

# BUILDING GENUINE TRUST THROUGH INTERPERSONAL EMOTION MANAGEMENT: A THREAT REGULATION MODEL OF TRUST AND COLLABORATION ACROSS BOUNDARIES

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I introduce the construct of threat regulation as an agentic interpersonal process for building and maintaining trust. I examine threat regulation as a specific dimension of interpersonal emotion management that fosters trust and effective cooperation by allowing individuals to understand and mitigate the harm that their counterparts associate with cooperating—in particular, harm from opportunism, identity damage, and neglect of their interests. To explicate the microprocesses of threat regulation, I draw on social cognitive theory, symbolic interactionism, and the psychology of emotion regulation.

Knowledge workers on collaborative interorganizational projects must gain the cooperation of counterparts over whom they have no hierarchical control. As interorganizational collaboration has grown within and between industries (Gomes-Casseres, 1996; Powell, 1990), the ability of knowledge workers to develop interpersonal trust across organizational boundaries has become increasingly critical. Trust not only enables cooperation when authority relationships are absent (Bradach & Eccles, 1989) but also increases risk sharing, reduces the need to monitor others' behavior, and facilitates access to "richer-freer" information (Currall & Judge, 1995; Powell & Smith-Doerr, 1994; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Uzzi, 1997). Unfortunately, developing trust across organizational boundaries can be difficult, because people frequently perceive individuals from other groups as less trustworthy than members of their own group—that is, they often perceive members of other groups as individuals with aspirations, beliefs, or styles of interacting that threaten their own group's goals (Fiske & Ruscher, 1993; Kramer,

1991, 1994; Kramer & Messick, 1998; Sitkin & Roth, 1993; Williams, 2001).

Strategic interpersonal actions that signal trustworthiness may mitigate the potential negative effects of group boundaries on the development of trust between knowledge workers who span these boundaries. For instance, steps taken to avoid threatening the goals, aspirations, values, and identity concerns of others may help boundary spanners signal goodwill, cooperative intent, and trustworthiness, while also avoiding the defensive, noncooperative responses frequently associated with feeling threatened. However, with few exceptions (Child & Möllering, 2003; Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998), the scholarly research on trust has not focused on the intentional interpersonal actions individuals can use to build trust. Scholars have most often described trust development as a relatively passive process of gathering data about other people's trustworthiness by watching their behavior in various situations over time (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Shapiro, Sheppard, & Cheraskin, 1992) or by using information from proxy sources (e.g., Burt & Knez, 1996; Zucker, 1986). Scant attention has been given to the fact that people are evaluating the trustworthiness of individuals, who are often not passive but engaged in active attempts to influence the evaluation process. Consequently, we know little about the strategies people use to intentionally build and maintain trusting relationships.

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Scholars have paid even less attention to how and why these intentional attempts to build trust might require emotion management. With few exceptions, such as Rafaeli and Sutton's (1991) examination of the trust-related implications of the emotional contrast strategies of interrogators (i.e., the good-cop, bad-cop strategy), authors of the literature on emotional management in organizations have not focused on trust. Rather, they have focused on the regulation of individuals' own emotional expression in accordance with organizationally mandated "feeling rules" or "display rules" (e.g., Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1979; Martin, Knopoff, & Beckman, 1998; Morris & Feldman, 1998; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989, 1990; Sutton 1991).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, work on emotional contagion has not focused on trust development but, rather, on the influence that one individual's emotional expression can have on the emotional experience of others (e.g., Barsade, 2002; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000; Tan, Foo, & Kwek, 2004). Consequently, we have much to learn about the implications that actively managing another person's emotions may have for the development and maintenance of trust.

In this article I assert that the risks of opportunism (i.e., self-interested behavior by another that conflicts with one's own goals), neglect of one's interests, and identity damage pose significant obstacles to maintaining trust and cooperation because these risks can lead counterparts to anticipate harm, experience negative emotion, and engage in defensive behavior. I not only contend that the concept of threat is central to the intentional actions of knowledge workers who build and maintain trust across organizational boundaries but also directly address the importance of the intentional interpersonal actions taken by these boundary spanners to influence the threats that others experience.

My model introduces the construct of interpersonal threat regulation as a multistep process for managing the harm that others associate with cooperating. Whereas other works in the

organizational literature focus more heavily on the action implications of individuals' perceptions of risk or potential harm to themselves (e.g., "issue" selling, by Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; psychological safety, by Edmondson, 1999; organizational silence, by Morrison & Milliken, 2000), the interpersonal threat regulation model presented here focuses on the active, intersubjective processes of understanding and managing *other* people's perceptions of threat and on the implications of these intersubjective processes for trust and collaboration.<sup>2</sup>

I argue that threat regulation is a social cognitive process that influences (1) the level of harm that others believe will affect their goals, concerns, and well-being and (2) the manner in which others experience and express emotions related to this level of anticipated harm. Threat regulation has an impact on others through three processes: perspective taking, threat-reducing behavior, and reflection.

Perspective taking—imagining others' thoughts or feelings from their point of view (Davis, 1996; Mead, 1934)—is central to facilitating responsive interpersonal interactions (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). This process provides an interpersonal understanding of the risks to cooperation (i.e., risks of opportunism, neglect, identity damage). It enables individuals to comprehend which of these risks are being experienced by others as threats and may, thus, inhibit trust and cooperation. The next process, threat-reducing behavior, involves boundary spanners' intentional efforts to influence the emotional responses of others. I define threat-reducing behavior as a set of intentional interpersonal actions intended to minimize or eliminate counterparts' perceptions that one's actions are likely to have a negative impact on their goals, concerns, or well-being. I contend that threat-reducing behavior translates personal emotion regulation strategies (e.g., Gross, 1998; Hochschild, 1979; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) into an interpersonal context, which permits individuals to reduce the defensive and negative emotional responses often received when others feel threatened. The third process, reflection, allows individuals to assess and self-correct (Ban-

<sup>1</sup> I use the terms *emotion regulation* and *emotion management* interchangeably. These terms refer to the same phenomenon but have their roots in different disciplines. Emotion regulation is used primarily in the social psychology literature (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1998; Gross, 1998), whereas emotion management is used more often in sociology and organization theory (e.g., Hochschild, 1979).

<sup>2</sup> I use the terms *interpersonal threat regulation* and *threat regulation* interchangeably. I am always referring to the interpersonal process.

dura, 1986, 2001) for insufficient, inaccurate, or inappropriate threat reduction.

I argue that threat regulation by boundary spanners influences their counterparts in several ways. It decreases the negative emotional responses associated with the anticipation of harm, it increases the positive emotional responses associated with being understood, it signals benevolent, trustworthy intentions, and it demonstrates social competencies required for future trustworthy behavior.

Taken together, the threat regulation processes of perspective taking, threat-reducing behavior, and reflection represent a cognitive and affective investment in signaling trustworthiness. This investment is difficult to fake for opportunistic individuals, because their true feelings may "leak" out through nonverbal behavior (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). Further, it may also have the positive externality of requiring psychological processes that elicit genuine affective attachments, which can reinforce both trust and cooperation.

I proceed as follows. First, I review the threats that may prevent cooperation and forestall trust development. Next, I describe the threat regulation framework introduced in this article and detail the three active, social cognitive processes associated with threat regulation: perspective taking, threat-reducing behavior, and reflection. I then develop hypotheses that explore how threat regulation elicits trust and cooperation from others. I conclude with a discussion and implications.

## THREAT

Individuals in organizations may associate threats with interdependent projects because they often frame the issues in their environment as threats or opportunities, depending on the potential of each for personal loss and gain (Jackson & Dutton, 1988). Although individuals may anticipate successful, mutual cooperation on interdependent knowledge creation projects, interdependent projects frequently entail risks. Those risks may include harm from opportunism (e.g., Luo, 2001; Williamson, 1975), demeaning interactions that damage the identities of project members (e.g., Ashford et al., 1998; Edmondson, 1999; Jehn, 1997), and the unintended neglect of individuals' interests by other project members (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). When the

potential for harm and loss exists, counterparts may cease to view a cooperative project as an opportunity for joint gain and may come to view it as a threat to their goals, concerns, and well-being.

Lazarus and Folkman formally define threats as "harms or losses that have not yet taken place but are anticipated" (1984: 32). Harms include both material losses and subjective damage to one's identity, status, perceived power, and so forth. Threats to cooperation are associated with negative emotional responses, such as stress and anxiety (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) that can inhibit trust development. They evoke these emotions because they have the potential to interrupt goal attainment, and goal interruption evokes emotional responses (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1998; Lazarus, 1991; Mandler, 1975). In addition, because trustworthy individuals are expected to act in ways that are "not harmful" (Gambetta, 1988), threats to cooperation are also likely to translate into negative beliefs about others' trustworthiness.

Although the focus of this article is on threat regulation and intentional behavior that influences others' perceptions of threat, I first review three major sources of risk and harm that others may perceive while working on interdependent projects: opportunism (i.e., another acting based on opposing self-interests), neglect of one's interests, and identity damage during interactions. Whereas opportunism and neglect have both received attention in the trust literature (e.g., Granovetter, 1985; Luo, 2001; Sheppard & Sherman, 1998; Whitener et al., 1998; Williamson, 1993), the fear of identity damage during interactions has been addressed less often as an obstacle to trust development. The anticipation of identity damage during interactions, however, can lead to negative emotions that forestall cooperation and undermine trust in the same manner that the anticipation of opportunism and neglect does. Moreover, identity damage during interactions is the only one of these three threats not mitigated through contracts.

## Opportunism As a Threat

Opportunism refers to self-interested behavior that often occurs with guile (Williamson, 1975). Opportunism is typically perceived when one "takes advantage" of others or uses others' weaknesses for one's own benefit. Opportunism

represents a greater source of potential harm when individuals' instrumental goals are misaligned or in direct conflict. It undermines perceptions of trustworthiness because it is detrimental to individuals' instrumental interests.

On knowledge work projects—projects that involve problem solving and the use and transfer of information (Garicano, 2000)—opportunism is a significant risk. It is often difficult to detect opportunistic behavior and malfeasance on knowledge work projects because tasks are frequently nonroutine, ambiguous, and difficult to evaluate by nonexperts. Examples of nonroutine knowledge work include such activities as bringing new ideas together in written form (e.g., a report), transferring tacit "know-how" (e.g., experiential knowledge about how to launch a new product or manage a postmerger integration project), or incorporating knowledge into a new technology (e.g., a software program or medical imaging device).

Although contracts, monitoring, and other safeguards such as credible commitments can reduce goal misalignment on knowledge work projects, a large number of contingencies and noncontractible issues are part of most interfirm relationships and projects (Perrone, Zaheer, & McEvily, 2003; Spier, 1992). For example, boundary spanners are typically "faced with an eventuality that does not alter the letter of the agreement, but requires modification of how the terms of the contract are fulfilled" (Perrone et al., 2003: 426). Opportunism and guile in dealing with these modifications can prevent parties from arriving at a jointly optimal solution and increase the time and cost of arriving at any solution.

In addition, whenever tasks are nonroutine, ambiguous, or uncertain, as they often are in knowledge-intense contexts, it is often too costly or technically impossible to write a completely specified contract that fully eliminates conflicting goals, accurately predicts future contingencies, and produces outcomes that can be verified by a third party (Baker, Gibbons, & Murphy, 2002; Macneil, 1974; McEvily, Zaheer, & Perrone, 2004). Because contractual mechanisms often do not fully eliminate the risk of opportunism, the threat or anticipation of opportunism can generate both negative emotions (e.g., stress, fear, anxiety) and the defensive, noncooperative, and avoidant actions that often accompany these emotional responses.

### **Neglect of One's Interests As a Threat**

Neglecting the interests of others when making decisions on an interdependent project can result in unanticipated harm to counterparts. For example, when a vice president independently approves new software to reduce costs for his or her division, it may complicate a systems integration project spearheaded by another division. Sheppard and Sherman (1998) note that both the neglect of counterparts' instrumental interests and the neglect of their identity-related concerns and values can undermine trust. Neglect that causes harm decreases perceived benevolence, a cognitive predictor of trust (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995), and generates negative emotions, which have an affective influence on trust (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005).

Neglect can also negatively influence perceptions of social competence. When social cues are misread (e.g., boundary spanners fail to accurately decode, uncover, anticipate, or understand their counterparts' views on the harmful impact of specific decisions), even benevolent individuals may unintentionally make decisions that have detrimental effects on their counterparts. Thus, neglect of others' interests may undermine multiple bases of trustworthiness.

### **Identity Damage As a Threat**

Identity damage refers to the experience of having a valued self-image denied or having one's self-esteem undermined. Self-esteem threat involves situations in which "favorable views about oneself are questioned, contradicted, impugned, mocked, challenged, or otherwise put in jeopardy" (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996: 8). Self-image threat is similar but involves being denied the image, identity, or "face" that one overtly claims during an interaction (Goffman, 1967). In this article I include within the scope of the argument identity damage that occurs during both synchronous interactions (e.g., face-to-face or telephone communication) and asynchronous interactions (e.g., hand-delivered correspondence, email, or fax).

Although all interactions afford people the opportunity to accept or reject the self-image that their counterparts put forth (Goffman, 1967; Mead, 1934), the context of knowledge work



makes people's image and identity as an expert more salient. Knowledge work demands problem solving and an exchange of information and ideas that can expose individual weaknesses, such as doubts, gaps in knowledge, and the need for help. Individuals may anticipate harm when they become proponents for issues that are relevant to an identity group they belong to (Ashford et al., 1998); when they reveal problems, issues, or errors within their organization (Edmondson, Bohmer, & Pisano, 2001; Morrison & Milliken, 2000); or when they take an interpersonal risk, such as expressing new ideas (Edmondson, 1999). Although the threat of identity damage is proposed to influence relevant organizational phenomena, such as organizational silence (Morrison & Milliken, 2000), the ways in which the *threat* of identity damage influences trust development and trust maintenance have received little attention.

The threat of identity damage is relevant in a knowledge-intense context because accusations, disrespect, or even thoughtless actions can harm a counterpart's self-image or self-esteem at any point during a collaborative project. In fact, as unanticipated errors and unpredictable problems arise at various points during a project, the potential for identity damage may temporarily increase, because these situations require negotiated solutions, and "many common negotiation tactics—disputing the value of an item, providing alternative anchors and frames, questioning interests and motives, criticizing arguments, and disregarding appeals—fall into the category of intrinsic threats to face [i.e., self-image]" (White, Tynan, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004: 103). Even well-intentioned offers of help can wound a counterpart's self-image or self-esteem by implying that the recipient is inferior or inadequate (Fisher, Nadler, & Whitcher-Alagna, 1982; Lee, 1997).

Identity damage can result from intentional social undermining, from the neglect of another's identity concerns, or from a lack of understanding of those concerns. Thus, when individuals anticipate that others will damage their identity during an interaction, they may attribute the damage to several factors that would make a counterpart less trustworthy: intentional malevolence, social ineptitude, or careless neglect. Gil, a management consultant I interviewed about critical incidents in relationship building, noted an occasion when he inadver-

tently threatened a client's self-image as an expert in simulation technology:

The client thought he knew a lot about simulation technology, but what he wanted was somewhat amateurish and . . . I knew that the company's CEO had seen the best of what was out there in modeling and simulation so what the client wanted to show him would be one big yawn.

My concern was that the client would not only fail to secure additional funding (for the project), but also lose some of his current funding. So, I sent him an email expressing my views on what we were about to do.

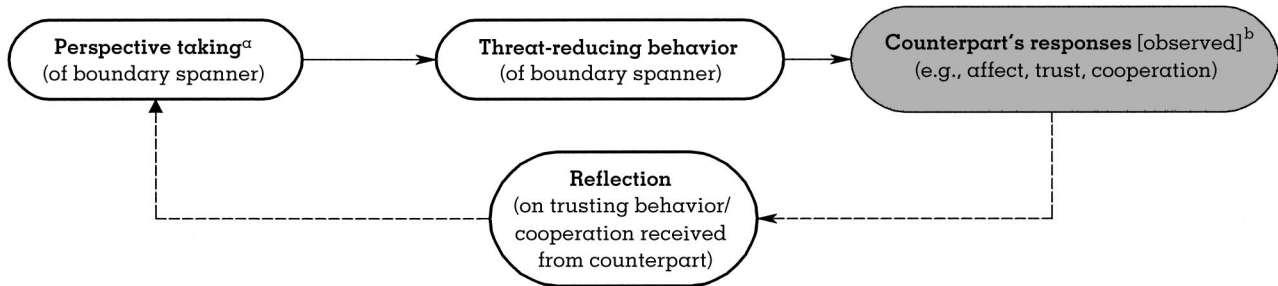
He took a personal affront to that email. He thought it was an arrogant statement—that I thought I knew what was in the best interest of his division. He sent me back a zinger [of an email] about the unmitigated gall . . . [of my original message].

I'm not bothered by it, but it certainly was not the way to do things. In retrospect, I would not have sent that email because it kind of slammed the door on us doing a whole lot of business for them in that particular arena. I clearly took the wrong path to reach that client. My intent was honorable. I wasn't trying to tick him off. But, he took it as a personal affront. I needed to figure out a [better] way to help.

As Gil's experience suggests, identity threats can cause people to avoid admitting that they need help. Even when help is readily available, the threat of self-esteem damage often prevents individuals from seeking it. Lee (1997: 345, Study One), for instance, found that only one-third of the subjects who were given a task that was "extremely difficult and time consuming" were willing to ask for help, although help was readily available. Identity threats can also lead to reduced cooperation, and this reduction may occur even when cooperation is in an individual's material self-interest. White et al. (2004) found that a high sensitivity to self-image threat was related to a decreased chance of creating value that would have benefited both parties in a negotiation situation.

Identity damage during interaction evokes negative views of others' trustworthiness (e.g., negative perceptions of their benevolence) and negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, and fear. Although reactions to identity damage are similar to those associated with opportunism and neglect of one's interests, I contend that identity damage during interactions cannot be eliminated by contractual safeguards or other

**FIGURE 1**  
**Threat Regulation Processes: Boundary Spanners' Cognitions, Behaviors, and Observations of Counterparts' Responses**



<sup>a</sup> Cognitive appraisal-related perspective taking.

<sup>b</sup> See Figure 2 (p. 609), shaded ovals, for more detail.

common substitutes for trust that align goals. For instance, Jehn (1997) argues that goal alignment cannot eliminate relational/emotional conflict, which is based on personality conflicts and identity damage. She states that "even when group members work on the same project, have mutual interest in completing it, and similar ideas of how to complete the project, they still may experience (relational/emotional) conflict" (Jehn, 1997: 530).<sup>3</sup> The potential for identity damage during interactions is an ongoing emotional hazard on collaborative projects, even when goals are aligned.

### THREAT REGULATION: AN INTRODUCTION

The threat regulation model developed in this section focuses on the intersubjective processes involved with understanding and managing *other* people's experience of threat, rather than the self-regulation of personally perceived threats (see Figure 1). For clarity, I specify the model in terms of the actions and intersubjective experiences of one individual in a dyad; however, both individuals in a relationship may engage in threat regulation simultaneously.

The threat or harm that others anticipate during cooperation (e.g., identity damage via denigration, opportunism via shirking or deception) can lead to negative emotion, defensiveness, and avoidance, which make securing their trust

and cooperation more difficult. When faced with counterparts who anticipate harm or offer less cooperation than is necessary to reach interdependent goals, boundary spanners may actively seek to gain the trust of their counterparts, rather than simply waiting for their counterparts to observe their personal trustworthiness over time. Thus, in contrast to current models of trust, which most often portray trust targets (i.e., people to be trusted) as passive individuals whose trustworthiness must be observed through repeated interactions (e.g., Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Mayer et al., 1995; Sheppard & Sherman, 1998), I take an agentic perspective (Bandura, 1986, 2001; Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934).

I introduce the construct of interpersonal threat regulation as a process through which individuals attempt to understand and influence the thoughts and emotions that others have with respect to anticipated harm. I assert that boundary spanners actively and intentionally engage in interpersonal threat regulation strategies for securing and maintaining trust and cooperation. Using a social cognitive lens (Bandura, 1986, 2001), I propose that interpersonal threat regulation is a three-step approach to gaining interpersonal cooperation that involves perspective taking, threat-reducing behavior, and reflection. I examine threat regulation both as a process of interpersonal emotion management and as a process of symbolic interactions.

To illustrate the three steps in the threat regulation process, I begin with an example from an interview with Ted, a boundary-spanning management consultant:

<sup>3</sup> Jehn (1995, 1997) found that emotional conflict was negatively related to performance and suggested that the negative emotion associated with emotional conflict interfered with cooperation.

I realized that my client, Pat, was losing money, and that it didn't make sense to keep the new division she'd created . . . [but] I couldn't say, "Look you have to kill your baby!" I never went to Pat with a report that was fully produced and never tried to do a group presentation in front of other senior managers. . . . [If I'd done that] Pat probably would have felt, "Well, this is what they think!" and would have ignored our work.

One thing I did was to go to Pat informally. "Look," I said, "this is how we're coming to understand the numbers."

Even with our strategy of informal meetings, Pat didn't believe us at first. But over time, we were able to explain why we were saying what we were saying. We'd share key information and analyses, listen, and plan whatever additional analyses were necessary. After four weekly meetings with updated analyses, Pat changed her point of view.

By the end of the 12 weeks, she had changed so radically that when we gave her pointers on how to improve the situation without eliminating the initiative [she had created], she wasn't willing to make the sacrifices it would take to save it. She decided to end it. Six months later the division that she created had disappeared. A year after the engagement, Pat was in-line to head one of the company's largest divisions.

I think that we succeeded here because we earned Pat's respect and trust, not necessarily her full trust, but enough trust so that she was willing to keep the lines of communication open. When I started a second project with her more than two years later, I knew that she would listen from the start.

#### **THREAT REGULATION PROCESSES: PERSPECTIVE TAKING, THREAT-REDUCING BEHAVIOR, REFLECTION**

The first step in threat regulation involves identifying the threats to collaboration that one's counterpart may be experiencing. In the example the boundary-spanning consultant's conclusion that his counterpart's initiative was losing money had negative implications for the counterpart's self-esteem and image as the successful founder of a new division and for the counterpart's career success (especially if the problem had been presented to her superiors before she had identified and corrected it). The boundary-spanning consultant first anticipated what the counterpart's reaction would be to various interpersonal actions for delivering the information (e.g., providing a report, giving a presentation in front of her superiors, talking

informally) and then selected a behavior that would reduce the threat the client would experience (i.e., talking informally). At several points, Ted, the boundary-spanning consultant, reflected on his trust building. He noted both that "Pat didn't believe us at first" and that, by the end of the engagement, "we earned Pat's respect and trust."

In the following sections I discuss each step of the threat regulation process. These steps are summarized with examples in Table 1, and the theoretical underpinnings of each step of the threat regulation process are summarized in Table 2.

#### **Perspective Taking**

Perspective taking, the intrapsychic process of imagining another's thoughts, motives, or feelings from that person's point of view (Davis, 1996; Mead, 1934), is the first step in threat regulation. As a process for gaining interpersonal understanding, perspective taking is an intentional mechanism for engaging in the social cognitive process of forethought (i.e., anticipating possible outcomes; Bandura, 1986, 2001). It is also a mechanism for the symbolic interactions required both to understand the meaning that a situation holds for another and to adjust to the needs of an interaction counterpart (Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1967; Mead, 1934). To avoid threatening a counterpart's self-image or "face," for instance, boundary spanners need to interpret the meaning of their counterparts' actions such that they understand the values that counterparts place on various goals, possessions, achievements, and identities (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Perspective taking allows people to better understand what others find threatening to their valued identities and to their material well-being. It also provides the information necessary to mitigate the threat others perceive during collaborative interactions.

Understanding the reasons for another person's feelings requires understanding how that person cognitively appraises a situation from his or her point of view. Cognitive appraisals are an integral component of people's emotional responses to events (e.g., Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Cognitive appraisals occur when people evaluate an external event with respect to its significance for them as individuals (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus &

**TABLE 1**  
**The Three Steps of the Threat Regulation Process**

Definitions and Examples	Threat Regulation Steps		
	1. Perspective Taking	2. Threat-Reducing Behavior	3. Reflection
Definition	<p>The intrapsychic process of imagining another's thoughts, motives, or feelings from that person's point of view (Davis, 1996; Mead, 1934)</p> <p>We define <i>cognitive appraisal-related perspective taking</i> as the intrapsychic process of imagining the impact of events on another's goals, concerns, and well-being from that person's point of view</p>	<p>Intentional interpersonal actions intended to minimize or eliminate counterparts' perceptions that one's actions are likely to have a negative impact on their goals, concerns, or well-being</p>	<p>The psychological process of assessing the impact of one's attempts to regulate others' experiences of threat by analyzing their emotional and behavioral reactions to one's behavior</p>
Examples (excerpts from interview with management consultant, Ted)	<p>"I couldn't say, 'Look you have to kill your baby!' I never went to Pat with a report that was fully produced and never tried to do a group presentation in front of other senior managers. . . . [If I'd done that] Pat probably would have felt, 'Well, this is what <i>they</i> think!' and would have ignored our work."</p>	<p>"One thing I did was to go to Pat informally. 'Look,' I said, 'this is how we're coming to understand the numbers.'"</p>	<p><i>Example A:</i> "Even with our strategy of informal meetings, Pat didn't believe us at first."</p> <p><i>Example B:</i> "I think that we succeeded here because we earned Pat's respect and trust, not necessarily her full trust, but enough trust so that she was willing to keep the lines of communication open."</p>

Note: Threat regulation refers to the process by which individuals influence (1) the level of harm that others believe will affect their goals, concerns, and well-being and (2) how others experience and express emotions related to this level of anticipated harm.

Folkman, 1984). According to cognitive appraisal theories of emotion (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), individuals not only evaluate the implications of events for their own goals, concerns, and well-being but also assess the human agency associated with these events—that is, they determine who is responsible for their positive or negative outcomes (Ellsworth, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985).

Understanding how someone is likely to cognitively appraise an event provides information on that person's probable emotional reaction,

because each emotion has an associated set of appraisals (e.g., Ellsworth, 1991; Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). For example, if a decision that thwarts employees' goals is made by their supervisor, whom they then hold responsible for the negative outcomes, these employees are likely to feel anger toward their supervisor (anger involves negative goal conduciveness and attributions of responsibility to another); however, if their goals are thwarted by uncontrollable circumstances, they are likely to feel sadness (which involves negative goal



**TABLE 2**  
**Integration of Dimensions of Existing Theories into the Three Steps of Threat Regulation**

Theories	Threat Regulation Steps		
	1. Perspective Taking	2. Threat-Reducing Behavior	3. Reflection
Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 2001)	<i>Dimension:</i> Forethought—anticipate the likely consequences of alternative actions (Bandura, 2001: 7)	<i>Dimension:</i> Intentions—purposeful representation of the future course of action to be performed (Bandura, 2001: 6)	<i>Dimension:</i> Self-reactiveness—self-regulatory processes that link thought to action (Bandura, 2001: 8) • Self-evaluation • Self-corrective actions
Symbolic interactionism (e.g., Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934)	<i>Dimension:</i> Perspective taking/role taking—understanding the other from his/her point of view	<i>Dimension:</i> Adjusting behavior to that of the other	<i>Dimensions:</i> • Perspective taking/role taking • Adjusting behavior to that of the other
Emotion regulation (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1998; Gross, 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)		<i>Dimensions:</i> Emotion regulation strategies • Altering the situation, • Altering cognitions about the situation—cognitive reframing • Altering attention • Modulating emotional responses (see Table 3 for details on emotion regulation)	

conduciveness and attributions that no one is responsible; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985).

I identify cognitive appraisal-related perspective taking as the process of imagining the cognitive appraisals of one's counterparts from their point of view, and I propose that it is cognitive appraisal-related perspective taking that facilitates the understanding of counterparts' experiences of threat and their probable emotional responses to one's actions. In the threat-reducing example, Ted, the consultant, used cognitive appraisal-related perspective taking to surmise that the information he was going to present to the client would be highly negative for the client's identity and career concerns (e.g., her goals for the new initiative, her chances for career advancement, her self-image concerns in front of the CEO, her self-esteem, and her subjective well-being). If Ted had not used cognitive appraisal-related perspective taking, he might have imagined the client would be unhappy with the bad news about the initiative, but he may have stopped short of understanding (1) the multiple sources of negative emotions that the client might experience, such as the threats of

identity and career damage; (2) the client's perceptions of the consultant as an agent of potential harm to the client; and (3) the range of possible negative thoughts and emotions the client might experience as a result of the news (e.g., wounded pride, shame, guilt, feelings of inadequacy, anger, indignation). This additional level of understanding may be highly relevant for selecting a course of action. For instance, if the client in our example had not been involved in founding the failing initiative and therefore did not feel that her self-image and promotion potential were at stake, sending a simple report describing the problem might have been perfectly appropriate.

I propose that cognitive appraisal-related perspective taking is an essential part of interpersonal threat regulation not only because it facilitates the understanding necessary for responsive action but because it evokes more empathetic and responsive action tendencies as well. Batson, Turk, Shaw, and Klein (1995), for example, found that individuals who engaged in perspective taking felt more empathy for the target and increased the value they placed on

that individual's welfare. Krauss and Fussell (1990, 1991) showed that perspective taking increased the degree to which individuals adjusted their message to a listener's knowledge base. Parker and Axtell's (2001) findings suggest that taking the perspective of one's suppliers is positively related to helpfulness and cooperative behavior toward those suppliers.

Although cognitive appraisal-related perspective taking is a dimension of perspective taking that has not previously been investigated independently from other types of perspective taking (e.g., cognitive, affective),<sup>4</sup> I propose that it is unique both because it provides the motivation to adjust one's actions to the needs of others and because it has the potential to provide information (such as the likely positive or negative impact of different courses of action) that can improve the effectiveness of one's adjustments and responsiveness.

### Threat-Reducing Behavior

The next step in threat regulation involves planning to reduce the fear or anticipated harm that one's counterparts associate with cooperation and then engaging in the behaviors that one has planned. Threat-reducing behavior refers to a set of intentional interpersonal actions intended to minimize or eliminate counterparts' perceptions that one's actions are likely to have a negative impact on their goals, concerns, or well-being. It involves the social cognitive processes of purposeful planning and formulating clear behavioral intentions (Bandura, 1986), and it employs these processes to achieve interpersonal responsiveness—a central aspect of symbolic interactionism. For example, boundary spanners who engage in threat-reducing behavior "plan and organize [their] actions with regard to what [they have] designated and evaluated" about their own goals, the expected action of others, and so forth (Blumer, 1969: 62).

Additionally, threat-reducing behavior requires that boundary spanners interpret the meaning of their counterparts' actions and make

indications about how their counterparts should act in order to generate new behavior, new perceptions, and new feelings in their counterparts (Blumer, 1969). In terms of threat reduction, the indications made by boundary spanners would be designed to generate new, more cooperative behavior, new perceptions of increased trustworthiness, and new feelings of ease and reduced anxiety.

**Threat-reducing behavior involves strategies from emotion regulation.** Influencing the feelings of threat that others experience not only requires both social cognitive planning and an understanding of the symbolic meaning that interactions hold for one's counterpart but also managing the emotions of one's counterpart. When individuals manage or regulate their own emotions, their emotion management strategies fall into several categories: (1) they attempt to alter or remove the emotion-provoking elements of the situation; (2) they alter their attention—for example, distract themselves from the emotion-provoking situation; (3) they alter the way they think about the situation—that is, cognitive reframing; or (4) they modulate their emotional response—for example, biofeedback, suppression, self-medication (for a review of these four categories of emotion regulation, see Gross, 1998).<sup>5</sup> Although few studies exist on interpersonal emotion management, those that do suggest that when individuals manage the emotions of others, they use the same emotion management strategies that they use intrapersonally (Francis, 1997; Lively, 2000; Thoits, 2004).

We propose that individuals using threat-reducing behaviors employ the four categories of emotion management strategies distilled by Gross (1998) to reduce a counterpart's anticipated harm (i.e., his or her experience of feeling threatened).<sup>6</sup> Table 3 summarizes the interpersonal application of each emotion management strategy to threat regulation.

**The four strategies of threat-reducing behavior.** Threat-reducing behaviors that are based on

<sup>4</sup> However, items reflecting cognitive appraisals (e.g., "Try to imagine how [this situation] has affected [this person's] life") can be found along with more affective items (e.g., "Try to imagine how this [person] feels") as part of manipulations aimed at inducing perspective taking about others' feelings (Batson et al., 1995: 306, Studies 3 and 4).

<sup>5</sup> Also see work on emotion regulation by Hochschild (1979), Lazarus and Folkman (1984), Carver and Scheier (1998), and Folkman and Moskowitz (2004).

<sup>6</sup> Although we propose that the categories are the same for personal and interpersonal emotion management, the dominant tactics within each category may differ when managing another person's emotions versus when managing one's own emotions.

**TABLE 3**  
**Emotion Management and Threat-Reducing Behavior<sup>a</sup>**

Interpersonal Emotion Management Strategies	Definition	Threat-Reducing Application	Threat-Reducing Example
1. Altering the situation	Includes modifying or changing the situation by removing some or all of the emotion-provoking elements (Gross, 1998)	Threat-reducing behaviors employing this strategy remove or modify the elements of a situation that would have a negative impact on others' goals, concerns, or well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A manager might <i>modify a threat-inducing situation</i> by holding a meeting at a restaurant instead of in the boardroom</li> <li>• A firm's VP of finance might put her team at ease by pushing back a meeting with the CEO and giving the team an extra day to "work the kinks out" of its presentation</li> </ul>
2. Altering attention	Involves distracting attention away from the emotion-provoking situation (Gross, 1998)	Threat-reducing behaviors employing this strategy distract attention away from the elements of a situation that are harmful to individuals' goals, concerns, or well-being	A consultant might <i>redirect attention</i> to a hated rival firm whenever clients become upset about the jobs that will be lost in their organization when they move the firm's payroll function to a location "offshore" (i.e., in another country)
3. Altering the cognitive meaning of the situation	Involves cognitive reframing or reappraisal—taking the facts and critical elements of the situation and formulating a plausible narrative that will have a different emotional impact (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000) <sup>b</sup>	Threat-reducing behaviors using this strategy reframe events in a manner that causes other individuals to reappraise the situation as having less potential for harm to their goals, concerns, and well-being	A manager might <i>cognitively reframe</i> a pay cut as a way to save everyone's job and the company from bankruptcy or liquidation; reframing the situation in contrast to a more negative event (i.e., job loss) can reduce individuals' perceptions of that event's negative impact on their goals and well-being
4. Modulating emotional response	Involves actions that interrupt a current experience of emotion; refers to actions such as deep breathing and biofeedback that "[directly influence] physiological, experiential, or behavioral responding" (Gross, 1998: 285), as well as intentional emotional expression	Threat-reducing behaviors using this strategy interrupt the physiological, experiential (emotional), or behavioral responses that others are having in response to anticipated harm (anxiety, fear, etc.)	A supervisor might manage the reaction of an employee by discussing a pay raise request that is going to be rejected during a walk to a restaurant a few blocks away instead of a restaurant in the same office building—thus using exercise, which causes deep breathing, to modulate the employee's emotional response

<sup>a</sup> This is an adaptation of relevant aspects of the four broad categories of self-emotion management (distilled by Gross, 1998) to the interpersonal emotion management context. Self-emotion management or emotion regulation refers to "the process by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions" (Gross, 1998: 275).

<sup>b</sup> When others comprehend and accept the new narrative explanation of the situation, their emotions change because they have a different understanding of the implications of the event or situation for their goals, concerns, and well-being. Narrative reappraisals may, for example, redefine who the relevant group is for social comparison, suggest the monetary amount individuals should use as a cognitive anchor in negotiations, highlight aspects of a story that had been underplayed previously, or make logical connects between elements of the narrative that were previously left unconnected.

the altering the situation strategy involve removing or modifying the elements of a situation that may have a negative impact on others' goals, concerns, or well-being. One senior consultant I interviewed mentioned allaying a cli-

ent's concerns by replacing a team leader on the consultants' side, who had allowed his team to miss a major project deadline, with another, more assertive individual. In contrast, another senior consultant mentioned a case in which

she dealt with a client's performance concerns by setting up weekly meetings between the client and the team member in question so that the client could learn more about the value the member was adding to the project. The senior consultant recognized that the client's concerns were tied to the structure of the project, which made this team member's contributions unclear. She modified the situation into one in which each team member's contributions to the project were transparent to the client.

The second emotion management strategy, altering attention, does not change the threatening elements of a situation but, instead, involves distracting attention away from those emotion-provoking elements. For example, in an interview about client relationships, a management consultant mentioned focusing his clients' attention on the client organization's long-term goals each time the clients became overwhelmed with the stress of their restructuring effort.

The third strategy, altering the cognitive meaning of the situation, refers to reframing the situation in an attempt to influence the other person's cognitive appraisal of the situation. In the case of threat-reducing behavior, reframing will cause the other person to cognitively reappraise the situation as less potentially harmful. Cognitive reframing or reappraisal involves taking the facts and critical elements of the situation and formulating a plausible narrative that will have a different emotional impact—in our case, less harmful and threatening (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). When others comprehend and accept the new narrative reappraisal of the situation, their emotions change because they have a different understanding of the implications of the situation for their goals, concerns, and well-being.

For instance, a manager might cognitively reframe a temporary pay cut as a loan/gift to help "family" through tough times or as a way to save everyone's job and prevent layoffs. Reframing the situation to encompass shared organizational goals and standards of fairness, instead of leaving a framing in place that only includes negative individual outcomes, can change people's appraisal of the impact of a situation on their overall well-being. In another example, Huy (2002) found that managers who reframed layoffs realistically as the only way to save the most prized jobs and to help their organization

remain competitive fostered cooperation from union leaders and employees for these organizational changes. Reframing organizational downsizing as the only way to save a failing company protected both union leaders' instrumental interests of preserving as many jobs as possible and their image as strong advocates for their constituency. Edmondson et al. (2001) found that surgeons who reframed the hierarchical operating room environment as a collaborative team environment in which all individuals were expected to speak up about potential difficulties gained greater information sharing about potential problems. In this study, the researchers found that reframing the operating team environment reduced the apprehension about denigration (i.e., identity damage) that members of other more traditional teams associated with speaking up.

Individuals may also use a combination of interpersonal emotion management strategies when generating specific threat-reducing behaviors. For instance, Ted, the consultant in the threat-reducing example, employed interpersonal emotion management strategies that involved altering the situation and altering the cognitive meaning of the situation. His threat-reducing behaviors included moving the interaction from a formal situation, such as a presentation, to an informal conversation, in which he told the client, "This is how we're coming to understand the numbers." He also cognitively reframed the situation from one in which an expert defined the problem and solution for a client to one that reflected a collaborative problem-solving effort. He continued this problem-solving reframing through several meetings, until he developed more trust with the client, who "did not believe [him] at first."

The fourth and final emotion management strategy, modulating emotional response, "refers to directly influencing physiological, experiential, or behavioral responding" (Gross, 1998: 285). Exercise, progressive relaxation, and drugs (including alcohol) are tactics used both intra- and interpersonally. For example, team building and executive retreats often include emotion-modulating activities such as exercise (e.g., rope climbing, skiing, golf, yoga, hiking), alcohol use (e.g., trips to a local winery), and/or relaxing activities (e.g., sailing, drumming, meditation).



The self-regulation or strategic use of emotional expression can also modulate the emotions of others. When the regulation of emotional expression is brought into an interpersonal context, it includes behaviors examined in research on emotion management, emotional contagion, and emotional labor (e.g., Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Barsade, 2002; Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1979, 1983; Martin et al., 1998; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989, 1990, 1991; Sutton 1991; Thoits, 2004; Van Mannen & Kunda, 1989). The literature on emotional labor and the literature on emotional contagion, for instance, suggest that expressing positive moods and positive emotions such as joy, enthusiasm, pleasantness, and calm can influence the degree to which other individuals feel those same emotions (e.g., Barsade, 2002; Bartel & Saavedra, 2002; Hochschild, 1979; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1990; Tan et al., 2004). Strategic emotional expression can also be used to elicit emotions distinct from the emotions expressed. For example, anger can be used to evoke fear, whereas sympathy can be used to elicit calm (Sutton, 1991). Moreover, two individuals working in concert but expressing contrasting positive and negative emotions (i.e., good-cop, bad-cop) can intensify the positive emotional response that others have to the individual who is strategically expressing the positive emotion (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1991).

Consistent with traditional research on emotional labor, which has tended to focus more on individuals' management of their own emotional expression in accordance with social norms or "feeling rules" than on interpersonal outcomes (e.g., Hochschild, 1983), the strategic expression of emotion is the one technique of interpersonal emotion management that is mostly likely to require the self-management of emotions to produce the specific emotion that a boundary spanner wants to express to influence others. Huy (2002), for instance, found that during a radical organizational change process, middle managers would report "psyching" themselves up or "blanking out" negative thoughts before interacting with their subordinates because they did not want to exacerbate their subordinates' fears about the change.

In sum, threat-reducing behavior is a broad category within the interpersonal management of emotion that may be used in a variety of contexts for actively dealing with others' experience of threat—identity threats (e.g., rejection

or denigration of the positive attributes that one is claiming for oneself), instrumental threats (e.g., job loss, reduced span of control, being passed over for promotion), and combined threats with implications for both identity and instrumental concerns.<sup>7</sup>

## Reflection

Step three in the threat regulation process is reflection. By reflection, I mean assessing the impact of one's attempts to regulate others' experiences of threat. Reflection includes the self-evaluative and self-corrective component of agentic behavior or human agency (Bandura, 1986, 2001). On cooperative projects, individuals who are engaged in threat regulation and active trust building observe the emotional responses and actions of others in order to assess the amount of trust, cooperation, and defensiveness they receive after each act of threat-reducing behavior. Consistent with other self-regulation processes that require information from others (e.g., Ashford & Tsui, 1991), individuals engaged in threat regulation must also attend to explicit and implicit cues from others and engage in a process to understand, interpret, and incorporate the responses of others into their future behavior. Boundary spanners may use direct inquiry to assess the impact of their threat-reducing behaviors; however, because of the subtlety of emotion management processes, they are less likely to rely on direct inquiry and more likely to rely on behavioral cues—either on direct and explicit cues from others, such as overt acts of trusting behavior, or on less obvious cues, such as information gained through what Ashford and Cummings (1983) refer to as indirect observation/monitoring strategies.

Boundary spanners then interpret the meaning of these interpersonal behavioral cues using sensemaking processes (Weick, 1995; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). After interpreting and analyzing others' emotional and behavioral reactions for discrepancies between the amount of trust and cooperation needed and the

<sup>7</sup> Although threat-reducing behaviors may involve face-saving actions, such as ignoring a faux pax (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1967), they include a broader set of emotion regulation behaviors than encompassed by face saving and are aimed at a wider category of interpersonal threats (e.g., opportunism, neglect, and identity threats).

amount received, boundary spanners may take self-corrective actions, such as increasing their level of threat regulation to close gaps in trust. For instance, in the threat regulation example, Ted, the consultant, mentioned that he used a series of joint problem-solving meetings with his client after assessing that the client did not believe him "at first." His narrative indicated that he continued to regulate the threat perceived by the client until this disbelief no longer existed. In his final statement he also indicated ongoing reflections about the level of trust he had built, which he noted was "not necessarily her full trust, but enough trust so that [the client] was willing to keep the lines of communication open."

Reflection is the cornerstone of regulatory behavior because it enables individuals to take corrective action. However, reflection can only motivate corrective action if individuals hold mental models that link their purposeful action to the responses they receive from others. In terms of threat regulation, boundary spanners will only be motivated to continue engaging in threat regulation to the degree they hold mental models that link threat-regulating processes to the experience of receiving trust and cooperation from their counterparts.

## THREAT REGULATION AND TRUST

In the previous section I delineated the active processes that constitute threat regulation. In this section I examine the impact that threat regulation has on a counterpart's trust. I argue that threat regulation processes not only influence the emotional responses of others but also affect how interpersonal trust develops and is maintained (Figure 2). I provide a brief background on trust before examining the processes through which threat regulation influences it.

### Background on Trust

Scholars have defined trust as one's willingness to rely on another's actions in a situation involving the risk of opportunism (Mayer et al., 1995; Williams, 2001; Zand, 1972). For example, when boundary-spanning individuals are willing to reveal sensitive firm information to suppliers, they are willing to risk the harm that would result if the information were shared with their competitors. Trust is based on individuals'

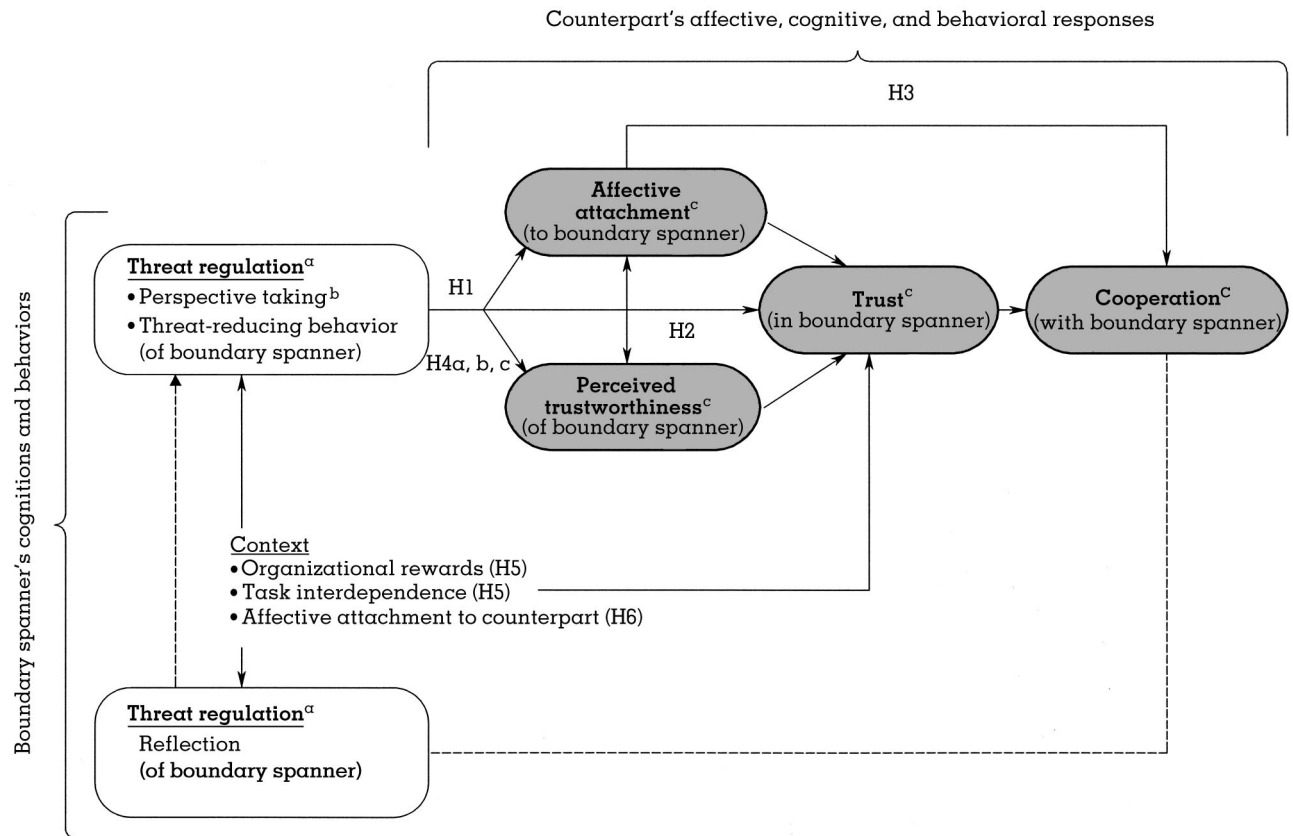
expectations that others will behave in ways that are helpful or at least not harmful (Gambetta, 1988). These expectations, in turn, are based both on individuals' perceptions of others' trustworthiness—benevolence, integrity, and ability (e.g., Butler, 1991; Gabarro, 1978; see Mayer et al., 1995, for review)—and on their affective responses to others (e.g., Jones & George, 1998; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; McAllister, 1995).

Because trust reduces the need to monitor others' behavior, formalize procedures, and create completely specified contracts (Macaulay, 1963; Powell, 1990; Williamson, 1975), it is invaluable to organizations that engage in collaborative endeavors (Powell, 1990; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone, 1998). Research suggests that trust between boundary-spanning individuals facilitates reliance on informal agreements and informal cooperation, supplementing and improving the efficiency of formal contracts (Currall & Judge, 1995; Dyer & Chu, 2003; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Saporito, Chen, & Sapienza, 2004; Uzzi, 1997). Mutual trust also increases motivation to devote resources to joint goals (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). This type of allocation decision is particularly important for interorganizational projects because "boundary spanners [and their counterparts] are simultaneously exposed to competing expectations from their own and their partner organization" (Perrone et al., 2003: 423).

Interpersonal trust also provides firms with such benefits as more access to tacit knowledge, increased risk sharing, and "richer-freer" information (Powell & Smith-Doerr, 1994). Further, it decreases the likelihood that boundary spanners will plan to terminate an interorganizational relationship (Saporito et al., 2004) and allows boundary-spanning individuals the freedom to adjust to unanticipated contingencies in ways that are jointly optimal, without the time and effort that are associated with renegotiating a contract with opportunistic partners (Lorenz, 1988; Uzzi, 1997).

Although trust facilitates cooperation on various types of nonhierarchical projects, active interpersonal strategies for building trust have received little attention in the academic literature. Two exceptions are Child and Möllering's (2003) paper on active trust in the Chinese business environment and Whitener et al.'s (1998) paper on managerial trust building. Child and Möllering suggest that actively building per-

**FIGURE 2**  
**Threat Regulation Model of Trust and Cooperation: Boundary Spanner–Counterpart Interactions**



<sup>a</sup> See Figure 1, unshaded ovals, for more detail on threat regulation processes.

<sup>b</sup> Cognitive appraisal-related perspective taking.

<sup>c</sup> Counterpart's response, shaded ovals.

sonal rapport is positively related to trust. In this article I expand the important concept of active trust building beyond a general motivation to build personal relationships. I delineate specific psychological strategies and interpersonal emotion management tactics that directly address potential risks and obstacles to cooperation and trust in knowledge-based contexts.

Whitener et al. (1998) discuss several ways to initiate trust with employees. Whereas some of their trust initiation strategies, such as behavioral consistency and behavioral integrity, require that counterparts observe a boundary spanner's behavior over time, other actions, such as communicating accurately and thoroughly, demonstrating concern, and sharing control, reflect a proactive stance toward initiating trust. I develop this proactive approach to-

ward trust building in two ways. First, I explore both symbolic and social cognitive processes, such as perspective taking, that enable proactive actions and responsive human agency in trust building. Second, I not only examine the feelings of threat, apprehension, anxiety, fear, and so forth that counterparts may experience when contemplating the risks involved with cooperation but also the role of interpersonal emotion management in strategically addressing these threats. Investigating active processes that attend to cognitive, affective, and symbolic processes of active trust may be particularly important for interorganizational relationships if, as Malhotra and Murnighan argue, it is "more difficult to transition non-embedded ties [those that are based on formal structures such as binding contracts] into embedded ties [those that are based on trust and social relationships]

than to develop embedded ties from the start" (2002: 554).

### Threat Regulation and Trust

I propose that threat regulation actively fosters the development and maintenance of trust and cooperation through several mechanisms. Threat regulation influences individuals' emotional responses to interactions and reveals social competencies that are important for future trustworthy behavior. It signals trustworthiness and involves an emotional investment that fosters trustworthy behavior.

**Threat-reducing behavior, emotion, and trust.** Boundary spanners' interpersonal threat-reducing behaviors influence the emotions of their counterparts because these actions modify counterparts' perceptions (cognitive appraisals) of whether the boundary spanners' actions are goal conducive. In general, behaviors that obstruct goals generate negative emotions, whereas those that are goal conducive produce positive emotions (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Mandler, 1975; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Threat-reducing behaviors may avoid the negative emotional responses people often have to instrumental conflicts, neglect of interests, and identity damage. In addition, these behaviors may generate the positive emotional responses that people have when their goals and identity (self-esteem and self-image) are supported or enhanced (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Fisher et al., 1982; House, 1981; Swann, 1987). Although mitigating negative emotion may prevent disruptive behavior, it is the positive emotions associated with threat regulation that may have a significant influence on facilitating trust and cooperation.

Threat-reducing behavior influences positive emotions in two ways. First, because it demonstrates concern for the fears and threats counterparts may be experiencing, it can generate the positive affect associated with receiving emotional support and interpersonal understanding. For example, cognitive reframing of a stressful or threatening situation for a counterpart can be a socially supportive action (House, 1981; Lively, 2004). Further, individuals may experience such emotional support and interpersonal understanding as the "emotional gifts" of sympathy, care, or liking. Clark defines emotional gifts as "emotions that one social actor

expresses or displays (verbally or nonverbally) to another that have value because they are scarce—that is not given indiscriminately or limitlessly—and because they create positive emotions in others" (2004: 404).

Second, because threat-reducing behavior communicates understanding of another's fears and concerns, it can be self-verifying and generate a positive emotional response. The process of having aspects of one's self understood can verify one's identity, build relationships, and generate positive affect. Moreover, self-verification can have these positive effects even when the aspects of one's self that are verified are negative, such as one's fears or weaknesses (Swann, 1987). People with negative self-views, for example, have been found to prefer a negative but accurate evaluator over a positive evaluator who is inaccurate and self-enhancing (Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992). People, in general, prefer evaluators and marital partners that verify aspects of their identity (i.e., see them as they see themselves) because it makes them feel that they know themselves (Swann, 1987; Swann et al., 1992). In small groups, self-verification has been associated directly with increased feelings of attachment to group members (Swann, Milton, & Polzer, 2000).

Because positive feelings generated during social exchange interactions influence affective attachments and liking for the specific individuals involved in the exchange (Lawler, 2001), the positive feelings stemming from self-verification and emotional support should not only influence a counterpart's mood but also his or her affective attachment to and liking for the boundary spanner. These positive emotions and affective attachments, in turn, can influence trust by increasing the "feel" that another is trustworthy (Jones & George, 1998) and by positively biasing perceptions of trustworthiness, attributions, and motivations that are relevant to trust maintenance (Williams, 2001).

*Hypothesis 1: When an individual's threat-reducing behavior is greater, counterparts' affective attachment to and positive affect for that individual will also be greater.*

*Hypothesis 2: When counterparts' affective attachment to and positive affect for an individual are greater, the counterparts' perceptions of that indi-*



*vidual's trustworthiness will also be greater.*

The positive feelings associated with being understood may not only influence trust but may also directly influence cooperation by eliciting helping behavior and other cooperative and prosocial behaviors, such as information sharing (Williams, 2001). In organizational settings, positive affect has been associated with helping behavior, generosity, and cooperation (George, 1991; George & Brief, 1992; Isen & Baron, 1991). Isen has noted that "a large body of research indicates that positive affect can influence social behavior—in particular, sociability, cooperativeness in negotiation, and kindness" (1987: 206). The positive affect associated with feeling understood may also influence affective attachments, which, in turn, may have an impact on cooperation. Affective attachments (in the form of relational cohesion) have been shown to influence individuals' cooperative tendencies in repeated exchange relationships, even in light of attractive alternatives (Lawler & Yoon, 1996).

*Hypothesis 3: When counterparts' affective attachment to and positive affect for an individual are greater, counterparts' cooperative behavior toward that individual will also be greater.*

**Threat-reducing behavior, social competence, and trust.** Threat-reducing behaviors reveal social competence because these actions demonstrate a boundary spanner's interpersonal understanding of another's fears, as well as the social competencies required to gain this understanding. The social competencies associated with threat regulation are typically observed through a boundary spanner's threat-reducing behavior. Nonetheless, these competencies include cognitive appraisal-related perspective taking and interpersonal emotion regulation strategies, as well as such competencies as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and use emotional information (abilities that constitute emotional intelligence; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey, Kokkonen, Lopes, & Mayer, 2004).

These social competencies reflect capabilities that may be required for future trustworthy behavior on interdependent projects. For example, cognitive and emotional understanding of others, often gained through perspective taking,

may be required to prevent inadvertent neglect of others' interests and to avoid statements and actions that threaten the identities of important project members. When a boundary spanner is relied on to make decisions on behalf of others, benevolent intentions may be insufficient if the boundary spanner does not understand the threats and benefits that others associate with different options. Not only are abilities, including social abilities, a predictor of trust (Mayer et al., 1995), but Sheppard and Sherman (1998) suggest that the social competency of emotional or empathic understanding is an important component of trustworthiness when individuals are highly interdependent.

*Hypothesis 4a: When an individual's threat-reducing behavior is greater, counterparts' perceptions of that individual's social competence (i.e., a social ability dimension of trustworthiness) will also be greater.*

**Threat-reducing behavior and signaling trustworthiness.** Scholars agree that benevolence is a core dimension of perceived trustworthiness (e.g., Mayer et al., 1995). Threat-reducing behaviors signal benevolence—that is, concern for the welfare of others—both because they decrease the fears associated with the potential for opportunism, neglect, and identity damage and because these behaviors themselves may be perceived as benevolent, emotionally supportive actions. In addition, by decreasing the potential for harm to others, threat-reducing behaviors may demonstrate or express concern—an expression proposed by Whitener et al. (1998) as a way of initiating trust. Threat-reducing behaviors may also signal cooperative intent by acting as an "emotional gift" and generating perceptions that a boundary spanner's objectives are more goal conducive and less subject to opportunism than their counterparts previously thought.

Signaling benevolence may be particularly important for building trust, because, once formed, perceptions that a boundary spanner will "protect one's welfare" can reduce the extent to which counterparts will perceive that threats to cooperation are likely to arise in the future. Thus, reducing threats in one domain, such as identity damage, can have positive spillover effects in terms of increased perceptions of overall benevolence that may mitigate

the perception of threats to cooperation in other domains (e.g., opportunism and neglect).

*Hypothesis 4b: When an individual's threat-reducing behavior is greater, counterparts' perceptions of that individual's benevolence (a dimension of trustworthiness) will also be greater.*

**Threat regulation, self-interest, and the credibility of signaling trustworthiness.** Credible signals typically have a cost. Threat regulation processes are costly in terms of the interpersonal effort and interpersonal emotion work involved. Emotion work refers to the conscious effort to alter feelings (Hochschild, 1979). Interpersonal emotional work involves both cognitive and emotional effort to alter the feelings of others. On the cognitive side, it involves the effort associated with forethought and perspective taking, as well as planning and reflection. In terms of emotional effort, it requires the abilities that Mayer and Salovey (1997) associate with emotional intelligence: perceiving, understanding, using, and managing emotions.

The time and interpersonal effort entailed in boundary spanners' investments in threat regulation may signal trustworthiness by leading their counterparts to believe that trustworthy behavior will be in the boundary spanners' self-interest. In other words, counterparts may believe that only trustworthy behavior by a boundary spanner will produce a collaborative outcome of the quality necessary both to warrant the boundary spanner's initial investment of time, cognitive effort, and emotional work and to generate a potential for future collaboration that is worthy of the initial investment of effort. This emotionally costly signaling process operates in a manner similar to processes noted by Klein and Leffler (1981), in which a seller's investments in expensive advertising can lead buyers to believe that producing and selling a high-quality product is the only way for the seller to recoup advertising expenses.

Threat-reducing behavior, as the most easily observed component of threat regulation, may represent a credible signal not only because it entails a costly emotional investment that makes others feel understood and self-verified but also because this investment is more costly for individuals hiding opportunistic intentions. Hiding one's intentions during repeated interac-

tions on a collaborative project requires strict monitoring of verbal and nonverbal actions that might undermine one's implicit assertion that threat-reducing behavior is based on benevolent intentions. First, it requires effort to mask opportunistic intentions. Second, opportunistic individuals should find threat-reducing behaviors particularly difficult to fake for two reasons: (1) the facial expressions for certain emotions, such as concern, are more difficult to voluntarily control than others, such as joy (Ekman, 1985; Frank, 1988); (2) frequently, "our true feelings 'leak' out through the behavioral channels that are less controllable" (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992: 259). When opportunistic individuals fail to monitor and control their nonverbal behavior, counterparts may become suspicious, because, "at some level, perceivers realize that people can choose their words carefully, but they are less adept at controlling their facial, vocal, and bodily expressions" (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992: 259). Attempts to mask opportunistic motives for threat regulation are likely to fail on long-term collaborative projects that provide many opportunities for counterparts to observe inconsistencies between verbal and nonverbal behavior and between benevolent and malevolent actions.

A final unique aspect of threat regulation as a credible signal is that it is an emotional investment in understanding another person that is tied to the potential positive externality of generating genuine concern for that individual's welfare (circumstances and emotions) from the conscious decision to make an emotional investment. Batson et al. (1995) found that perspective taking instructions could increase valuing of and empathy for another. When a boundary spanner intentionally engages in threat regulation, the resulting empathy can curb self-interested behavior that might disadvantage the target of his or her concern (Batson & Ahmad, 2001; Frank, 1988; Shott, 1979), thus making the boundary spanner more trustworthy.

The potential for self-interested behavior to result in genuinely benevolent actions is also discussed and mathematically modeled by Rotemberg, who argues that<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> In this quote I have substituted "boundary spanner" and "counterpart" for the original "leader" and "follower," respectively.

altruism by a [boundary spanner] has a very particular rationale. Its benefit is that it leads the [counterpart] to believe that the [boundary spanner] will not move the team in a direction that benefits the [boundary spanner] at the expense of the [counterpart]. The result is that the [counterpart] trusts the [boundary spanner]. This trust then allows the [boundary spanner] to move the team in directions that are beneficial to all members (1994: 709).

Consistent with his arguments about altruism, Rotemberg (1994) does not argue that a boundary spanner's threat regulation or benevolence is a deception. Rather, he argues that *after* the boundary spanner intentionally calculates the benefits of threat regulation or benevolent actions, he or she then engages in considerate behaviors that generate a *genuine* shift toward benevolence. Thus, threat regulation may not only represent an investment that can credibly signal trustworthiness by aligning interests in joint outcomes and future collaboration but also may reflect an intentional decision capable of generating behaviors that evoke genuine feelings that serve as relational sources of perceived trustworthiness.

*Hypothesis 4c: When any one of the three components of an individual's threat regulation is greater (i.e., perspective taking, threat-reducing behavior, or reflection), counterparts' perceptions of that individual's overall trustworthiness will also be greater.*

**Effectiveness of threat-reducing behavior: A moderating factor.** For simplicity in the previous section, I assumed that a boundary spanner's threat-reducing behaviors are effective at reducing counterparts' concerns. However, because threat regulation is an iterative process that involves reflecting on the effectiveness of one's threat-reducing behavior and self-correcting discrepancies, any particular act of threat-reducing behavior may be effective or ineffective at reducing a counterpart's concerns. For instance, threat-reducing behavior will be less effective when boundary spanners misunderstand what is threatening to their counterparts or when counterparts misinterpret attempts to reduce their experience of threat. The less effective a specific threat-reducing behavior is at alleviating a counterpart's fear of harm, the less likely it is that this particular act of threat-

reducing behavior will generate positive affect and perceptions of trustworthiness (e.g., benevolence, social competence). At any point in time, the relationship between the quantity of threat-reducing behavior and the affect or trustworthiness generated will be moderated by the effectiveness of the threat-reducing behavior selected. Over time, through the iterative process of reflection, perspective taking, and adjustments to their threat-reducing behaviors, individuals ideally will self-correct for ineffective threat-reducing behavior.<sup>9</sup>

*Hypothesis 5: The effectiveness of threat-reducing behavior will moderate the relationship between the quantity of threat-reducing behavior and (a) affective attachment (H1), (b) social competence (H4a), (c) benevolence (H4b), and (d) overall trustworthiness (H4c). The less effective threat-reducing behavior is at addressing a counterpart's concerns, the less positive the relationship will be between threat-reducing behavior and (a) affective attachment, (b) social competence, (c) benevolence, and (d) overall trustworthiness.*

## THREAT REGULATION IN CONTEXT

Threat regulation takes place within a context of specific organizations, particular tasks, and specific interpersonal relationships. Such contexts generate instrumental and relational influences on threat regulation.

### Organizational and Task Contexts

The organizational and task contexts of a project generate instrumental influences on

<sup>9</sup> Gender is an example of a factor that may influence the effectiveness of threat-reducing behaviors. Because men are stereotypically more agentic (Eagly, 1987; Rudman & Glick, 1999), for instance, they may be more effective at reducing threat when they meet these stereotypic expectations by selecting threat-reducing behaviors that are more action oriented (e.g., actively altering a situation by removing threatening elements). In contrast, because women are stereotypically considered more nurturing (Rudman & Glick, 1999), they may be more effective at reducing threat when they select more supportive threat-reducing behaviors, such as helping others think about a situation in a less threatening way.

threat regulation. These contexts increase the power that each party has to interrupt the other's goal attainment. For instance, the reward systems that surround interdependent projects influence the benefits that individuals will receive for successful collaboration, along with the losses they will incur if some team members thwart their ability to produce a successful project. Similarly, reciprocal task interdependence, which involves mutual dependence on the work and effort of others (Thompson, 1967), not only provides boundary spanners with the power to inadvertently interrupt counterparts' goals but also provides their counterparts with the ability to punish the boundary spanners for any goal interruptions. Finally, positions of power, such as team leader, also provide the ability to disrupt goals, because individuals with positional power may withhold needed resources or valued rewards. Increases in counterparts' power to interrupt the goals of boundary spanners will influence boundary spanners' motivation to avoid interrupting counterparts, and thereby avoid eliciting the negative emotional responses and defensive behaviors that accompany perceptions of threat and interruption.

Fiske (1993) has proposed that power, including the power to interrupt another's goals, affects the less powerful individual in a relationship by increasing his or her perspective taking, a core component of threat regulation. Less powerful individuals engage in more perspective taking because it is typically in their self-interest to imagine and anticipate how powerful others may interrupt their ability to reach valued end states. Power may influence the usefulness of engaging in threat-reducing behavior for similar reasons. For instance, boundary spanners who engage in threat regulation processes with powerful others may thereby decrease the likelihood that they will suffer from the negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, fear) and defensive behavior of those powerful others.

Organizational reward systems and task interdependence not only motivate threat regulation processes but also improve goal alignment and provide a calculative reason for trusting others. I propose that because organizational reward systems and task interdependence align goals, they can simultaneously motivate boundary spanners to engage in proactive threat regulation and increase counterparts' willingness to trust them.

*Hypothesis 6a: The greater a counterpart's power to interrupt an individual's goal attainment, the greater that individual's threat regulation (perspective taking, threat-reducing behavior, reflection).*

*Hypothesis 6b: An individual's threat regulation will partially mediate the positive relationship between a counterpart's power (which aligns goals) and the counterpart's trust in that individual.*

### Interpersonal Context

The quality of interpersonal relationships represents another contextual factor that may influence threat regulation. Affective bonds, a central component of interpersonal relationships, refer to experiences of feeling "joined, seen and felt, known, and not alone" (Kahn, 1998: 39). They influence threat regulation processes by fostering more considerate behavior. Affective bonds increase the tendency to feel empathy, which, in turn, increases considerate, prosocial behavior (Batson, 1991).

In addition to its impact on threat regulation, affect has a well-established direct influence on trust (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Williams, 2001). The affective bonds and liking that boundary spanners and counterparts share may influence trust in several ways. Affective bonds may positively bias the attributions counterparts make regarding a boundary spanner's behavior, may motivate counterparts to use a less stringent criterion for evaluating the boundary spanner's trustworthiness, or may promote prosocial behaviors that build trust (Williams, 2001). I propose that boundary spanners' experience of affective bonds will influence their motivation to engage in threat-reducing behavior. At the same time, these affective bonds will influence trust directly, because counterparts' experiences of these bonds will influence their perceptions of boundary spanners' trustworthiness and their trust in the boundary spanners (i.e., Hypothesis 2).

*Hypothesis 7: The stronger the affective bonds an individual feels for his or her counterparts, the greater that individual's threat regulation (per-*



*spective taking, threat-reducing behavior, reflection).*

## DISCUSSION

Professionals working on interorganizational projects must traverse organizational boundaries to secure the cooperation of people over whom they have no hierarchical control. They are faced with risks that can inhibit cooperation, such as opportunism, neglect of interests, and identity damage. In this article I attempt to broaden our understanding of trust by examining two aspects of trust relationships that have received little joint attention: human agency and affect. In my threat regulation model, I examine interpersonal behaviors and psychological strategies required for human agency in trust development, while recognizing the affective side of the risks inherent in many cooperative endeavors—the fear, apprehension, and feelings of threat individuals experience when they anticipate that harm may result from cooperation.

Although affect is a well-recognized predictor of trust (e.g., Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; McAllister, 1995), the fear and apprehension that a counterpart associates with cooperation have implications for active trust building that are not well-understood. I argue that by addressing counterparts' anticipation of harm responsively and proactively, threat regulation not only decreases these negative experiences but also influences trust in several ways. Threat regulation processes influence trust by affecting emotional responses, signaling trustworthiness (i.e., benevolence) and cooperative intent, representing social emotional investments, and demonstrating social competencies (e.g., interpersonal understanding).

The three-step threat regulation process contributes to the trust literature by providing a model for active trust development. Using a framework for human agency from social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 2001), this model integrates psychological processes for understanding and regulating emotion (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1998; Gross, 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985) with intersubjective processes from symbolic interactionism for understanding and responding to others (Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1967; Mead, 1934). The first step in threat regulation—cognitive ap-

praisal-related perspective taking—involves forethought and an interpersonal understanding of the cognitions that caused the feelings of threat that counterparts associate with cooperating. The second step in this process—threat-reducing behavior—enables individuals to decrease others' experiences of threat. The model integrates specific emotion regulation processes, such as cognitive reframing, with the interpersonal responsiveness of symbolic interactionism and the intentionality of social cognitive theory. The third step in the threat regulation process—reflection—is an essential self-assessment and self-corrective step consistent with self-regulation processes in psychology (e.g., Bandura, 1986; Carver & Scheier, 1998).

In the threat regulation model, I delineate not only processes that foster both trust and affective attachment but also processes that are particularly relevant for building relationships in cross-boundary contexts that may be associated with additional threats to cooperation, such as intergroup goal misalignment, status differences, and value conflict. On complex, ambiguous, and nonroutine projects, I suggest that the need for threat regulation may be important for maintaining trust throughout the duration of a relationship, because new threats to a counterpart's identity and goals, such as the need to negotiate the solution to an unexpected contingency, may arise at unpredictable points over the course of a project.

The model developed here also contributes to our understanding of the role of emotion management in organizations. The management of emotional expression during interpersonal interactions has received a significant amount of attention in both sociology and organization theory. This research, which focuses primarily on emotional labor, reveals critical aspects of service work and emotional life in organizations (e.g., Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1979; Martin et al., 1998; Morris & Feldman, 1996; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989, 1990; Sutton, 1991; Van Mannen & Kunda, 1989). However, the literature in this area has not focused on collaborative outcomes.

The threat regulation model of trust represents an underexplored dimension of interpersonal emotion work. It builds on previous conceptualizations of emotional labor in three ways that are particularly relevant for the collaborative nature of work in a less hierarchically struc-

tured, more knowledge-based economy. First, emotional labor has traditionally involved conforming to "feeling rules" or "display rules" that are easily observed, motivated, and rewarded by a social group—the organization or the profession (e.g., Hochschild, 1983; Pierce, 1995; Sutton, 1991). In contrast, threat regulation is independently motivated by the need for cooperation and often not directly sanctioned or rewarded by the organization. For example, Fletcher (1999) noted that behaviors such as empathetic teaching that can reduce interpersonal threat, promote cooperative learning, and facilitate organizational goals often go unrecognized and unrewarded by organizations. Mirroring the nature of work in the knowledge-based economy, threat regulation is a form of interpersonal emotion work that is often nonroutine, proactive, and not easily observed or monitored. Therefore, it may be more difficult to directly reward and sanction than emotional expression in more routine service work.

Second, research on emotional labor has often focused on emotional expression as the mechanism of interest for influencing the emotions of others (e.g., Hochschild, 1983; Sutton, 1991). The threat regulation model, in contrast, employs a variety of cognitive, affective, and behavioral strategies for managing the emotions of others, such as cognitively reframing and behaviorally altering the situation. Drawing on the psychological literature on emotion regulation, this model complements and clarifies the psychological processes underlying the small but growing body of work on the interpersonal emotion management outcomes of emotional labor in sociology (e.g., Francis, 1997; Lively, 2000; Thoits, 2004).

Third, the role of social norms and display rules may be less prominent in threat regulation processes than in the emotional labor processes involved in routine service work. Threat regulation on cooperative projects occurs in professional settings that are typified by a wider latitude of discretion within emotional display rules than is permissible in many types of routine service work. Therefore, understanding display rules may be necessary but not sufficient for engaging in threat regulation. Interpersonal emotional intelligence, especially emotional knowledge about how feelings are generated and influenced in other individuals and interpersonal understanding of specific individuals, may be required for successful threat regulation

on collaborative projects. Investigating the threat regulation dimension of interpersonal emotion management may broaden the way researchers investigate the motivation for, the processes involved in, and the outcomes associated with emotional labor in a knowledge work setting. As the knowledge intensity of the economy increases, the need to coordinate less hierarchically structured work may not only increase the importance of interpersonal trust in organizations (Adler, 2001) but also may increase the importance of the collaborative potential of interpersonal emotion management.

### DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The hypotheses in the threat regulation model need to be tested in a variety of interorganizational and cross-functional settings, such as R&D alliances, professional service relationships, joint ventures, technical consortia, and cross-functional product development teams. Qualitative research will be important for delineating the sets of threat-reducing behaviors most often used by individuals in different real-world contexts (e.g., cross-functional teams, R&D alliances). Experimental studies will be important for manipulating and measuring the amount of threat that individuals associate with cooperative endeavors, measuring the impact of specific sets of threat-reducing strategies, and understanding the effect of opportunistic intentions on the effectiveness of attempted threat regulation.

Longitudinal research will enable researchers to disentangle how time, threat regulation, and interpersonal affective bonds influence trust development and maintenance in contexts with differing initial levels of suspicion, animosity, and positive affect. These studies should investigate not only the implications of threat regulation for trust but also threat regulation more broadly, as an active strategy for developing the closely related, team-level constructs of relationship quality and psychological safety—constructs that foster the championing of difficult issues, openness around organizational problems and errors, and other organizational outcomes.

Finally, a combination of methods will be necessary to establish threat regulation as an active, intentional process. To do this, it will be important to establish not only that one individ-

ual's threat-regulating actions influence another's perceptions of threat, trust, and cooperation but also that individuals hold mental models that include threat regulation as a viable strategy for building trust. Mental models undergird intentional behavior because individuals will only purposely choose to engage in threat-regulating actions in an effort to build trust and cooperation if they hold mental models with cause-and-effect links from threat regulation to trust and cooperation.

## CONCLUSION

It is a challenge to traverse organizational boundaries to secure the cooperation of people over whom one has no hierarchical control. In contrast to current models of trust development, I have proposed that boundary-spanning individuals working on interdependent knowledge-based projects do not wait to be found trustworthy but, instead, actively seek the trust and cooperation they need from others to accomplish their interdependent goals. I argued that active trust seeking is necessary because of the harm that counterparts may associate with cooperation—opportunism, neglect of interests, and identity damage.

A major contribution of this article is the introduction of the multistep process of threat regulation as a form of interpersonal emotion management and the proposition that perspective taking, threat-reducing behavior, and reflection are the three steps that constitute this process. A second contribution is the model linking threat regulation to interpersonal trust and cooperation. I proposed that threat regulation builds and maintains trust not only by influencing emotion, an antecedent to trust, but also by signaling one's own trustworthiness, demonstrating one's social competence (e.g. interpersonal understanding), and making a social emotional investment that fosters trustworthy behavior. Through this article, I seek to motivate empirical tests and a more precise understanding of threat regulation and its relationship to trust and collaboration.

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