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Tim Gawley

Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada

## Revisiting Trust in Symbolic Interaction: Presentations of Trust Development in University Administration

### **Abstract**

Trust development has been studied from many sociological perspectives. Despite its early ventures, a perspective that lags in its attendance to trust is symbolic interaction. Using data drawn from twenty four semi-structured interviews with Canadian university administrators (UAs), this paper revisits a Goffman-influenced conceptualization proposed by Henslin (1968) to frame the analysis of four trust development tactics: being visible, expressing sincerity and personalization, showing the face and establishing routine activity. Resistance encountered during trust development is also discussed. Findings are compared with previous studies of trust in professional, leadership and everyday life settings. The implications of this paper for future symbolic interactionist forays into the areas of trust and administration are also discussed.

### **Keywords**

Trust; Symbolic Interaction; Erving Goffman; Qualitative Methods; Educational Administration; Leadership

### **Symbolic interactionism and trust development**

Trust development has been explored by symbolic interactionists and ethnographic researchers in a number of contexts. These include studies of service work such as Bigus' (1972) study of milk deliverers, Henslin's (1968, 1976) study of cab drivers and Prus' (1989) study of sales. Symbolic interactionist studies of policing and deviance have also addressed the notion of trust development. In addition to Jacobs' (1992) study of undercover police officers, Prus and Sharper (1991) study trust development among hustlers and thieves. These represent exemplary contributions to understanding trust in everyday life roles and situations. However, this small array of studies also shows how symbolic interactionist attention to trust has lagged in comparison to more recent conceptual and empirical discussions in the area (Hardin 2006). Nevertheless, the perspective can still add much to the study of trust development through its attendance to the meanings, interpretations and actions in everyday life. Using symbolic interaction, this paper presents tactics that university administrators (UAs) report using to develop trust with

others in their everyday interactions. Trust development is conceptualized and analyzed through the re-visitation of Henslin's (1968) conceptualization of trust which is extended by the work Erving Goffman (1959, 1961, 1963, 1967 and 1971) and complemented with the tactician-oriented perspective of Prus (1999).

### ***Symbolic interaction and trust development in educational administration***

The development of trust is especially relevant in education (i.e., school districts or boards, colleges and universities) where children, young adults, continuing students, parents, trustees and interested funding bodies such as governments, private businesses and non-profit sponsors desire visibility in areas of budgeting, administration or teacher competence. Trust permeates all interactions in university communities. As Misztal (1996) argues, all communities require trust for the development of a co-operative society. Hence, trust development in university interactions can emerge between students, between students and non-students (e.g., residents of the community in which a university is located), between students and professors, professors and administrators, between administrators and their assistants, between administrators and unions, community politicians or boards of governors and between administrators themselves.

Despite the alleged necessity of trust development in university and other educational contexts, empirical research on trust development is scarce. A few recent studies focus on trust in research activity (Liebeskind and Oliver 1998; Shrum, Chompalov and Genuth 2001). In administration, Baert and Shipman (2005) recently discuss the institutional implications of the "corporate model" of accountability for trust in British universities. Bottery (2003) outlines aforementioned dimensions of trust in a similar discussion about trust between governments and professional educators. Educational administration remains a territory to be explored by sociologists in general and symbolic interactionists in particular (Prus 2004). It provides an untapped subculture in which symbolic interactionism can revisit conceptualizations of trust development so that it once again contributes to the conceptual and empirical understandings of trust in administrative and other contexts.

### **Conceptualizing trust development in university administration: Revisiting Henslin's "*Trust and the cab driver*"**

The symbolic interactionist studies mentioned above include some of the earliest contributions that the perspective has made to understanding trust development. Influential among these studies is Erving Goffman whose concept of impression management (Goffman 1959) is initially applied to the definition and empirical examination of trust. Among the first to apply Goffman to the examination of trust is James Henslin's (1968) study of cab drivers in which he deconstructs Goffman's notion of the "front" (a. the setting; b. appearances; c. manners of the performer; and d. the fit of the actor with the expectations of the audience) to formulate a conceptualization of trust. To Henslin, trust develops where "*an actor has offered a definition of himself and the audience is willing to interact with the actor on the basis of that definition...*" (Henslin *ibidem*: 140). Adopting this conceptualization, Henslin proposes a process of trust development involving the following six elements:

- a. The proffering of a definition of self by an actor;
- b. Such that when the audience perceives fit between the parts of the front of the actor;
- c. And accepts this definition as valid;
- d. The audience is willing, without coercion, to engage in interaction with the actor;
- e. The interaction being based on the accepted definition of the actor, and;
- f. The continuance of this interaction being dependent on the continued acceptance of this definition, or the substitution of a different definition that is also satisfactory to the audience (Henslin *ibidem*: 140)

Revisiting Henslin's work not only acknowledges the continuing value of his conceptualization for understanding trust from a qualitative sociological perspective. It also provides an opportunity to qualify his Goffmanian conceptualization by incorporating later materials from Goffman himself. Doing so, it is hoped this paper repositions symbolic interactionism to a less peripheral location in the conceptualization and empirical study of trust.

Henslin's conceptualization continues to provide an exemplary base from which to interpret the trust development activities of UAs for three reasons. First is his assumption that trust emerges from social interaction. This is a fundamental tenet of symbolic interaction (Blumer 1969). In studying UAs, it is important to note that while offering self definitions to others involves the *visible* presentation of self to others, Henslin's definition remains open to the assertion that trust development *does not* necessarily require that actors be aware of the audiences. Interaction necessarily includes reflective interpretations by actors and audience members alike as they assess the validity of each other's activities and perspectives within and without direct interaction with prospective trustees.

This is supported in Goffman's work through his discussion of the *Umwelt* or the "region around [a person] from within which signs for alarm can come" and where action toward this alarm needs to be taken (Goffman 1971: 252-253). The *Umwelt* does not necessarily include some immediate physical location or visible boundary between alarm and safety. It can also refer to caution about things that are sensed over large distances, so much that the individual or group causing the alarm is not physically observable, and that such threats can be detected through other means such as communication technologies (Goffman *ibidem*). Everyday activities such as driving (Dannefer 1977) highlight how people in non-social or non-visible scenarios (e.g., when drivers are not fully visible behind a windshield) deal with trust development. The observations presented in this paper largely involve accounts where interviewed UAs *are* in the presence of others with whom they are developing trust. However, other accounts provide instances in which the actor is *not* present during the UA's development of trust, especially during moments when the validity of trust development is under assessment. Developing trust is a matter of reflection about the past, present and anticipated activities of others regardless of their actual visibility at a given point in time.

Second, Henslin's definition provides the establishment of routine or normalized trust relations. The notion that trust is a precondition for a stable social order has been articulated by several trust theorists (Garfinkel 1963; Giddens 1990; Luhmann 1988). Recently, Misztal (2001) adds Goffman to the fray by examining how his

concept of normality, informed by his work *Asylums* (1961) and *Stigma* (1963), explains the importance of trust in everyday life. Social order requires predictability and reliability in which everyone is “safe and sound to continue on with the activity at hand with only peripheral attention given to checking on the stability of the environment” (Goffman 1971: 283 in Misztal 2001). The development of trust eventually establishes “normal appearances” that “assure people that nothing around them is out of the ordinary and life is predictable, so in the absence of anything unusual, they can continue their routines” (Misztal 2001: 314). By developing and continuing routine presentations of self, the state of normality reinforces the legitimacy of trust.

Finally, Henslin’s conceptualization supports the notion that trust is a tactical performance. Prus (1999: Ch.6) calls this the “tactical enterprise” whereby people perform activities which enhance, focus, control or stabilize their influence and interests in relations with others. In the tactical enterprise, UAs are reflexive actors who receive and handle information in their everyday situations so as to enhance or secure their own influence and interests in relation to others (Prus 1999:168-169). Considering the conceptualization of trust development offered above, the portrayal of UAs as trust development tacticians fits appropriately with Prus’ own definition of trust which “a quality attributed to persons [...] by others; it denotes an anticipation that these persons will act in manners consistent with the one’s interests” (Prus 1989: 104). A UA is a reflexive trust tactician whose participation in trust development entails the interchangeability of roles between actor and audience in accordance with the meanings and circumstances of an interaction for that administrator.

This paper presents four tactical dimensions of trust development in university administrative contexts which correspond with Henslin’s trust development process. *Being visible* acknowledges how trust first develops through an actor’s presentation to others. *Expressing sincerity and personalizing encounters* represent the middle elements of Henslin’s conceptualization. These actions are used to persuade others that a UA’s presentation is valid. *Showing your face* acknowledges the process of clarifying the expectations that actors and audiences hold with respect to developing stable trust relationships. Finally, *establishing routine activity* describes the need for actors to sustain the acceptance of trust definitions between actors and audiences. It is emphasized that these four dimensions do not address the role that settings and appearances have in the development of trust, but focus exclusively on the manners involved in trust development. This is not to imply that settings and appearances are not essential in the development of trust by UAs. It is simply a matter of scope.

## Methodology

The data for this paper come from in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with twenty four Canadian UAs. A diverse sample of universities, administrative positions, faculties and departments are represented in the sample. The UAs in this study have experience in eight universities located between the Atlantic Provinces and Western Canada. These universities range in size and specialization, ranging from small and medium primarily undergraduate universities to medium and large research-intensive institutions. The UAs also represent a range of positions including Provosts, Presidents, Vice Presidents, Principals, Deans, Associate Deans, Department Chairs and Program Directors. Each position also entails a different degree of duties and responsibilities which makes for insightful variations and commonalities in the experiences of UAs. Several academic areas

are also represented including Biology, Cultural Studies, Education, Engineering, History, Physical Education, Philosophy, Physical Resources, Public Administration, Religious Studies and Sociology.

Participants were recruited through the combination of convenience, snowball and random sampling techniques. Administrators in the researcher's home institution were initially recruited, which led to a snowball sample of additional participants from inside and outside of the institution. To ensure that the sample went beyond the researcher's home institution, an exhaustive list was generated through the analysis of Administrative and Academic Program websites from five Southern Ontario Universities where seventy-eight administrator e-mail addresses were identified. Then, a random sample of thirty UAs was contacted through e-mail. Among those who participated from this pool, further snowballing generated a diverse sample of individuals.

The interviews were conducted in various locations including offices, private library study rooms or off-campus cafés. The interviews lasted between forty five minutes and two and one half hours with the majority lasting between one and one and one half hours due to the hectic schedules of UAs. The intensity of the UAs' duties also meant that the researcher focused primarily on the availability of participants rather than on their personal characteristics. Among the five women who participated, their titles ranged from Department Chair to Principal.

Interview questions were organized according to a list of themes adopted from the generic social process of *Performing Activity* proposed by Prus (1996). It requires qualification here that the interviews were not performed with the intent of discovering these generic processes in the development of trust. Rather, they provide conceptual guidelines for the investigation and analysis of activities performed by UAs (Campbell 2003). Consequently, the interviews encouraged highly reflective and flexible discussions which allowed UAs to share their perspectives about administrative work with minimal disruption (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995).

The following findings were assembled using open coding procedures derived from Strauss and Corbin (1998). Given the focus of this study on role performance in educational administration (Prus 1997), transcriptions were analyzed for the presence of activity-oriented concepts and supportive dimensions. The analysis of UA accounts subsequently uncovered the importance of trust development in university administration. A deeper analysis of these activities further resulted in the emergence of the dimensions presented here. During the analysis, UA accounts of these dimensions were cut and pasted into appropriately labeled word processor filing folders. The labeling of these activity-based dimensions was decided through a combination of the researcher's own assessment of what the dimensions signified, or "in vivo codes", with a review of the trust literature (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 115). After these dimensions were identified it was ultimately discovered how each of them reflect elements of the trust development process outlined by Henslin (1968, 1976). Hence, the dimensions described below are presented in a manner which reflects the sequence of those elements.

## Developing trust in university administration

One UA highlights trust development in his everyday activities when he stresses the important consistency between talk and action. As he states, “there must be congruence between profession and action. If there is not, you have a process in place and you bypass that process, then you generate cynicism. Then of course trust collapses . . . When people become cynical, they don’t believe what’s going on. Then they don’t trust.” Dimensions of trust stress the importance of consistency and visibility of action. To develop trust, an individual must convince and visibly demonstrate to others that they are sincerely acting in their interests. The following sections present four tactics involved in the development of trust among UAs along with a brief discussion of how trust development, assumed to be a desirable in administrative contexts, encounters resistance.

### *Being visible*

Definitions of trust stress the importance of visibility. As actors, UAs gain trust by presenting themselves and their administrative agendas to faculty and other administrative audiences. One UA tells of a contextual transition from a predecessor who worked in a “top-down” manner to his relatively open and consultative style. He describes how visibility, through what he calls his “road shows”, is able to “restore the trust” among UAs and faculty:

It was very patronizing or “Father knows best” kind of thing, and it wasn’t done in conjunction with strategic planning. It was ad hoc. So when I arrived, the whole budgeting process was in disrepute. Nobody trusted it . . . I embarked on what I call base budget reform ... And then I went on “road shows” with my budgets. I went to the faculty ... I did it with the Deans. I was a regular guest at my request ... The process for our budgeting was to try to be open with the process and the documentation got thicker and thicker and the explanations got bigger and bigger ... By the end of my second budget year I was getting verbal acknowledgements and feedback saying, “yeah, this is open. This is transparent. We trust that what you’re telling us is the straight goods” ... We’ve restored the trust.

Of additional interest here is how the UA’s presentation of self is accompanied by the visibility of administrative documentation. Preda (2002) observes the importance of financial documents in presenting and promoting organizational identities. As hinted in the above instance, UAs present documents as illustrations of the “product” being “sold”. Similarly, another UA strongly insists during an interview that she display her portfolio to the interviewer:

*Administrator:* You asked me about what I do. I’ll tell you my job description. And I can share these things with you because I just put together my portfolio . . . My title is Director and I had to put together this portfolio of what I’ve done as Director for two years here.

*Interviewer:* I don’t want your job description.

*Administrator:* But you need to hear my job description!

Using these documents, she shares what has been accomplished during her tenure as Director of an academic unit. This UA’s display of documentation signifies an attempt to present an administrator whose competence, hard work and

commitment is consistent despite what she describes is an overwhelming set of demands resulting from human resources shortages in her unit.

Visibility is readily performed by some UAs, but as the comments of others suggest, visibility in the generation of trust is fraught with uncertainties. As Goffman points out, there are risks to becoming too visible to the point of “obtrusiveness” (Goffman 1963: 49). For one UA, too much administrative visibility is potentially detrimental to the development of trust. His strategy is to allow administrative colleagues to perform their tasks with autonomy while intervening when requested:

You can't have any meaningful subsidiary if you don't trust people at that level. If you don't trust them, or you are suspicious of their motives or you insist on over-vigilance, you actually weaken the fabric and it is impossible to implement subsidiary or anything else. You don't involve yourself in a hands-on operation of an institution. You must trust your officers to work competently in their realm and that they will report to you on all kinds of issues that are important, and if there are particular grievous issues that do not admit of easy resolution by superior officers, then you come in, only then.

How too much visibility negates successful interaction has been seen in other ethnographic accounts. In the same way that too much openness can jeopardize a sale (Prus 1989: 107), too much visibility can jeopardize administrative trust.

### ***Expressing sincerity and personalizing encounters***

In addition to being visible, the expressions of sincerity and personalization are essential to trust development in university administration. In their everyday encounters, UAs report using sincerity and personalization to generate trust among their colleagues. While such expressions might seem casual and effortless, these tactics are not always easy to perform. One UA discusses the obstacles involved in the expression of sincerity, especially when it is certain that the audience does not fully understand the complexities associated with university issues or activities. For UAs, sincerity entails being sensitive to the views of others despite the vagueness of their understandings or intentions. Despite these difficulties, the UA recognizes the importance of sincerity:

The first thing you have to do to foster it is you have to try to be very receptive to suggestions and proposals that people make. On the one hand, that's a very difficult thing to do because . . . the truth is from certain points of view, most proposals seem off the wall because some people make proposals without having to deal with the institutional or budget constraints that you have to deal with in the day-to-day . . . But one of the things that I found is that you need to try as much as possible to find that grain of truth in their suggestions, and you really do need to create a context in which people feel like they can institute change.

Another difficulty facing UAs is the notion that they are outsiders to the everyday “in-the-trenches” dilemmas faced by staff, faculty or students. Administrators recount how they are either assumed to be unsympathetic to faculty needs, wants and visions or they insensitively withhold the resources required for those initiatives. To generate trust, UAs strengthen their sincerity by accentuating the personal ties they have with their colleagues. They attempt to convince others that they are genuinely “on their side”. One UA describes how he overcomes this outsider label by identifying faculty problems as “shared” problems:

I am dealing with faculty perceptions that the Dean is sitting on bags of money ... Part of being a Dean is convincing others that the Dean's role is that of an advocate for faculty and that the Dean feels the same frustrations. The board [of Governors] requires a decrease in the operating budget of five percent. When I have to decrease the operating budget by five percent, all faculty also have to decrease the budget by five percent. It is not me who reduced the Faculty of Arts operating budget by five percent. I either do that or I have to resign. The problem of finding that five percent to cut becomes a shared problem.

Sincerity and personalization are expressed as separate tactics in trust development, but the above accounts also show how trust development involves their concurrent enactment.

In addition to convincing the audience of their inside status, UAs mention the need to disassociate themselves from those contextual elements that UA audiences consider suspicious. While UAs will avoid people whom their audiences regard as untrustworthy, interesting is how they also avoid expressions of socially or institutionally litigious language and activities that potentially jeopardize the development of trust. It is not only those untrustworthy others who UAs need to avoid. They also need to be aware of the contextual-sensitivities possessed by their audience so that expressions of inappropriate words or actions can be avoided. In their study of door-to-door salespeople, Schweingruber and Berns (2003: 456) observe how a salesperson's fixation on the money made from sales "causes dealers to mismanage their presentation of self", leading prospects to "see dollar signs in the eyes of the dealers and thus to reject the dealers and their product." This encourages the salespeople to adopt a "nonmonetary self" orientation to their work which enables the company to develop a more collective definition of success (Schweingruber and Berns *ibidem*: 460).

The expression of this nonmonetary self is observed among UAs as something to avoid during trust development. Like all budgets, university budgets generate uncertainty among UAs, staff, faculty and students. Two UAs convey the importance of displaying this "nonmonetary self" with others:

You should be able to deal with your people on the good things, the bad things and the ugly things. That way they feel like they are being dealt with fairly. If you are only interested with people on money issues then it creates an uneasy work environment. I make money issues a part of other things so they don't seem so exceptional.

I think that consultation and collegial participation has to be a twelve month activity. The budget process cannot be seen as exempt from the general governance pattern. If it is, its exceptionality gives it more credit than it deserves. And not only that, it isolates it as the most important thing. It's important, but our teaching, our ability to function as a community and our serving our students; they are easily as important as the budget. So if all of a sudden the administration only becomes interested when the budget comes around, what message does that send to the faculty and staff?

The above UA accounts highlight how interaction with faculty goes beyond the essential discussions of budget estimates and resources. Monetary concerns permeate all university issues, but as the UAs imply, trust is developed when they are able to downplay or set aside the monetary aspect and deal with other community concerns from a diversity of perspectives.



### **Trust development as “showing your face”**

Trust can be a relational activity wherein UAs and their audiences mutually develop trust. As the implications of *Being Visible* indicate, UAs need to be mindful of the trust expectations held by their audiences. In their daily interactions with audiences however, it is also necessary for a UA to be mindful of how these “others” act because it is not always certain that they are upholding the UA’s expectations of trust. Here, the actors become the audience where the affirmation of trust involves making others aware that the UA, in fact, also have trust expectations. This is accomplished through what Goffman (1967) calls showing the face.

The “face” refers to “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (Goffman 1967 in Meehan 1992: 460). In the context of police patrols, Meehan (1992) describes the showing of face as the act of negotiating and maintaining a consistent array of rules and conventions between officers and juveniles in a defined patrol area. A single area is patrolled by several officers, each with different expectations about how the juveniles should act. Every officer therefore must show their expectations to juveniles if the officers want the youths to conform. The consistency of the officer’s expectations of action demonstrates the maintenance of face. A loss of face occurs when these established expectations are violated by the officer with a subsequent challenging of the officer’s authority by the youths. For officers, face involves the consistency of their authority but also the maintenance of good order within their sectors. A loss of consistency or order in the patrolled sector signifies loss of face (Meehan *ibidem*).

Just as the patrol officers show their face to the public, the development of trust in university contexts entails the showing of face by UAs to others in the university community. Included here is the necessity that UAs consistently demonstrate their expectations to others. For one university Dean, consistency in the dissemination of information is foundational to the development of trust between him and his departmental Chairs:

Currently, I’m in discussions with each department Chair about their plans and how much money they need. Once I make my decisions, all of them will know who is getting what. They all know what the plans are. We share all of that stuff. So [Named Chair] would know what [Another Named Chair] is getting.

In this instance the Dean not only displays his resource distribution method individually to each Chair. He shows his values and expectations to everyone so that all Chairs know that resource allocation has been consistent with the UA’s stated rules and expectations.

As part of developing consistent rules and expectations, UAs need to trust that others are willing to abide by them. Administrators develop trust by maintaining a presence. Not maintaining this presence potentially jeopardizes the trust since others, in the absence of an audience, are more likely to deviate from presumed consistencies. In administration, this patrol-like activity can occur, as is the case of a UA who notices inconsistencies between the actions of an out-sourced snow removal service and the weather:

Generally you can’t get a snowplow contract that is “pay as you go” or a lump sum. It is usually a combination of the two. If you don’t monitor what is actually going on with the weather, when you get a bill from the contractor it could be way out of whack [overcharged]. You may have a Salter on site

for half an hour whipping through the parking lots dumping salt down for half an hour and charge you for two hours . . . You've got to monitor it, just letting him know that you are monitoring it, and giving the odd indication that you are monitoring it, keeps them honest.

By maintaining a presence, it is assumed that some physical visibility is occurring between the actor and audience. However, in this instance the UA shows his face to the snow removal contractor without having visible contact with either the company or the snow plow operator whose plowing and salting quality is in doubt. To Goffman, the UA is managing his *Umwelt*, that area around the UA from within which signs of uncertainty emerge and where the alleviation of uncertainties are handled (1971: 252-253). As suggested earlier, the *Umwelt* is not limited to a visible space around an individual. Nonvisible threats can also be felt within the *Umwelt*. The UA's distrust is based on the snow remover's previous actions. Based on these, trust is gained through the UA's reduction of uncertainty for future snow removals, not through direct interaction with the snow plow remover, but through his use of information technologies to anticipate the future activities of the snow remover (e.g., weather information from radio, television and internet). This information allows the UA to generate trust by ensuring that the activities of the snow removal operator is consistent with his informed expectation about how much snow removal activity is required. Trust is developed when uncertainties are neutralized.

### ***Establishing routine activity***

Strauss (1993: 193) highlights the importance of routine activity in everyday life when he states that as activities are repeated, "they become over time so routinized as to fall mostly out of consciousness until something happens to call attention to them." For an organization to achieve defined goals it has to develop and maintain "a patterning of action" or routine action (Strauss *ibidem*: 194). Routines contribute to administrative trust development since it is easy to "see" stable activities and decisions, but routine also allows people the stability to observe oncoming change. Goffman offers a similar argument. Trust can be developed when actors and audiences alike are displaying normality. The establishment of normality among UAs provides a stable context in which other individuals or groups in a university can easily observe and understand UA activities. Trust is developed when activities are routine. If activities are too complex then UAs risk the losing trust with their colleagues.

The interview data with UAs uncover an explicit linkage between routine activity and trust. In one interview, a UA goes so far as to say that:

Transparency means that you explain why you do things, follow a pattern that is open to everybody's understanding but not so you disclose confidential information that may be of exclusive preserve of senior administrators . . . But where we are transparent is the process. That's where it's transparent. It's transparent in that it is consistent . . . If the policy is so labyrinthine and nobody knows how it works or there are exceptions to the rules, or if people can bypass the process, then that's where cynicism enters in.

Other UAs echo this view. However, the consistencies of policies or processes are complemented with a need for ongoing consultation while another UA promotes the benefits of a consistent receptiveness to others' views:

I think the key to maintaining and defending is working in a much sustained manner with your peers and your colleagues and all of the people who report to you, and making sure that everybody knows why you are doing what you are doing.

My way of doing things has been very consultative because people hate surprises. People like to be consulted . . . When people get up in the morning and see a new program that has been talked about, and they haven't been consulted about, they get very upset.

This second instance also acknowledges the emotionally-charged undercurrents that exist in the event of negated routines. Strauss discusses how the upsetting of routines consequently generate excited responses from individuals whose abilities to predict and hold administrative activities into account are suddenly breached. As he states, "let them [routines] be challenged and you cannot but notice annoyance, anger, indignation, and other signs of passion" (Strauss 1993: 197). The study of routine activity is often overlooked because of its uninspiring presence in everyday life. However, the above instances reinforce the importance of routine activity in the generation of trust.

### ***Encountering resistance in trust development***

Trust appears to be a desirable state of affairs in administration, and so when trust is promoted, it is thought that others would be consensual to its development. The above instances thus far have implied how trust is a desirable part of interaction between UAs, faculty and university staff. In the everyday life of administration however, even when UAs encourage trust, it is difficult to develop since colleagues and subordinates are not always willing to reciprocate with the actions or responsibilities necessary for its success. This discrepancy makes it difficult for UAs to accomplish the trust they want from others. This is addressed by one UA who explains that while university faculty and staff want to be openly informed about administrative matters, they also do not wish to take on the extra activities that such consultations may involve. As he states, "I think people want to be consulted. I don't think people want to do your job. I think they are actually fearful of doing it. But they don't want to think that they've been left out of any decision-making process at no matter what level." For UAs, trust signifies the presence of sincerity, visibility, expectation consistency and routine. For faculty and staff it may also imply this, but it can also entail additional responsibilities that may not be feasible or desirable given the levels of responsibilities already required in their own positions. This can be particularly frustrating for UAs who even consider discontinuing their trust development activities, opting instead for arbitrary decision-making and problem-solving tactics. A frustration with the discrepancy between administrative openness and subordinates' lack of initiation is conveyed by one UA who states:

They want to know but they don't want to know . . . Everyone has reached a point where they resent not being consulted. They resent not knowing what is going on. If there is a decision made that they didn't quite like then they say "How come this wasn't raised with us?" But if you call a Department meeting about a third of the faculty will show up. If you circulate an e-mail that you've spent three-quarters of an hour formulating how you say things, you get a response from four people. So everyone wants to be consulted but nobody actually wants to take the time to have meetings or really provide feedback. So you're constantly stuck. You have

to maintain the appearance of being consultative, and sometimes you genuinely do want the consultation, but you constantly deal with the frustration from a lack of participation.

The UA becomes weary of trust development since the principle is not being reciprocated with the interactionist practice required for its achievement. Despite his reservations, the UA feels compelled to maintain his philosophy since a sudden discontinuation could be met with protest and the subsequential development of distrust. The everyday resistance to trust development highlights how the accomplishment of trust is fraught with obstacles and uncertainties.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

Like other contestable concepts in the social sciences trust is a concept with many meanings, theoretical perspectives, typological frameworks and methodological approaches. Theoretical explanations of trust are differentiated by their scope (i.e., trust in societies, social institutions and interpersonal interactions) and assumptions about human nature (i.e., trust as rational, behavioral, cognitive, value-based or contextual), while attempts by scholars to organize these offerings into general categories have generated multiple and overlapping typologies (den Hartog 2003; Lewicki and Bunker 1996; McAllister 1995; Nooteboom 2003). For instance, Lane (1998) defines and summarizes trust theories into three types: calculated-trust (Coleman 1990, Williamson 1975, 1993), value-based trust (Barber 1983; Fukuyama 1995; Parsons 1971) and cognition theories (Garfinkel 1963, 1967; Giddens 1990; Luhmann 1979, 1988; Simmel 1990; Zucker 1986). However, not all theorists can easily fit into a single category. A theorist like Sztompka (1999) for instance is difficult to locate given his overarching consideration for each of Lane's dimensions (Sztompka 1999, 2005).

Methodologically, the study of trust is dominated by the application of quantitative approaches, namely experimental designs and social surveys, which reflects the predominance of behavioral, rational and social capital studies (Hardin 2006). Recent illustrations of experimental work on trust include Buchan, Croxen and Dawe's (2002) study of cross-cultural differences in trust and Buskens and Weesie's (2000) study of trust in the used car buying experience. Recent examples of survey research include Robinson and Jackson's (2001) use of General Social Surveys from 1972 to 1998 and Van de Rit and Busken's (2006) application of the Chicago Health and Social Life Survey. The former study assesses social capital and trust. The latter examines trust in intimate relationships. Trust research has become methodologically diverse in recent years with the recognition of qualitative methods. Qualitative methods are still regarded as supportive mechanisms in the formulation of quantitative hypotheses and measures in some fields, but they are also providing legitimate insights into trust in their own right (Goudge and Gilson 2005).

Common qualitative dimensions of trust and trust development have been identified across several professional, occupational and leadership contexts. Arguably, the question arises about whether the study of trust requires the addition of yet another perspective in yet another scarcely explored context. Given its crucial role in the stability of interpersonal relationships, value systems and social institutions, it makes sense that existing perspectives be examined in as many diverse situations as possible so that their explanatory powers be confirmed and contested. Amidst the abundance of theoretical and methodological agendas

available to explain trust development, one sociological perspective whose explanatory potential has been neglected is symbolic interaction. Despite offering pioneering investigations of the concept, the study of trust by symbolic interactionists currently lags behind other sociological and social scientific approaches.

To illustrate how even the earliest interactionist contributions continue to offer valid and alternative framings of trust, this paper revisits the conceptualization of trust offered in James Henslin's study "*Trust and the cab driver*" to understand how university administrators (UAs) develop trust in their everyday interactions. Henslin's conceptualization provides a six element process of trust development that acknowledges how trust is a) developed in interaction, b) decided through an interpretive process wherein actors and audiences assess the validity of each other's expectations, and c) how trust is eventually sustained through the establishment of consistent expectations and presentations of self.

The revisiting of Henslin's conceptualization also provides the opportunity for some refinement, namely how the development of trust occurs regardless of the literal presence of either an actor or audience. Goffman's notion of the *Umwelt* provides an outlet for how uncertainties in the assessment of trust occur in the absence of prospective actors or audience with whom trust is being developed and how these uncertainties are resolved despite the vast distances between, or absences of, their audiences. A recent revisiting of Goffman's concept of normality by Misztal (2001) directs this paper to the importance of routine in the development and stability of trust. Henslin's trust development process is also framed within the tactician-oriented perspective of Prus which clarifies how Henslin's actor and audience roles are interchangeable according to the individual's situation in an interaction. Administrators are trust tacticians who assess whether trust is to be developed with others and who also persuade their audiences that trust is indeed possible and desirable.

This paper also contributes sociologically to the study of educational administration and other areas of professional, occupational and social life by offering an interpretive perspective for studying trust development which emphasizes an activity-based qualitative understanding of everyday administrative life. Using this approach, this paper also provides four tactical dimensions that UAs themselves report using in the development of trust. The tactic of *being visible* supports previous observations regarding the value of self presentations to others. In particular is the displaying of competence. Cook, Kramer, Thom, Stephanikova, Mollborn and Cooper (2004) find how the demonstration of competence assists trust development. These dimensions are also observed by Mechanic and Meyer (2000) where patients mention interpersonal competence and technical competence as important in the development of physician trust.

*Sincerity and personalization* are also found in the literature as common dimensions of trust development in sales, service and professional-client relationships (Bigus 1972; Cook et al. 2004; and Prus 1989). In his study of alternative health care users, Semmes (1991) observes how the demonstration of genuine caring for patients by the health care providers encourages trust. Here, trust is developed through "emotional commitment" which includes the demonstration of "empathy for the patient's condition, respect for the patient's intelligence . . . shared information and familiarity . . . and sincerity" (Semmes *ibidem*: 458). The observed separation that UAs make from untrustworthy outsiders also supports the findings of Elsbach (2004) who finds that professionals, who display similar emotions and vulnerabilities as their audience, or "in-group" characteristics, help develop trust (Elsbach *ibidem*: 279).

The consistent keeping of trust expectations between the self and others, or *showing the face*, is not observed to the same extent in the literature. One exception is the study by Weber and Carter (1998:14) who apply Garfinkel's conceptualization of trust to the examination of interpersonal relationships to find how "disclosing the self" is essential to trust generation. The parallel between Goffman and Garfinkel is not surprising given their emphases on everyday life activity. The "showing of face" accentuates the unique contributions that symbolic interactionist concepts make to the study of trust development. Finally, the *establishment of routine activity* supports findings for how dimensions such as availability, time management and an appropriate length of encounters assist in the development of trust (Cook et al. 2004; Jacobs 1992; Semmes 1991).

This study of trust development among UAs is not without its limitations or suggestions for future inquiry. One limitation is that the outcomes of the trust development tactics reported by UAs are not empirically known. Any success implied or described by the UAs is based on the beliefs that they have, in fact, developed trust with their audiences. Discrepancy between the perceptions and realities about trust development is discussed by Dirks (2000) who observes how leaders, believing that they have developed high levels of trust, learned how they developed less trust with others than actually believed. Future research could include qualitative observations of administrator and audience interchanges that confirm just how these tactics succeed, fail, are recast or rejected, hence permitting an even more rigorous analysis of construction and reconstruction processes involved in trust development.

While the data collected from UAs admittedly focus on trust development from the actor's perspective, it does however offer one instance of how trust development, assumed to be desirable for all individuals given its importance to the development and maintenance of stable interaction, encounters audience resistance. This is seen in the frustrations of the Department Chair whose efforts to be visible and sincere to faculty fail to generate the commitment and involvement needed for him to successfully complete departmental tasks. Weber and Carter (2003) note the importance of such reciprocity in constructing trustful dyadic relationships while Dirks and Skarlicki (2004: 34) suggest how trust dilemmas exist for leaders wherein the successful development of trust with one party potentially involves the loss of trust with others. Under these circumstances UAs who develop trust with certain individuals or groups run the risk of losing trust with other competing third party individuals or groups. The achievement of reciprocity with one party entails jeopardizing reciprocity with others.

It is uncertain whether this dilemma is an explanation for this Department Chair's situation, but the complexities involved in the resistance to, and failures in, trust development require further exploration. It would also be fruitful to pursue how trust is reconstructed following its failure; the construction of forgiveness is of particular interest here (Weber and Carter 1997). Trust development is not a linear set of stages or steps. It is a process that entails success, failure and reformulation over time. Given the assumptions that human group life is processual and that individuals are reflexive beings capable of diverse sets of actions and meanings in their everyday lives, symbolic interactionists are in an ideal position to offer understandings for these and other activities in the study of trust.

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