorne Studies, for example, the workers of the Bank Wiring Room attempted to restrain the high productivity of the Room's rate-buster; they saw his violation of their informal quota as a betrayal likely to lead to them all having to work harder for the same pay. This study of betrayal of a work group's own normative expectations formed the basis for several decades of research on workplace rewards, work-group norms, and interpersonal influence. More recently betrayal has been noted by those seeking to understand the role of trust in organizational settings, those studying workplace justice, and theorists of psychological contracts.

Betrayal of Trust

Two sets of scholars seeking to understand workplace trust have discussed betrayal in depth. They see betrayal as integral to an understanding of trust (Elangovan & Shapiro, 1998; Morris & Moberg, 1994), and consider betrayal to be the risk one runs when trusting another, the inherent vulnerability people have when they must place their fortunes in the uncertain hands of others (cf., Bigley & Pearce, 1998). They note that workplace trust is necessary because tasks are ambiguous and changing, and others' actions and the outcomes of those actions are often difficult to observe. Both works

distinguish personal betrayal from impersonal betrayal and focus on the former. As Morris and Moberg (1994) state their case, personal betrayal is situated in the relationship between two people and a betrayal occurs when the expectations of a specific person for the actions of another person are not met. For example, the Bank Wiring Room rate-buster described above personally betrayed his coworkers. In contrast, impersonal betrayal is when a normative expectation or expectations pertaining to an office or to membership in a group are violated. If a government official accepts a bribe for a favorable decision, this is a violation of impersonal trust pertaining to that person's membership in the organization and occupation of a particular office or role. Similarly, if a general sells his army's battle plans to the enemy that is impersonal betrayal. Morris and Moberg (1994) developed a theoretical framework of personal betrayal in work settings. They focused on conditions leading individuals to perceive that they have been betrayed by another, and suggested that betrayal will be felt if the act was perceived as intentional, and if it was 'personal' (intentionally directed at the victim), rather than accidental.

The second set of scholars is Elangovan and Shapiro (1998), who provide a comprehensive theoretical model of personal betrayal in organizations. In contrast to others in industrial/organizational psychology they focused on why the perpetrator betrays rather than on the circumstances under which a breach or transgression is interpreted as a betrayal by the victim. Elangovan and Shapiro took a utilitarian approach to explaining why someone would betray others at work. They suggested that a person at work is more likely to betray others if the act is likely to be personally beneficial, the penalties or possibility of detection are low, other principles supporting the betrayal can be evoked, and if the perpetrator has a personal propensity to betray. Morris and Moberg (1994) and Elangovan and Shapiro (1998) have contributed to our understanding of workplace trust by articulating the circumstances that would lead victims to classify a transgression as a betrayal and that might cause perpetrators to violate others' trust in them.

Workplace Injustice

In much work on injustice the word betrayal is rarely mentioned but descriptions of reactions to felt injustice reflect many elements of betrayal. For example, Bies (1987) reported the results of programmatic research on how argumentation lessens others' perceived moral outrage. He examined how offending acts could be reframed so they no longer seemed morally culpable, eliciting moral outrage in the victim. Outrage at perceived injustice has also been examined by Bies and Tripp (1998) and Bies, Tripp & Kramer (1997). This work has helped to counterbalance the excessive emphasis on cognitive calculation in much justice research by highlighting that a perceived injustice can elicit very strong emotions. In these works 'moral outrage' appears to be a

synonym for betrayal. If anything, one might assume that some offending acts might be relatively mild, provoking sorrow, perhaps, but not moral outrage. Yet in the injustice literature the examples provided (e.g. underpayment) include unmet expectations which can be merely inconvenient or irritating rather than the kind of morally outrageous acts characterized as betrayals. That is, those studying injustice appear to address a broad range of workplace unmet expectation, from the trivial to the most extreme. Yet, we would not expect perpetrators' attempts to mitigate with self-justifying explanation to apply equally to a wide range of transgressions. For example, argumentation may only be effective for ambiguous acts, or mild transgressions, ones that have little chance of evoking moral outrage in the first place. Certainly, the excuses of perpetrators of genuinely morally outrageous acts are likely to be greeted with scorn. Differences in degree do matter, and so a better understanding of betrayal can help in understanding the boundary conditions for social accounts in mitigating reactions to transgressions with the potential to outrage.

Breach of Psychological Contract

The growing interest in reframing employees' relationships with their organizations as psychological contracts has led to inquiry into the consequences of a breach of the psychological contract. A psychological contract is a set of beliefs, held by the employee, about what the employee and employer are obliged to give and receive in the relationship (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Robinson, Kraatz & Rousseau, 1994; Robinson, 1996; Rousseau, 1995). Sandra Robinson (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Robinson, 1996) has developed a model of the circumstances under which a breach of the psychological contract leads employees to experience the emotion of violation. She noted that a perception of a breach of psychological contract does not necessarily lead to 'feelings of betrayal and psychological distress', what she called perceived violation. Robinson suggested that a breach will be experienced as a violation if it is of sufficient magnitude, has important implications, is purposeful, is unfair, and violates the prevailing social contract. Her theoretical and empirical work makes an important contribution by emphasizing that all breaches of expectations do not necessarily result in strong feelings of violation or betrayal. However, in contrast to Elangovan and Shapiro's suggestion that betrayal is experienced only in personal relationships, Robinson includes an impersonal partner—the organization.

Like Morris and Moberg (1994) and Bies (1987), Robinson's work provides a basis for a more comprehensive examination of issues they introduce. These include determining which expectations are important enough to evoke feelings of betrayal if violated, a re-examination of the exclusion of impersonal betrayal from I/O psychology, the necessity of perpetrator intent to betray, the role of third parties, and necessity of shared knowledge, among others. We

hope to build on this work with a comprehensive examination of betrayal. It begins with a discussion of what betrayal is, with particular attention to what leads certain transgressions to be more likely to be perceived as betrayals. This is followed by an analysis of areas in which theorists differ in their description of betrayal or its consequences. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of this conceptualization of betrayal for research in I/O psychology.

UNDERSTANDING ACTS OF BETRAYAL

There are widely differing definitions of betrayal depending on the focus of the scholar. It is necessary to gain clarity on two defining features of betrayal before proceeding. First, to some betrayal is an individual's perception of another's act since, following Robinson, any given act may be perceived to be a betrayal or not. Others view betrayal as the action itself. Here, the latter act-based focus is adopted. This is because it is the most widely adopted definition, avoids a potentially autistic focus solely on individuals' potentially idiosyncratic perceptions, and directs attention to the question of why an act may or may not be interpreted as a betrayal.

Second, once we understand betrayals as acts defined as transgressing important expectations, we are free to treat the acts of groups, organizations or other collective entities as having the potential to be perceived as betrayals. Individuals have expectations for collective groupings as well as for individuals. Psychological contracts, for example, involve an individual's expectations for organizations' obligations to them. Certainly, there is widespread agreement on the importance of trust in and trust created by institutions (e.g., North, 1990; Zucker, 1986), and where there is trust there is the potential to betray the trust. Yet, before examining the characteristics of acts of betrayal we begin with the point of widespread agreement.

Betrayal Enrages

When a transgression is categorized as a betrayal, strong negative emotions are aroused (Bateson, 1977). Åkerström (1991) suggested that an act of betrayal arouses intense sentiments such as indignation, contempt, revenge, and rage that can continue long after the event took place. As an illustration, Hansson, Jones and Fletcher (1990) reported that adults over age 60 stated that half of the incidents of betrayal at work they recalled had occurred more than twenty years before. The perception of being betrayed can unleash powerful emotions and so can have severe and potentially lasting consequences. It is this potentially powerful emotional quality and motivating potential of felt betrayal that attracts the interest of industrial/organizational psychologists. In organizations not all transgressions will enrage, yet when individuals experience a transgression as a betrayal the effects are potentially grave.

Transgressions that Betray

If a violation is perceived to be a betrayal when it transgresses important expectations, what makes some expectations important while others are not? As Shackelford (1997, p. 73) notes, 'The actions or events that constitute betrayal in one relationship context may not constitute a betrayal in another such context'. Robinson noted that to qualify as a betrayal the trust violated needs to be important—what Elangovan and Shapiro called 'pivotal expectations'. Yet labeling transgressions which evoked feelings of betrayal as important after the fact has little predictive value. It would be more useful to have some guidance regarding which expectations are likely to be important or pivotal. Fortunately, many researchers in social psychology, sociology and political science have sought to distinguish betraying transgressions from others. While there is much overlap in the ideas of these theorists from different disciplines, each perspective is worth exploring.

Violations of a constitutive rule

Metts (1994) argued that a transgression is more likely to be perceived as a betrayal if it violates a 'constitutive rule'. These are rules about what actions must occur if the relationship is going to continue. If constitutive rules are seen to be violated the relationship becomes meaningless or incoherent. The relationship or group must cease to exist in its present form (cf., Jones & Burdette, 1994). Constitutive rules are contrasted with 'regulative rules' which govern how interdependence will be managed. Thus, a constitutive rule for physicians may be to recommend only those procedures and drugs they believe will help the patient, while a regulative rule might be to see patients at their appointed times. A perceived violation of the constitutive rule (only beneficial treatment) goes to the heart of the nature of the relationship and so its violation is more likely to be seen as a betrayal than is a 30-minute delay in seeing the doctor.

In organizations constitutive rules would be those necessary to the coherence of the relationship with another individual, group or organization. For organizations these would be role requirements necessary to the functioning of the organization, and would be expected to vary depending on the context. For example, we would consider a colleague's 'selling' a good grade to a student at our university to be a violation of a constitutive rule and thus a betrayal. However, we are familiar with universities elsewhere in which such acts have occurred and the transgressions were treated more as a regulative-rule violation than a betrayal. Doesn't the assignment of grades based solely on students' performance constitute a core function of a university? It did appear that grades in those settings did not have the same constitutive meaning as they do in ours. There students obtained jobs and other opportunities based on who they knew, and their intellectual prowess was judged from

personal interaction. Grades had no use as signals of intelligence or conscientiousness or knowledge because they all knew one another in these small intellectual circles, and so selling university grades was not a constitutive rule transgression.

Revelations of group-defining secrets

Another approach to identifying why certain transgressions constitute betrayals is offered by Åkerström (1991). While having many similarities to the above arguments on constitutive rules, he examines one kind of constitutive rule in some depth—secrecy. He argues that betrayal involves overstepping a 'We-boundary'. A 'We' consists of relations ranging from a pair of friends to a nation (Åkerström, 1991, p. 2). He suggests that secrets and confidences exchanged are the creators of social bonds, the necessary component to the creation of a We. Åkerström echoes Simmel's (1994) contention that without secrets many aspects of social life would be impossible. Secrets divide those who know from those who do not. Such We-groupings can vary in size and intimacy and may be quite unstable. Thus, betrayal is a dishonoring of the We.

Åkerström goes on to note that in times of conflict or when individuals or groups have invested a great deal in their secrecy the betrayal can become very threatening. He distinguishes 'telling' betrayals from 'leaving' betrayals. On the one hand, telling betrayals may divulge information which is harmful in the hands of the outsider (i.e., the planned product innovation in the hands of a competitor) or may simply be mundane information that symbolizes the 'specialness' of the relationship or group. Nevertheless, it violates the We bond. On the other hand, leaving the group, occupation or organization can be seen as betrayal, as is desertion during war. Sometimes there are instrumental reasons for treating leaving as a betrayal—as violent underworld association members are concerned that a deserter is a potential informer. Alternatively, leaving may simply be interpreted as a rejection of the values of the We.

Applying his ideas to organizational settings helps illustrate why it is often so difficult to determine which acts will be seen as betrayals there. Both telling and leaving are a normal part of many career patterns. The skills and practices one learns on the job become the person's own foundation for a successful career. Employees often occupy explicitly 'boundary spanning' roles in which information exchange with their counterparts in other organizations is encouraged, and employees are frequently hired from other companies so that the hiring firm can learn new practices. Thus, telling and leaving may be expected activities at work, and not viewed as betraying acts. However, whether an act of employee telling or leaving is an act of betrayal can be a matter of great dispute. Following Åkerström, we suggest this is when such telling and leaving threatens the group or organization's values or survival. The fact that such

expectations can be very contentious is reflected in the numerous lawsuits regarding 'no compete' clauses in employment contracts which bind employees after they have left an employer. Certainly, we would expect tellings and leavings that threaten the organization, occupation, or group to be more likely to evoke feelings of betrayal. Thus, we might expect participants to develop normative expectations about which leavings and tellings are an expected part of work and which ones would be betrayals.

Threats to security

Transgressions that threatens the relationship, group, occupation or organization's security are likely to be seen as betrayals (Shackelford, 1997). Different acts pose security threats to different relationships, so the same acts may be seen as a betrayal in one relationship or setting but not in another. Shackelford (1997) provides insights into distinguishing acts that are betraying transgressions in one relationship from the same acts which do not evoke that judgement in another. He suggests that over evolutionary history human beings have adapted to relationships with different specific functions, and that a betrayal will be perceived as a transgression that threatens the viability of that specific relationship. He uses the contrast between same-sex friendships with mateships, producing evidence that extra-relationship intimate involvement is more threatening to a security in mateships than friendships and so more likely to be perceived as a betrayal.

Certainly, organizations and work groups will differ in the acts which might threaten their security. For example, in some organizations trade secrets pose a real threat to the continued viability of the organization while in others there are no real trade secrets. Some organizations working at the leading edge of internet or other software technology will not even disclose the kind of projects they are developing, whereas teachers do not have any trade secrets from one another. So we would expect the internet product developer to be more likely to see a software writer's departure for a competitor as a betrayal, but the principal would host a party to wish the departing teacher good luck.

Threats to identity

Finally, transgressions that threaten one's identity are more likely to be seen as betrayals (Jones & Burdette, 1994). In their discussion, Morris and Moberg (1994) argue that in order to be felt as a betrayal a transgression must be personalized such that 'the victim's sense of self-legitimacy or social identity' is threatened (p. 180). Likewise, Afifi and Metts (1998) suggest that 'many of the examples of betrayal provided by participants are directly related to identity attacks' (p. 386). For example, not receiving an expected promotion may threaten one person's self-image as an upwardly mobile, successful manager while for another it may be disappointment but poses no threat to self-identity.

In the former case the victim is more likely to see the non-promotion as a betrayal. Thus, personal relationships, groups and organizations will vary in the extent to which membership is important to an individual's identity and for those individuals transgressions of constitutive rules would strike at the core of one's self-image (Metts, 1994).

In summary, transgressions are more likely to lead to classification as betraying acts if the expectations transgressed are pivotal or important. What leads some transgressions to be important enough to be judged betrayals are violations of those rules or normative expectations that govern the very purpose of the relationship, or if they violate secrets that support the relationship, or if they threaten the victim's basic security or sense of identity. These are the sorts of transgressions that evoke feelings of betrayal in either personal or impersonal relationships. Further, such betrayals also reflect disruptions in what the victim had assumed or taken for granted, introducing uncertainty about one's security and sense of self. The foregoing discussion is summarized in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Understanding organizational betrayal

Betraying acts enrage those betrayed.

Transgressions will be classified as betrayals if they:

- violate expectations serving as constitutive rules for the relationship, or
- violate expectations protecting relationship-defining secrets, or
- threaten members' security, or
- threaten members' identities

Betrayals:

- may be transgressions of impersonal role obligations to groups or organizations as well as personal obligations to other individuals
- may be perceived whether or not the perpetrator intended to betray the victim or victims
- involve implicit or explicit third parties
- do not necessarily involve shared expectations
- may be situationally or dispositionally driven.

DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES OF BETRAYAL

Despite general consensus on the characteristics of those acts likely to be seen as betrayals, there remain several equivocal issues. A discussion of these differences helps to highlight several current issues in I/O psychology, and so we briefly address questions such as: Can transgressions of impersonal role obligations be perceived as betrayals? Is it a necessary condition that an act of betrayal be intentionally harmful? Must all participants agree on the meaning and interpretation of acts of betrayal? What is the role of emotion in reactions to betrayals?

Personal and Impersonal Betrayal

In I/O psychology theorists vary as to whether transgressions of expectations regarding impersonal relationships may be experienced as acts of betrayal. Recall that personal betrayal occurs when the expectations of a specific person for the actions of another person are not met, while impersonal betrayal is when a normative expectation or expectations pertaining to an office or to membership in a group are violated. Personal betrayals concern only the relationship between two people—their expectations for one another based on the relationship they have built—while impersonal betrayal is violation of role expectations as a member of a collective entity such as a group or organization. Morris and Moberg argue that individuals will seek to distinguish actions intended to harm them personally from accidental harm as a byproduct of something else in deciding whether or not they have been personally betrayed. This is because harmful events at work can happen for many reasons. Thus a focus on personal betrayal alone allows them to focus on the victims' search for intent in deciding how to classify a transgression.

Similarly, Elangovan and Shapiro (1998) argue that transgressions of obligations owed to impersonal entities such as groups or organizations would not be viewed as betrayals by employees. While Elangovan and Shapiro (1998) provide an articulate defense of their reason for considering violations of impersonal trust to be deviations rather than betrayals, we contend that a better understanding of why acts may be classified as betrayals makes the elimination of impersonal betrayal unnecessary. A deviation is a violation of a group's normative expectation for members. We contend that a betrayal may be a type of deviation, but it is a special type of deviance. Deviance can include such mild acts as wearing a suit on Casual Friday or eating at your desk. Clearly, some violations of collective norms are serious and threatening enough to be seen as betrayals, and therefore to enrage. While Elangovan and Shapiro's (1998) restriction to personal betrayals assists them in maintaining clarity in their discussion of why perpetrators betray, we believe that limiting I/O psychology solely to the study of personal betrayals in the workplace unnecessarily neglects an important aspect of work and forgoes insights that can be gained from understanding impersonal betrayal. This is so for several reasons.

First, other theorists include impersonal entities as parties to betrayal and trust. Robinson considers violations when the perpetrator is a collective (the organization) and so a strict focus on personal betrayals alone would exclude her work. Similarly, organizations, groups and institutional arrangements may be trusted in the course of conducting organizational work (cf., Bigley & Pearce, 1998) and where trust exists it can be betrayed.

Second, in practice, it may not be possible to clearly distinguish personal from impersonal transgressions in organizational settings. The general selling secret battle plans to the enemy is violating impersonal role expectations, but

those of his colleagues who knew him would very likely consider it a personal betrayal. Similarly, did the rate-buster in the Bank Wiring Room violate his personal relationship with each of his coworkers, or did he betray a normative expectation pertaining to his work group? Organizations are mixes of role and personal obligations, and transgressions of role obligations that threaten individuals' understanding of their workplace, threaten their security or their own identities are as likely to be seen as betrayals as are violations of informal personal understandings.

Finally, members of organizations certainly may experience an enraging sense of betrayal from another's betrayal of the organization. Examples might include a colleague you do not know personally agreeing to testify for the government in its lawsuit against the company, or when a fellow employee (who is a stranger to you) gets caught accepting a bribe and brings embarrassment to everyone working for the organization. Transgressions of impersonal role obligations can be the most stinging of betrayals—those which endanger the safety of the group.

After all, the term betrayal was first applied to selling secrets which harmed the clan; the word betrayal comes from the Latin word *tradere*, 'to hand over', as in secrets to an enemy. The application of this concept to personal relationships, such as friendships or marriage, is a comparatively recent attempt to indicate that threatening transgressions can occur at the personal as well as the collective level. (And perhaps reflects the fact that in modern societies our personal security is dependent on smaller groupings—couples rather than clans.) Individuals who work enter into obligations to organizations, occupations, and work groups; obligations to these entities, if violated, may be very threatening and so may be seen by their fellows as betrayals. Therefore, we suggest that acts which transgress expectations regarding both personal and impersonal relationships can be perceived as betrayals.

The Necessity of Intent

It is generally agreed that betrayal harms the victim in some way (hence the term victim). However, less clear is whether the perpetrator must intend to harm the victim. Harm, in the sense used here, can refer to any negative outcome of the betrayal episode from physical forms of betrayal (e.g. abuse) to psychological outcomes (e.g. loss of self-identity). Does it matter whether the employees who sell secret product innovations to the company's competitor do so in a deliberate attempt to harm the organization, or are they just indifferent to the harm their greed may cause? To be seen as a betrayal must the act be calculated to harm the victim? It turns out that one's answer to this question rests on the theoretical perspective one takes and, empirically, who is studied.

The most ardent claims for the necessity of intentional harm-doing in determining whether an action is a betrayal comes from research on the victim's

interpretive or sense-making process (Bies, 1987; Morris & Moberg, 1994; Robinson, 1996). Each of these theorists agreed that betrayal must be perceived by the victim as an act whereby the perpetrator intentionally causes harm. Thus Morris and Moberg argued that 'the victim must convince himself or herself not only that it was the violator who caused the harm but also that he or she did so freely and deliberately' (1994, p. 179).

However, theorists from other disciplines suggest that it isn't necessary to require perpetrators' intention to harm, simply that they intend to behave opportunistically. As Elangovan and Shapiro stated, 'although violations of trust need to be voluntary to be considered betrayal, some of them may be unintentional' (1998, p. 551). These authors used both the presence of intent and the timing of intent (whether prior to or after the initiation of a relationship) to develop a typology of betrayal which distinguishes between acts of 'accidental' betrayal—the absence of intent—from 'intentional', 'premeditated,' and 'opportunistic' types. For example, numerous accounts of studies of espionage highlight the idealistic motives of the perpetrator—selling intelligence for the common good—and not their intent to harm the unfortunate victims (Åkerström, 1991).

Finally, there is considerable ambiguity about intent when perpetrators and victims are directly queried. Jones and Burdette (1994) provided evidence gleaned from retrospective narratives that both perpetrators and victims perceive opportunistic motives yet differ in their attributions of cause. That is, while both agreed that the act of betrayal was intentionally performed, perpetrators overwhelmingly attribute their own motives to unstable causes (e.g. fit of rage). Victims, on the other hand, were much more likely to perceive the motives of the perpetrator as intentional, stable, and internal (e.g. dispositional character flaw). In addition, Baumeister, Stillwell and Wotman (1990) discovered that victims and perpetrators have substantially different subjective interpretations of the consequences of betrayals. Perpetrators are more likely to see the incident as isolated and without lasting implications, while the victims believed it caused lasting harm and continuing grievance. Such differing subjective perceptions of betrayal are not surprising—a betrayal is such an extreme violation that we would expect perpetrators to minimize and mitigate it if at all possible. As Jones and Burdette reasoned, 'Perhaps such explanations reduce one's sense of moral responsibility for undesirable behaviors' (1994, p. 258).

Thus, requiring intent to harm victims probably is too strict a requirement. Particularly when we consider impersonal betrayals, it seems clear that many betrayals are undertaken for gain and the harm to the victim is a byproduct rather than the primary purpose of the act. Anyway, perpetrators can always claim they meant no harm or hadn't realized the implications (and we really cannot read their thoughts). As Elangovan and Shapiro (1998) suggested, it is not the intent to harm which leads an act to be seen as a betrayal but an indifference to the harm caused to those who placed their trust in the

perpetrator. We recognize that many actions which victimize individuals in organizational settings are compelled by circumstances or are accidental and participants do seek to differentiate those from betrayals. However, future work would benefit from a more precise focus on indifference to or devaluing of harm, rather than intent to harm, as the requirement for eliciting feelings of betrayal.

Victim, Perpetrator, and Third Parties

In industrial/organizational psychology the focus has been on the victim–perpetrator dyad. Typically, third parties are incidental to the betrayal episode, relegated instead to the status of a comparison standard (Morrison & Robinson, 1997) or a source of influence (Morris & Moberg, 1994). Yet theorists in other disciplines focus on the role of third parties, some insisting that acts of betrayal inherently require third parties (Baxter, Mazanec, Nicholson et al., 1997).

Shackelford and Buss (1996) suggested that betrayal involves the potential threat of diverting valued resources to persons outside the primary relationship. Likewise, Argyle and Henderson (1984) hypothesized that relationship rules are created to deal with potentially negative consequences related to third parties (e.g. ensuring that self-disclosures are kept in confidence). Their research suggests that the violation of rules concerning third parties is one of the most crucial in terms of the consequences to the relationship, with over one-third of the respondents rating them as either 'moderately' or 'very important' in the relationship's subsequent dissolution.

Some theorists require that any act of betrayal involve a third party. Baxter et al. examined betrayal from a dialectic perspective—that loyalty is meaningful only in unity with its opposite, disloyalty (or, the act of betraying)—and argued that third parties are required in any account of betrayal: 'There are always three parties, A, B, C, in a matrix of loyalty. A can be loyal to B only if there is a third party C who stands as a potential competitor . . . thus the concept of loyalty becomes meaningful to us only when united conceptually with the possibility of betrayal' (1997, p. 656). Thus, third parties are central to many scholarly theories of what it means to betray.

Industrial/organizational psychologists probably also should recognize the implicit and sometimes explicit third party in acts of betrayal. For example, as members of social groups, third parties are implicated to the extent that shared norms, agreements, and expectations concerning appropriate conduct are developed. In this way third parties constitute a powerful source of influence (Morris & Moberg, 1994), or 'clan control' (Ouchi, 1980). Yet typically I/O psychologists place the role of third parties outside the primary betrayal episode. For example, Robinson (1996) limited the role of third parties to a source of comparative information in the victim's sense-making process of a potential violation. For others, third parties are implicit at best. Bies, for

example, focused on outrage over underpayment of expected compensation. Third parties would be implicit in this betrayal, in the form of alternative employers forgone, based on the false promise of high compensation. An explicit recognition of the role of third parties would help enrich our understanding of the kind of reactions individuals may have to violated expectations. Who those third parties are and how they are involved in workplace betrayals would be a fruitful area for future research.

The Necessity of Shared Knowledge

To what extent must the victim and perpetrator share knowledge concerning expectations and their importance to the relationship? Here again there appears to be little consensus in the literature. Robinson (1996) argued that the lack of mutality concerning the content of expectations is a common condition. Alternatively, Elangovan and Shapiro (1998) stated that both must agree on the contents of expectations but may disagree on the extent to which these are important to the relationship. Still others, such as Bies (1987) and Metts (1994), suggested that knowledge of the facts is negotiated between the victim and perpetrator through social accounts or other remedial efforts.

Robinson did not require that the victim and perpetrator agree on expectations for the relationship. Commensurate with the current definition of the psychological contract as individual employees' perception of their own and their organization's reciprocal obligations (Rousseau, 1989, 1995), Robinson focused exclusively on the individual employee's perception that they are a victim of a psychological contract breach. Since psychological contracts are inherently perceptual and idiosyncratic to each individual, it follows that 'an employee's beliefs about the obligations underlying his or her employment relationship are not necessarily shared by agents of the organization' (Robinson, 1996, p. 228). She based her model in part on the possibility of 'incongruence' because each may have divergent schemata by which to interpret expectations, many expectations are complex and ambiguous, and the level of communication will vary. What matters is that the employee perceives a breach and, through an interpretative process, comes to feel that it constitutes a violation of an important promissory agreement. Thus, the victim and perpetrator need not agree on the contents, importance, or even the behaviors involved for a breach to be classified as a betrayal.

Elangovan and Shapiro (1998) disagree. Arguing from the perpetrator's perspective, they stated that mutuality is a precondition for betrayal. They require that both victim and perpetrator be 'mutually aware' of the expectations, otherwise there could be no intent on the part of the perpetrator, hence no actual betrayal. This definitional condition allows for the distinction between an act of opportunistic betrayal and an oversight or accident. If both agree on the expectations the transgression cannot be attributed away as an accident, misunderstanding, or other mere disappointment. However, the two

parties do not have to agree on the extent to which the expectations are pivotal or important to the relationship. Thus, they may still disagree on whether an act of betrayal occurred. In fact, the victim need not even be aware of the betrayal, since Elangovan and Shapiro focused exclusively on the perpetrator's decision to betray.

Further, Metts (1994) and Bies (1987) proposed that expectations are negotiated, sometimes even after the transgression has occurred. Both Metts and Bies focused on how the knowledge of a betrayal episode may be altered through social accounts or other remedial efforts. In both cases, the perpetrators use any inherent ambiguity concerning the contents of expectations to ameliorate the harm or intention attributed to them and their act. In Metts' (1994) discussion of relational transgressions, the consequences of a particular transgression are largely the outcome of a negotiation process consisting of several factors: severity of offence, explicitness, motivations, attributions, understanding, and insight. Similarly, Bies (1987) discussed the social accounts provided by perpetrators that served to mitigate the negative implications for the harm-doer.

Like intent to harm, the requirement for mutuality seems too strict for workplace settings. There is simply too much that is ambiguous, so many ways in which behavior can be compelled by changing circumstances. Acts which are serious threats to an employee's security or identity can occur because the market for the company's product has collapsed. Employees may have worked for many years for a public utility that has now been privatized and finds that it must operate in a more efficient manner than the employees had expected. Or an unexpected opportunity for a better job may induce an engineer to leave the project at a critical time. While there will always be mutual agreement that a general's selling secrets to the enemy is a betrayal, many of the changes organizations and individuals working in them undertake cannot be so unambiguously understood by all to be betrayals. There seems to be no way to escape the fact that what are betrayals in work settings will often be matters of dispute.

Dispositional vs. Situationally Driven Betrayal

There has been a long-standing tension between dispositional theories, on the one hand, and situational theories, on the other, in social science. Despite widespread agreement that, in the famous equation of Lewin (1951), behavior is a function of both the person and the environment there remains only a limited number of truly interactionist models (see Eoyang, 1994, for a notable exception). The same pattern exists among those studying betrayal.

The clearest example of the dispositional approach to betrayal is provided by Jones and Burdette (1994) who conceptualized betrayal as driven by a personality trait; in addressing betrayal from this perspective they have developed a measure of an individual's propensity to betray, called the Inter-

personal Betrayal Scale. In contrast, several other scholars have embraced the notion of situational relativity and argue for differences in interpretations of acts as betrayals as dependent on the nature of the relationship (Baxter et al., 1997; Clark & Waddell, 1985; O'Connell, 1984; Shackelford & Buss, 1996). For example, Baxter and colleagues argued that perceptions of an act as a betrayal will vary from one context to the next depending on the loyalty demands present. Similarly, Clark & Waddell (1985) examined differences in betrayal as a function of the type of relationship. According to their previous research (Clark & Mills, 1979) they argued that the rules concerning the benefits one expects to give and receive will vary depending on the type of relationship. Using the distinction between communal—whereby 'members feel a special obligation for the other's welfare' (Clark & Waddell, 1985, p. 404)—and exchange-based relationships (defined by the lack of this special obligation) these authors argued that 'behaviors considered unjust in one relationship may be considered perfectly acceptable in another' (p. 403). Echoing this sentiment, Shackelford and Buss (1996, p. 1152), argued from an evolutionary perspective to suggest, 'one way to predict and explain which behaviors will be interpreted as a betrayal of a relationship is to identify the adaptive benefits that might have accrued to ancestral humans forming that relationship'. From Baxter et al., Clark and Waddell, and Shackelford and Buss's perspectives different relationships are developed to reap different benefits and to the extent that the expected benefits differ across relationships there should be different perceptions of what constitutes a betrayal in the various contexts.

In order to better understand workplace betrayal we can draw on both perspectives. For example, research might seek to establish the validity of Jones and Burdette's (1994) Interpersonal Betrayal Scale for selection decisions. Similarly, we might be able to begin to identify those situations where perception of betrayal is a possibility by learning more about the loyalty demands in different situations, or the importance of different relationships and memberships to participants' self-identity. To assist the latter work, Baxter et al. (1997) reported a measure that can be used to determine the importance of relationships to one's sense of self, the Inclusion-of-Other-in-the-Self Scale (Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992) and Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) have developed a measure of the importance of various social-group identities to the individual.

IMPLICATIONS

As complex, global organizational forms and contractual relationships increase in importance questions of trust, injustice and psychological contracts become more salient to the organizational enterprise. We identified betrayal as a concept central to these fields of study and to a better understanding of

interpersonal relationships that was ill-understood. This review sought to introduce industrial/organizational psychologists to the wider literature on betrayal and to clarify its applications to the workplace. These arguments have several implications for current issues in research and practice in industrial/organizational psychology, which are elaborated below.

Clarifying Workplace Betrayal

First, we discovered that there are several different and conflicting understandings of workplace betrayal. We drew on the more extensive literatures on betrayal in social psychology, sociology, and political science to develop a more comprehensive understanding of workplace betrayal. First, we saw that simply stating that a transgressed expectation must be important or pivotal to elicit feelings of betrayal provides insufficient guidance. Specifying what is important and why, as social psychologists such as Shackelford and Buss have done, is necessary to theory development. Here we provided those features other scholars have said characterize important expectations and applied them to organizational settings, proposing that transgressions which violate constitutive expectations, violate a We-boundary, threaten a victim's sense of security, or threaten self-identity are more likely to be seen as betrayals. We hope these can provide a basis for theory development and testing of what leads to feelings of betrayal in the workplace.

Second, we suggested that defining impersonal betrayal as outside the scope of workplace betrayal was both misguided and unnecessary. Impersonal betrayals can be every bit as threatening as personal ones. Further, concerns about having one party to the transgression be a collective fade once we relax the requirement that a perpetrator must intend to harm the victims. If the perpetrator is aware of and indifferent to the potential harm he or she may cause, impersonal betrayal can be accommodated. Role obligations are simply too important to industrial/organizational psychology, to define them out of consideration.

Third, in industrial/organizational psychology normative advice on averting moral outrage has centred on admonitions to provide explanations and information to prevent an interpretation of the act as a betrayal. Yet this work suggests that transgressions of constitutive, relationship-forming rules that threatens one's security or identity are not likely to be mitigated with soothing words. Most people aren't going to be talked out of their perception that an action threatens the very basis of the relationship or is not a threat to their security or identity. Once such suspicions are engaged it would be difficult to present any sort of argumentation that would not be viewed as cravenly self-serving. Rather we would suggest that ambiguous acts which may or may not be interpreted as betrayals are comparatively rare in organizational settings. In functioning organizations many participants have extensive experience with one another and the setting and the areas of ambiguity are concomitantly

small. This is not to say that explanation would not help to support employees' perceptions that they are respected and have standing (Tyler, 1998) or perhaps shift blame elsewhere, just that it would probably not lead individuals to be less likely to interpret an act as a betrayal, or to mitigate their rage once they have done so. Thus, at best, forestalling perceptions of betrayal would depend more on an advance understanding of employees' perceptions of their We-groups, their constitutive rules governing their relationships and memberships, and which relationships are important to their senses of security and self-identity. Only such foreknowledge would provide the information necessary to either shift expectations before the act or gird for the consequences if that is not possible.

Finally, we know too little about cross-cultural differences in perceptions of acts of betrayal or in reactions to felt betrayal. The extent to which culture influences the rules of relationships and perceptions of betrayal remains an as yet unexplored area of inquiry (Argyle & Henderson, 1984; Clark & Waddell, 1985). If transgressions are subject to ambiguity in a single organization in one society, the potential for differences in what constitutes a betrayal in cross-cultural settings is immense. For example, the first author has conducted research in formerly communist countries in transition to market economies, and she has found that newly installed American and British managers were engaging in what their subordinates believed to be acts of betrayal: violations of their employees' expectations that bosses should act as caring parents (e.g., Pearce, 1995). Even when these expatriate executives understood their subordinates' expectation they tended to dismiss them as wrong, expecting the employees to adopt their own constitutive rules once they had been shown their 'errors'. Clearly, constitutive rules are not so easily changed, and these subordinates' feelings of betrayal certainly were not mitigated by such instruction. Helping to identify differences in constitutive rules, We-boundaries, sources of security and the importance of memberships to self-identity could prove useful in averting serious breakdowns of trust in cross-cultural collaborations.

Extreme Emotions as Motivators of Workplace Behavior

One of the defining aspects of betrayal is that it evokes strong negative emotions. These strong emotions, in turn, hold great motivating power. As Ellsworth (1994, p. 25) has stated, 'many scholars believe that the primary function of emotion is to move the organism to appropriate action in circumstances consequential for its well-being.' We have argued that betrayal often involves a fundamental threat to one's security (i.e. well-being). As such, it provides a unique opportunity to examine the motivating potential of emotions. Given industrial/organizational psychology's long-standing interest in motivation, it is surprising that the emotions and the behaviors thereby motivated are only now coming under scrutiny.

Betrayal forms the basis for two suggestions for future research with respect to betrayal and the emotions evoked. First, research on betrayal has been relatively silent about the actual emotion elicited by an act interpreted as a betrayal. While almost everyone would agree that betrayal evokes strong negative emotions (Bateson, 1977) the actual form taken may vary considerably from feelings of sorrow to extreme rage. Åkerström (1991) uses a host of terms to express the negative emotions aroused, including indignation, contempt, revenge, and rage. Morrison and Robinson suggest that 'central to the experience of violation are the feelings of anger, resentment, bitterness, indignation, and even outrage' (1997, p. 231). It would be useful to illuminate the various scope conditions concerning the manifestation of the negative emotions involved in betrayal. For example, when will a terminated employee who had expected lifetime employment feel outrage versus bitterness? Perhaps the research on betrayal in I/O psychology has gotten ahead of itself by focusing on how to mitigate the consequences of the resultant negative emotions (e.g. Bies, 1987), while neglecting the various forms and consequences of negative emotion that may occur in the first place.

Attribution theories of emotion (e.g. Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Ortony, Clore & Collins, 1988; Scherer, 1984; Weiner, 1985) could provide a useful starting point for understanding the workplace consequences of strong negative emotion. According to these attribution theorists, emotions result from an individual's appraisal of their environment along a number of dimensions. It is noteworthy that our review of the defining features of acts that elicit betrayal reflects some of the more general dimensions proffered by attribution theorists of emotion. That is, attribution theorists discuss the dimensions of novelty, agency, and norm/self-concept compatibility (see Ellsworth, 1994) which correspond to our discussions of security, intent, and identity centrality, respectively. For example, Ellsworth discussed evidence that the attribution of agency plays a crucial role in differentiating the resultant negative emotion. Thus, the employee who attributes the cause of her or his termination to fate or market conditions may feel bitterness, whereas an attribution of cause to a manager's betrayal may engender extreme feelings of outrage (cf. Frijda, 1986; Scherer, 1984).

This also illustrates the influential role of culture. For example, Matsumoto, Kudoh, Scherer & Wallbott (1988) reported that Japanese were less likely to assign blame to individuals than were American participants. When asked to assign responsibility, these participants were more likely to respond 'non-applicable' than were their American counterparts. This is particularly important with respect to betrayal, since research generally supports the notion that without blame there is generally little anger (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992). Indeed, there is some evidence provided by cultural psychologists suggesting that a situation that would evoke anger in more individualist cultures may actually evoke feelings of shame in more collectivist or interdependent cultures (e.g. Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, the interdependence of

emotion and culture suggests a variant of our situational argument concerning betrayal. To what extent does knowledge of betrayal developed in the more individualist cultures of North America and Northern Europe apply to cultures with different value systems? The role of culture suggests a host of scope conditions that need to be explored with increasing urgency in the globally integrated workplace.

Our second suggestion for future research has to do with the behaviors which result from an experienced emotion. That is, there is surprisingly little empirical research or theory in I/O psychology that predicts the actions of those who experience different emotions. Instead, most research and theory concerning the role of emotions at work has focused predominantly on their expression as distinct from their experience (e.g. Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). Unfortunately, to our knowledge no one has yet conducted systematic empirical research about reactions to the experience of different workplace emotions (Jones and George, 1998, presented persuasive theory but, as yet, no empirical tests). How does the victim respond to the rage engendered by betrayal? How does the perpetrator respond to the guilt they feel upon their act of betrayal? When will the doctoral student who feels betrayed murder the offending professor (or himself)? These are just some of the questions that a review of betrayal suggests. The time is ripe to begin to develop a more nuanced understanding of the behavioral reactions to emotions at work.

CONCLUSIONS

Betrayal is vital to an understanding of the more interpersonally based networked organizational forms, and also is a surprisingly versatile reflection of many of the current interests of industrial/organizational psychologists. The concept is central to theories of trust, justice, and psychological contracts, and suggests productive areas of research in cross-cultural normative expectations, the efficacy of mitigating accounts in workplace settings, and the effects of strong emotion on workplace action. This review suggests that if it is something we are talking about more, such a conversation can be illuminating.

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