HUSBANDS’ EXPERIENCE OF BEING TRUSTED BY THEIR WIVES: A
HEURISTIC STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Trust is widely understood to be a critical component of interpersonal relationships. In an effort to understand this complex construct, the majority of research on dyadic trust has focused on the decision to trust and the interactions between a trustor and trusty, with a strong bent toward understanding the trustor’s experience. Surprisingly little is known about the experience of the trusty, or the recipient of trust, which if not remedied may result in erroneous assumptions about the experience of the trusty or an obscuration of the relational dynamics surrounding trust as a whole. Using qualitative, heuristic methodology, the author sought to understand husbands’ intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences of being trusted by their wives by allowing them opportunity to articulate or represent the depth of such experience, including in-depth, semistructured interviews. Immersion in the data provided by the co-researchers revealed eight primary themes with associated subthemes. The primary themes that emerged were: deep satisfaction; an understanding that his wife’s trust is a privilege not to be taken for granted; validation through positive regard; affirmation of doing what is right; peace and security; intimacy; experience of grace; and freedom. These findings begin to fill a void in the literature, illuminating the experience of trusties for the benefit of not only those in relationships but those tasked with supporting relationships as well. Embedded within existing theoretical frameworks, the results of this study provide both a deeper understanding of the trusty experience as well as a springboard for further related research.

Key words: trust, trusty (or trustee), trustor, interpersonal, intrapersonal, heuristic
Dedication Page

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Melanie, who, as an act of love, trusted me enough despite my imperfections to set me free to delve into the depths of marital trust with all of its beauty, murkiness, profundity, risks, intensity, and toils. There is no one whose trust means more to me and whose trust I desire to be worthy of than you, Melanie.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Trust opens up new and unimagined possibilities.”
—Robert C. Solomon

Scottish author and Christian minister George MacDonald (1877) once wrote, “To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved” (p. 35). Such sentiment may be true for many, yet those on the receiving end of trust have received surprisingly little attention in scholarly literature. What follows is an introduction to a study of husbands as trusties, or the recipients of trust, in a marital relationship. This introduction includes a brief explication of the problem this study addresses, the purpose and nature of the study, research questions and objectives, and a conceptual framework supporting and justifying the study. Key terms are operationally defined, assumptions and limitations are discussed, and the significance of the study is addressed.

Significance of the Problem

Trust is regarded by many as one of the most important components of a loving, happy, and well-functioning relationship (Fehr, 1988; Gottman, 2011; Regan, Kocan, & Whitlock, 1998; Simpson, 2007). The ability to trust others, according to renowned developmental psychologist Erik Erikson, is the “first task of the ego” (Erikson, 1950, p. 221). As a child explores the world, he or she must be emotionally tethered to a caregiver by way of trust (Bowlby, 1969). When increasingly mature interpersonal relationships are developing, one must learn to trust as an aspect of intimacy (Sternberg, 1986). When interdependence grows, making one’s life subject to the vicissitudes of another, one must grapple with trust (Roberts, 1997; Vinkers, Finkenauer, & Hawk, 2010). When commitment to relational exclusivity is considered, trust must be assessed (Larzelere & Huston, 1980). When confidence in the love of a partner is shattered, one must struggle with how much to trust (Mikulincer, 1998). And when a relationship has grown through many years of trials and triumphs, one may learn to rest in the security of trust (Gottman, 2011;
Larzelere & Huston, 1980). Trust carries great value; value carefully considered from the perspective of the giver as well as that of the receiver, both in its presence and absence (Hosking, 2014).

We are born into a world of objects, both human and material, that we must learn to trust for survival. To avoid living in constant fear, we must learn to trust as one of the first tasks in life, even in the presence of uncertainty. We quickly become aware at some level that depending on others is a matter of life or death, even before trust becomes a matter of conscious choice. The amygdala, or the threat-sensing smoke detector of the brain (van der Kolk, 2014), is fully developed at birth (Cozolino, 2006), which means that fear may precede even the first experience of trust in life. Trust is not so much an act that produces vulnerability; rather, trust is first an act necessitated by vulnerability.

Trust involves risk on the part of the giver. The willingness to be vulnerable in the act of trusting appears to be common to many if not all definitions and conceptualizations of trust (Gottman, 2011; Johnson-George & Swap, 1982; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). The trusty¹, or the recipient of trust, may choose to exploit the trustor for personal gain; a fact the trustor must consider in the decision to trust. To withhold trust may be to protect oneself from harm, and to give trust may be to seek personal gain, such as security and satisfaction. Such considerations are certainly relevant in the study of trust and appear to have dominated the literature and research. Yet the recipient of trust, as a key player in these interpersonal dynamics, must be considered as well.

¹ In this paper, “trusty” (plural, trusties) will be utilized to refer to the recipient of trust. In the literature, “trustee” is sometimes used to refer to the recipient, yet this word often carries a legal rather than interpersonal connotation. “Trusty” carries more of an interpersonal meaning.
Unfortunately, in an effort to minimize personal risk, a trustor may not fully consider the benefit of trust for its recipient (Dunning, Anderson, Schlosser, Ehlebracht, & Fetchenhauer, 2014; Gilovich, Kruger, & Savitsky, 1999; Malhotra, 2004). In the absence of dramatic acts of betrayal, trust is relatively stable over time, forming a filter through which one interprets the actions of his or her partner (Rempel, Ross, & Holmes, 2001). Given the risky nature of trust, one may be tempted to think of this stability exclusively in terms of its protective function or personal benefits for the trustor. Yet, perhaps there could be an alternate consideration. As Miller and Rempel (2004) discovered, trusting a partner can lead to more partner-enhancing attributions, which can, in turn, increase one’s trust, even if the tendency is to attribute positive motives that exceed the partner’s evident trustworthy behavior. Furthermore, such partner-enhancing attributions, which are associated with trust, appear to promote stability or increase in marital trust over time (Miller & Rempel, 2004). Thus, worth considering is the possibility that trust produces benefits for its recipient that enhance relational stability and satisfaction.

Historically, research has focused on trust and mistrust, primarily emphasizing their impact on the trustor. A problem that must be addressed is how little is known about the recipient of trust. The problem addressed here is not mistrust and its consequences for the trusty per se, but the lack of knowledge about the experience of being trusted when the trusty believes such trust exists. The research study described in this dissertation investigates the possibility that being the beneficiary of trust may allow one to have a range of unique and meaningful perceptions and experiences, perhaps including those that could enhance personal well-being as well as relational strength and satisfaction.
Summary of the Problem

As long as relationships exist, couples will face challenges of trust. Theoretical (Bowlby, 1969; Gottman, 2011; Siegel, 2010; Simpson, 2007) and empirical (Luchies et al., 2013; Miller & Rempel, 2004; Murray & Holmes, 2011; Rempel et al., 2001; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999) inquiries have produced knowledge about the construct of trust that may assist those in relationships or those seeking to provide guidance or counsel. While an understanding of trust is important, the vast majority of authors on the subject, intentionally or not, emphasize the experience of the trustor versus that of the trusty, even when the focus is on interpersonal or interdependent relationships. In his insightful and forward-thinking comments on trust in society, Gambetta (1988) wrote, “It is important to trust, but it may be equally important to be trusted” (p. 221). Nearly 30 years have passed since Gambetta wrote these words, yet little has been done to study the importance of being trusted.

Trust, or a lack thereof, is often treated as an invariable effect imprinted upon one’s mind as the result of the actions or inactions of others (Gottman, 2011; Wieselquist et al., 1999). For example, Kohn (2008), a neurobiologist writing on the issue of trust, goes so far as to state that trust is involuntary; one does not consciously choose to trust or distrust. Empirical evidence certainly points to trust being conditional, or conditioned, under certain circumstances (Ahn, Ostrom, Schmidt, & Walker, 2003; Eckel & Wilson, 2003; Walker & Ostrom, 2003), but perhaps it need not be so under all circumstances. While Walker and Ostrom (2003), based on their review of the literature, conclude that trust is often conditionally determined, they admit that future research must account for “multiple types of players” (p. 383), or the various characteristics and combination of characteristics exhibited in the trustor-trusty relationship. Previous research has utilized theories and methods that presuppose a great deal of self-interest
in its players, particularly self-interest on the part of the trustor that may appear to lead to automatic responses to a trusty. Worth considering is whether certain players, or trustors, may choose to trust for the benefit of the trusty or in response to a perceived benefit to the trusty; not consequentially, involuntarily, or out of obligation or pure self-interest.

If an unchallenged understanding of trust is that it is solely a consequence of another’s actions that one bears little control over or responsibility for, then it makes sense that the responsibility for the reestablishment of trust, or the earning of trust, would fall entirely on the trusty. Yet this may be a faulty and potentially damaging conclusion as well. An excessive burden of responsibility may be placed on the trusty, well beyond that of a reasonable expectation of trustworthiness. The trusty could potentially be treated as if he or she were fully responsible for the thoughts and feelings of the trustor. Also, an assumption may be that a trustor will function inevitably, primarily, or exclusively out of reflexive self-interest. Subsequently, the trustor may not be challenged to choose trust as an act of beneficence or love. Thus, tension exists between the acknowledgment that trust is linked to the thoughts and feelings of the trustor and the common notion that one’s trust is merely a by-product of the actions of another. And if trust is treated purely as an effect or consequence, conditioned entirely by the actions of the trusty, then it makes sense why little attention has been given to the experience of being trusted or to how the choice to trust may impact the recipient of such trust.

A focus on the experience of the trusty, or the recipient of trust, has the potential to deepen our understanding of trust, perhaps in ways that challenge more popular, traditional, or simplistic considerations. With this ultimate goal in mind, it is helpful to first look at key terms and their definitions, then look at the foundation of trust research that has been laid, attending to the clear trajectory of knowledge that justifies a focus on the trusty at this point in time. This
literature reflects the following themes: the general concept of trust, interpersonal/dyadic trust, influences on trust, the practice of trust, the benefits of trust, and the recipient of trust.

Key Terms

Prior to proceeding with a more in-depth discussion of trust, a few key terms need to be defined. The terms trustor and trusty must be clearly defined moving forward as they are the key players in trust-relevant interactions. The concept of differentiation also contributes to a more complete understanding of the approach to trust explored in this study and will be more fully explicated in what follows. Trust itself is clearly the most critical term to operationally define and will require the most attention in what follows.

Trustor and Trusty

For the purposes of this study, the term trustor will be used to describe a person that experiences or chooses to trust. Given that trust is experienced subjectively and in varying degrees, the term trustor will refer to an individual that trusts along a spectrum from a lot to very little, or not at all; that is, assuming the trustor is in a position to do so. The term trusty, while a less commonly used word, accurately describes a recipient of trust, or the individual a trustor would trust. A trusty is a person that may be or is able to be trusted, often characterized by some level of trustworthiness. The term trustee, despite its frequent usage in social scientific literature, tends to carry a more legal or administrative connotation that is less suitable to interpersonal relationships. In sum, a trustor interacts with a trusty based on varying experiences and degrees of trust.

Differentiation

Murray Bowen (1966, 1978) introduced the concept of differentiation of self as a way of understanding the dialectical tension that exists between autonomy and connection with others,
particularly at emotional and intellectual levels. According to Nichols and Schwartz (2004),
differentiation of self involves a person’s ability to think and reflect, and to be flexible and act
wisely, regardless of internal or external emotional pressure. A differentiated individual is able
to take personal responsibility for his or her thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and actions (Corey,
2013). Differentiation is a healthy condition reflecting both autonomy and interdependence. A
tendency toward fusion or enmeshment exists when a person finds it difficult to maintain his or
her own autonomy, particularly when facing issues of anxiety (Nichols & Schwartz, 2004;
Simpson, 2007). By implication, an individual should be responsible for his or her decision to
act trustingly, even if the cognitive and emotional aspects of trust have many determinants.
Highly differentiated people, given their ability to remain relationally connected without
enmeshment, may be able to intentionally engage in trusting interactions, understanding the risks
necessary to pursue deeper levels of intimacy (Simpson, 2007).

Empirically, differentiation of self is supported as a valid construct in the literature
(Charles, 2001; Jankowski & Hooper, 2012). Therapeutically, Bowenian, Gestalt, Existential,
Adlerian, and Human Validation Process Model principles all in their own way emphasize
differentiation, including personal responsibility, as a critical aspect of individual and relational
health (Corey, 2013). For example, Virginia Satir (1964) postulated that personal maturity is
characterized by being fully in charge of oneself, being able to make decisions based on accurate
perceptions of self, others, and the context. Furthermore, the mature, differentiated individual
accepts personal responsibility for the choices he or she makes. Trust must by definition
maintain this well-founded emphasis on differentiation and personal responsibility with an
awareness of various influences on the decision to trust or not trust.
Trust

Trust is a multifaceted, complex construct, making it difficult to define and operationalize. Prior to the 1980s, trust was studied primarily as a personal disposition entailing general beliefs and attitudes about people’s trustworthiness. In the 1980s a shift began toward studying trust within dyadic relationships (Simpson, 2007). Despite such progress in the study of trust, a move from generalized trust to trust in dyadic relationships only complicated the matter of definition and study even further. As Hardin (2003) pointed out, studying trust became particularly difficult in that it involved three components—I trust you to do X. Further study has revealed even more components. Two multidimensional individuals interact around a trust-relevant situation influenced by past, present, future, thoughts, feelings, actions, goals, other contextual factors, and the interactions of all of these variables and more.

Numerous definitions of trust have been put forth by researchers and theoreticians alike, primarily throughout the last 40 years. Trust in general tends to involve the level of confidence people have that others will consistently respond to their needs and desires (Larzelere & Huston, 1980; Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985). Interpersonally, this trust includes the appraisal of a partner as reliable and predictable, the belief that the partner is concerned with one’s needs and can be counted on in times of need, and feelings of confidence in the strength of the relationship (Rempel et al., 1985). Holmes and Rempel (1989) simplified these dynamics into a tripartite model of trust involving predictability, dependability, and faith. They suggested that trust grows when a partner, or the trusty, voluntarily alters his or her preferred course of action for the sake of the trustor’s well-being, similar to Gottman’s (2011) more recent conceptualization of trust. MacKinnon and Boon (2012) suggest that trust is a continuum along which an individual may move higher or lower depending on one’s personal situation or the actions of a partner.
Furthermore, trust can be thought of as a basic apprehension of gain or loss through dependence on a partner (Murray et al., 2011) and represents a set of cognitive and emotional expectations for what will occur in the future (Miller & Rempel, 2004).

This emphasis on the notion of an uncertain future is a central focus of most definitions of trust. According to Sztompka (1999), trust is a bet about the future contingent actions of others, a strategy for dealing with an uncertain and uncontrollable future. As he puts it, the risk of not knowing the future is traded for the risk to trust. Miller and Rempel (2004) state that trust involves security and certainty in response to “the vagaries of an uncertain future,” providing a sense of confidence in both present and future interactions (p. 703). Luchies et al. (2013) retain this emphasis on the future by suggesting that trust is the expectation that a partner can be relied upon to be responsive to one’s needs and to promote one’s best interests, both now and in the future. Not only is trust a risk taken related to an uncertain future, but the risk to trust may alter one’s expectations for the future and memories of the past, all of which reciprocally continue to influence one’s decision to trust in the present. Perhaps Sorrentino, Holmes, Hanna, and Sharp (1995) put it most simply when they proposed that trust is the antithesis of doubt. Whether that doubt is rooted in the past, present or future, and whether one’s level of trust influences one’s experience of doubt in the past, present or future, trust does appear to be a relational phenomenon that, in one way or another, impacts one’s experience of doubt and uncertainty; perhaps on the part of both the trustor and trusty.

In one of the most recent renderings of a definition of trust, Murray and Holmes (2011) suggest that trust in essence tells one when to risk approaching his or her partner. Their understanding posits trust within the mind of an interdependent person, with a recognition of many personal, relational, and historical contributors to such trust. According to Gottman’s
(2011) recent work on marital trust, trust means that in any particular interaction, one can rely on a partner to behave in a way that maximizes one’s payoffs. Such trusting reliance is behaviorally manifest and is a characteristic of an interaction, rather than simply a thought, personality trait, or characteristic of a relationship or a person. Tension exists between these contemporary renderings of trust. For Murray and Holmes (2011), trust is an individual, relationally influenced capacity used to assess relational interactions. But for Gottman, trust appears to be an interactively determined ability to actively rely on one’s partner, a by-product or consequence of the partner’s behaviors. For Murray and Holmes, trust, regardless of its contributing factors, exists within an individual as a guide for interactions, inseparable from but not fully determined by the interdependence in the relationship. For Gottman, trust is a type of interpersonal reliance, most likely behaviorally exhibited, resulting from and determined by the behaviors of another.

Murray and Holmes (2011) ultimately provide a more palpable definition of interpersonal trust since it allows for a person to determine to some extent his or her own level of trust; that is, an allowance consistent with differentiation. Gottman’s definition would require regression in our understanding of the value of personal choice and responsibility. If trust is considered a by-product of the decisions of another, as Gottman seems to suggest, then differentiation is compromised; one’s trust becomes fused to the actions of another. Personal and relational well-being tend to suffer as fusion or overdependence characterize a relationship, yet well-being may be enhanced as a result of differentiation, or healthy interdependence (Murray & Holmes, 2011).

Given these definitional considerations, Murray and Holmes’s (2011) simple, yet broadly applicable definition of trust as an individual, relationally influenced capacity used to assess relational interactions seems most suited to provide the basis for an operational definition of trust moving forward. Therefore, built upon their thinking but supplemented with the work of others,
the operational definition of *trust* will be as follows: a situationally and relationally influenced personal disposition toward one’s partner that informs one’s view of the past as well as one’s present and future-oriented regulation of interpersonal risk, manifesting in trust-related actions, reactions, and interactions.

**The General Concept of Trust**

The concept of trust has historically drawn a great deal of attention as a central and critical component of any society. Through the centuries—from economist Adam Smith (1776), philosopher David Hume (1737), psychologist William James (1896), developmental psychologist Erik Erikson (1950), and ancient biblical authors Solomon and the apostle Paul to the more contemporary historian Geoffrey Hosking (2014), neuroeconomist Paul Zak (2012), author and analyst Ulrich Boser (2014), marital researcher John Gottman (2011), and psychologists Sandra Murray and John Holmes (2011)—the concept of trust has captured our multidisciplinary attention. Yet despite its importance and intrigue, interpersonal trust has received much less theoretical and empirical attention than might be expected (Rousseau et al., 1998; Simpson, 2007; Watson, 2005).

Trust’s complex and multidimensional nature may be to blame for this lack of attention. Watson (2005), in her multidisciplinary investigation of various definitions of trust over a decade ago, identified 22 definitions presented by a range of theoreticians and researchers. As indicated in the previous section, trust can be studied from many angles, such as a core belief, dispositional perspective, motivational thought, abstruse feeling, goal-directed action, or even the desired result of a sales-oriented strategy. In his recent exposition on the history of trust, Hosking (2014) recognized how trust can be conceptualized as a personal feeling, attitude, or relationship, often recognized in action. Yet when he reflected on his studies, Hosking (2014) highlighted the fact
that “we are all interdependent…. Trust is a vital ingredient in this web of interdependence” (p. 4). While much could be written about the more individualized, personal aspects of trust, such a task would go well beyond the scope of this chapter and will be addressed more in the review of the literature in Chapter Two. In what follows, the emphasis is placed on the relational or interpersonal dynamics of trust, with increasing attention given to the role and experience of the trusty.

**Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Trust**

Interpersonal, dyadic trust is a more refined area of research investigating one’s ability to trust a partner, the impact of the level of trustworthiness by a partner, as well as the relational determinants and consequences of trust and trustworthiness. Interpersonal, or dyadic, trust is more than simply the beliefs one person has about another or the actions henceforth. While trust may be gauged by how one thinks, feels, or acts in relation to another, it is certainly not limited to personal thoughts, feelings, and actions. People differ in the intrapersonal meanings attached to trust, emotions experienced when trust is challenged, and the thoughts and behaviors experienced around these challenges; and these meanings are clearly negotiated and adopted within interpersonal relationships (Evans & Krueger, 2015; Larzelere & Huston, 1980; Mikulincer, 1998; Simpson, 2007; Sztompka, 1999; Wieselquist et al., 1999).

In Simpson’s (2007) review of the foundations of interpersonal trust, he addresses how scholars have identified various aspects of content-specific definitions of trust, which include expectations, beliefs, and attributions that may be directed toward people in general or applied to individual partners in a relationship. What is striking about these aspects of trust is that they all tend to reside in the mind of the individual tasked with choosing to trust or not trust. For example, if one has been hurt in a previous relationship, one may be particularly cautious when
choosing to trust one’s present partner. Or if as a child one witnessed numerous breaches of trust among significant adults or caregivers in his or her life, then one may develop doubt about the feasibility of trust in general. Even though trust is clearly a relational phenomenon, inextricably linked to interpersonal processes, trust or distrust in large part appears to originate from the hearts and minds of the individual actors. In efforts to define trust, there is little doubt that the trustor, influenced by past and present relational dynamics, bears some level of personal responsibility for one’s expectations, beliefs, and attributions.

**Further Influences on Trust**

The study of various influences on such trust goes beyond simply studying the sheer existence of trust within an individual or a relationship. With regard to one’s ability to trust a partner, Murray et al. (2011) established a dual-process model of trust involving impulsive trust, or one’s automatic, less-conscious attitude toward one’s partner rooted in one’s past, and reflective trust, or one’s consciously held beliefs about the strength of the partner’s caring and commitment, rooted in one’s experiences with that partner. Depending on the situation and one’s personal capacity for self-regulation, one influence may override the other, leading to a decision to act in either a trusting or untrusting manner. This dual-process model is quite similar to Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler’s (2000) discussion of explicit and implicit attitudes. Implicit attitudes may be stable, habitual forms of evaluation that are triggered automatically, while explicit attitudes are more context-sensitive, personal constructions. Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler suggest that both these attitudes exist simultaneously within an individual, impacting decisions in various ways under various circumstances. They also discuss what they call “motivated override,” a process in which one consciously overrides an implicit attitude with a more satisfactory explicit attitude (p. 106). As applied to trust, one’s implicit attitude may be
low trust, while one may seek to override such low trust with an explicit attitude of higher trust, or vice versa. Murray et al. (2011) and Wilson et al. (2000) provide refreshing perspectives on trust that allow for influences on one’s ability to trust that fall outside of one’s conscious awareness, as well as a more conscious element related to the choice to trust.

In a study conducted by Murray et al. (2011) in which participants were led to believe that their partners were compiling lists of complaints against them, impulsive trust regulated self-protection in response to reflective trust concerns. In other words, those low in impulsive trust automatically distanced themselves, whereas those high in impulsive trust seemed more capable of resisting an urge to self-protect. This study provides evidence that psychological processes within the individual choosing to trust, even processes outside of one’s awareness, can have a profound impact on the trust given to a potential recipient, and that trustworthiness is not the only determinant of the trustor’s ability to trust. In a related study, Murray et al. (2011) found that when one’s working memory capacity is low, a person’s ability to trust tended to follow his or her impulse rather than reflection since he or she was too mentally taxed to override impulsive trust inclinations. Arguably, if one’s impulsive trust is low and working memory is taxed, his or her partner’s efforts at trustworthiness may prove less than effective in earning trust, even if it is well deserved.

Well established in the study of trust is the influence of attachment style. Mikulincer (1998) examined whether there are attachment-style differences in trust-related goals and strategies, or what benefits would be sought by trusting a romantic partner. He found that secure individuals would trust a partner to pursue an increase in intimacy; anxious-ambivalent individuals emphasized security seeking; and avoidant participants generally sought to attain control in the relationship. This study illuminates how one’s attachment style, a particular
personal disposition toward interpersonal relationships, may influence one’s trusting attitudes and behaviors apart from the trustworthiness of a partner and in a way that may potentially influence one’s partner in substantial ways. Additional studies, which will be addressed more extensively in Chapter Two, have established attachment style as a significant factor in interpersonal, dyadic trust.

Deutsch (1973), in what many consider foundational work in a theoretical understanding of trust, suggested that there is an assortment of motivational reasons to trust. These include despair, social conformity, innocence, impulsiveness, virtue, masochism, faith, confidence, or a desire for risk-taking. For the purposes of this proposal, virtue, faith, confidence, and risk-taking stand out as particularly relevant. These motivations demonstrate value-driven choices to trust. Motivated by a belief system that promotes or celebrates other-centered values, one may choose to trust as an act of virtue, faith, and confidence, acknowledging the risk of potential harm to self as an acceptable potentiality. Such motives could drive the choice to trust even when such choice could appear illogical or foolish to others. Yet the choice is clearly that of the trustor. This understanding of trust is consistent with Simpson’s (2007) observation that interpersonal trust may be based on personal goals, or the idea that the choice to trust will achieve for self, other, or the relationship that which the trustor desires to achieve. Impulsive trust notwithstanding, if one’s value-driven motivation and goal is to love, care for, or serve the recipient of trust, then the decision to trust becomes less dependent on trustworthiness and increasingly dependent on one’s personal belief structures. Such decisions could have a profound impact on a trusting.
The Practice of Trust

Worth highlighting briefly is the importance of the practice of trust. For trust, or a lack thereof, to leave its mark on a relationship, it must exit the realm of thought and feeling and enter the behavioral realm of relational interactions. As Wieselquist et al. (1999) suggested after reviewing the literature, trust is usually treated as a disposition toward a partner that involves a sense of predictability, dependability, and faith. A person will typically act in accordance with one’s disposition of trust, and that person’s partner will act in accordance with his or her level of trustworthiness. The practice of trust is relationally reciprocal, a manifestation of varying levels of interdependence and a sense of personal or relational rewards and costs (i.e., social exchange). One partner assesses trustworthiness and engages in one’s level of trusting actions while the other partner assesses trust and engages in one’s level of trustworthy actions. These processes are uniquely individual impulses and choices linked by inseparable, interdependent processes.

A focus on the practice of trust may look at acts of commission versus omission, or choosing to trust in action versus choosing not to. Counterintuitively, distrust can lead to receptivity to advice and more accurate relationship judgments resulting in commensurate trust-related practices. In a series of experiments, Schul and Peri (2015) demonstrated that when interacting with harmful partners, participants were more careful and accurate in their decision making. They also demonstrated that people are more receptive to advice when independently activated into a mental state of distrust. In an unanticipated way, this finding demonstrates how distrust can be the impetus for increased reflective choice and related action, a unique conclusion that runs counter to the belief that trust is merely an involuntary response to the trusty. While this type of distrust may provide certain benefits for the trustor, people generally seek the benefits that trust in action may provide, even when trust requires risk-taking.
The Benefits of Trust

Beyond felt and anecdotal evidence of the benefits of trust, research reveals a host of benefits related to the existence of trust intrapersonally and interpersonally. Righetti, Balliet, Visserman, and Hofmann (2015) demonstrated that high-trust individuals were less likely to suppress their emotions during relational sacrifices done for a partner, were more satisfied with the outcome of their sacrifice, and were more satisfied in their relationship. This provides evidence that healthy emotion regulation helps individuals make sacrifices for a partner rooted in trust. The finding also suggests that relationship satisfaction itself, a recursively influenced individual perspective, may be influenced by the choice to trust rather than just the trustworthiness of the trusty. To carry this implication further, relationship satisfaction typically involves satisfying interactions. Perhaps choosing to trust produces reactions by the trusty that produce more satisfying interactions; possible evidence of the benefit of trust for the recipient.

In a study of 81 couples by Miller and Rempel (2004) over a two-year period, the authors found that partner-enhancement, or having positive beliefs and expectations of a partner, and trust are mutually reinforcing in established relationships. Not only are they reinforcing, but there appeared to be a bottom-up process in which partner-enhancing attributions promoted marital trust. Furthermore, they found that changes in trust over time were related to partner-enhancing attribution of positive motives to a partner that exceeded the assessment of the partner’s actual behavior. In other words, there is evidence that attributions influence trust in a significant way, just as trust may influence partner attributions. If this is the case, the recipient of trust clearly does not fully determine his or her partner’s trust by way of acting in a trustworthy manner. The decision to trust is rooted, in part, in one’s decision to enhance one’s partner in one’s own mind.
Reciprocity may also be a factor at play in trust interactions. Research suggests that trust and reciprocity are correlated and the amount of reciprocity may be a function of the level of trust (Berg et al., 1995; Pillutla, Malhotra, & Murnighan, 2003). Walker and Ostrom (2003) edited a text titled *Trust and Reciprocity* in which all the authors shared the following definition of trust: “the willingness to take some risk in relation to other individuals on the expectation that the others will reciprocate” (p. 382). Whether reciprocity deserves such a prominent place in the definition of trust or not, it is certainly worth considering. In a fascinating set of studies, Malhotra (2004) attempted to illuminate the nature of this relationship between trust and reciprocity. Malhotra concluded that trustors focused more on the risk involved in trusting than on any benefits that such trust might provide for the trusties. Likewise, the trusties focused more on their own benefit than on the risk of the trustors. While such attention to risk by the trustor may seem reasonable, it also appeared to be somewhat self-defeating since the trusty’s decision to reciprocate, despite his or her own self-interest, was significantly affected by the benefits received from being trusted. These results are both consistent and somewhat inconsistent with previous research that found that trusted parties often reciprocate even when it is costly, and such reciprocity was more frequent and sizable when trustors had taken large rather than small risks (Berg, Dickhaut, & McCabe, 1995; Pillutla et al., 2003). This empirical evidence provides further incentive to investigate more fully the experiences of the trusty in a relationship.

Reciprocity itself may be embedded in broader patterns of circular interactions. In their study on commitment and trust, Wieselquist et al. (1999) found that strong trust by one partner yields enhanced commitment by the other partner by way of producing enhanced dependence, commitment, and pro-relationship behavior on the part of the trustor. Stated another way, trusting by Partner A leads to an increased sense of dependence, commitment, and pro-
relationship behavior by Partner A, which appears to increase the commitment level of Partner B by way of the trust that observing pro-relationship behavior by Partner A can engender. Wieselquist et al. (1999) concluded that “trust is a function of three elements: the individual, the partner, and the situation” (p. 961). Complementing this finding, Murray and Holmes (2011) point out how Partner A will assess the commitment level of Partner B to gauge how much trust should be granted. These interactions would appear to create a synergistic, self-reinforcing spiral of more commitment and trust. Perhaps Murray and Holmes put it best when they wrote,

Witnessing the partner’s [behavioral displays of] responsiveness [to one’s goal to connect behavior] bolsters one’s own trust in the partner, in both its unconscious and conscious forms. Greater trust in the partner in turn solidifies one’s own commitment and motivation to be responsive. One’s own greater responsiveness then reinforces the partner’s trust and strengthens the partner’s commitment. (p. 40)

This empirical literature reveals that the dynamics of trust are truly dyadic, established in the interdependence and circular interactions of a couple. While one partner may say “I trust you” or “I don’t trust you,” this assertion is inextricably linked to intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics of the relationship, further challenging the notion that trust is simply an earned by-product of trustworthiness, a simplistically linear conceptualization of the construct.

Discoveries in biology have recently begun to illuminate various dynamics of trust. Interestingly, genetic heritability has been found to constitute a significant proportion of variance in trust in twin studies utilizing either a Trust Game behavior measurement or questionnaires capturing participants’ trust beliefs (Cesarini et al., 2008; Sturgis et al., 2010). Reuter et al.

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2 The Trust Game, a monetary exchange game often used in trust research, will be explained in Chapter Two; see Berg et al., 1995, for Trust Game procedures
(2009) found that those with a particular variant of the oxytocin receptor gene exhibited more trust while participating in a Trust Game. This is consistent with the fact that oxytocin plays a role in trust-related social behaviors such as maternal attachment and pair bonding (Donaldson & Young, 2008). These findings suggest that genetic factors may produce a genotypic trust predisposition that produces phenotypic trust manifestations in combination with relational and socialization experiences.

Furthermore, social experiences themselves appear to produce neurophysiological effects. In another study on the effects of oxytocin, Kosfeld and associates (2005) discovered that nasally administered, or exogenous, oxytocin increases a trustor’s trust in a trusty. Zak, Kurzban, and Matzneret (2004, 2005), utilizing the Trust Game to measure the behavior of the recipients of trust, found that the perception of a signal of trust increases endogenous oxytocin levels in the trusty, which in turn leads to trustworthy behavior. And of particular interest is that oxytocin may produce much of its effects in brain regions associated with automatic and intuitive processes (Baumgartner et al., 2008), a discovery consistent with Murray et al.’s (2011) concept of impulsive trust. The combination of these findings suggests a synergistic, positive feedback loop of trust and trustworthiness, attributed in no small part to the experience of the trusty. These results also clearly associate pair bonding, or attachment, and the giving and receiving of trust.

Other studies on neurobiological aspects of trust have found correlations between a higher trust disposition and reduced social stress-induced cortisol for a trustor (Heinrichs, Baumgartner, Kirschbaum, & Ehlert, 2003; Takahashi et al. 2005) as well as correlations between serotonin levels and the reduction of negative emotions for a trustor, which plays a role in trust situations (Crockett, Clark, Tabibnia, Lieberman, & Robbins, 2008). Clearly, individual
neurobiological phenomena affect and are affected by relational co-regulation as social behaviors interact with neurotransmitter and hormonal levels within the individuals involved. For example, if a trustor is able to experience reduced negative emotions by the presence of adequate serotonin and a higher trust disposition involving lower cortisol levels, then she may be more likely to trust her husband. When she then chooses to trust, influenced not only by circumstances or her husband’s trustworthiness, but by her own genes and neurobiology, then her husband may experience increased levels of oxytocin and perhaps less cortisol due to decreased levels of stress in the relationship (Gottman, 2011). His neurophysiological reactions may then produce more trustworthy behavior that subsequently reinforces positive surges of bonding neurohormones in his wife.

Yet despite the aforementioned evidence of personal benefit to the recipient of trust, researchers still tend to draw conclusions primarily about the trustor. For example, an increase in oxytocin and trustworthiness in a trusty is interpreted primarily as a payoff for the trustor by way of reciprocity (Riedl & Javor, 2012). Riedl and Javor (2012) go so far as to declare that “the goal of trusting another individual is to realize a reward” (p. 72). Such emphasis on self-focused gain on the part of the trustor and severe neglect of the benefits unique to the trusty appears unfortunate indeed.

**The Recipient of Trust**

Despite being a key player in the relational manifestation of trust, the recipient of trust has received little attention in the trust literature. The benefits of trust for the trustor and for the relationship are relatively clear, yet the potential benefits for the trusty, the recipient of trust, are less clear. In a study by Kim et al. (2015) the authors discovered that when at least one partner lacks trust, the result is less forgiveness, more contempt, and less closeness following conflict.
Studies have also shown that those with medium to low trust may approach their relationship partners with hypervigilance and suspicious, nontrusting behavior that may confirm or even elicit the untrustworthy behavior they expect to find (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). While these results illuminate consequences of low trust, they also reveal a dyadic impact on the recipient of trust, or the individual who interacts with a low-trust partner. As Hosking (2014) succinctly stated, “Trustworthiness cannot be discovered by a lack of trust” (p. 37). In other words, just as trustworthiness inspires trust, trust in some ways may prove to inspire trustworthiness or perhaps make its existence more apparent to a trustor.

Mikulincer (1998), in his discussion of his research on attachment style and trust, observed that secure individuals seemed more capable of actively caring for their partners than prioritizing their personal need for care and comfort. Finding a “secure base” in a trustworthy partner certainly may provide the security necessary to develop trust, yet attachment style may impact the well-being of a trusty as the trustor strategically provides trust or a lack thereof primarily for the sake of meeting one’s personal needs. And when there has been a betrayal of trust, a person’s way of coping with this betrayal is likely related to both the nature of the betrayal as an attack on one’s attachment working model and as a reflection of various attachment style, trust-related coping strategies (Mikulincer, 1998). And a question Mikulincer (1998) has entertained is whether intimacy is a precondition for trust or whether trust is a means for strengthening intimacy. This question allows for the option that the choice to trust may help to produce the very intimacy that one seeks as a basis for the risk to trust to begin with; a nonlinear, reciprocal phenomenon (Mikulincer, 1998).

To further elaborate on this circular dynamic of trust and intimacy, Gottman (2011) wrote about numerous consequences for a spouse of one’s decision to trust. Utilizing a “trust metric”
that he describes in his book, *The Science of Trust*, Gottman (2011, pp. 41–81) completed computations using couples that participated in his lab studies. He found that for married couples, when a husband trusts his wife, her relationship satisfaction increases, she is less negative when talking about the history of their relationship, and he engages in significantly greater emotional attunement. When a wife trusts her husband, he uses less aggressive language, expresses less disgust and contempt, and is less prone to emotional and physical violence, as well as less degradation of his wife. When she trusts him, she is significantly less depressed, is less prone to flooding during conflict, and has fewer thoughts of divorce and separation. As evidenced by these studies, one’s decision to trust a spouse can have positive effects on the spouse—for oneself and the relationship. Ironically, Gottman sees this as a confirmation of his trust metric that is rooted in a definition of trust that seems to place the responsibility for trusting squarely on the shoulders of the trusty. Even when evidence exists that points to benefits for a trusty, interpretation tends to lean toward an emphasis on the actions of the trusty for the sake of the trustor.

The review of previous studies on trust reveals just how little attention is given to the experiences of the trusty, or the recipient of trust. The literature is not devoid of such references to trusty experiences (e.g., Gottman, 2011; Riedl, 2013; Riedl & Javor, 2012; Simpson, 2007), yet they are generally indirect and de-emphasized as compared to the experiences of the trustor and the impact on the relationship as a whole. Encouragingly, those that have most recently reviewed the history and trajectory of trust research and literature recognize the need to investigate the experience of the trusty. For example, Hosking (2014) recognized how trusting can elicit reciprocal trust, thus requiring the trustor to be as equally trustworthy as he or she would wish the trusty to be. In his explication of his sociological theory of trust, Sztompka
(1999) also recognized how trust seems to elicit trust, and he adds how trust may be a prerequisite for trustworthiness. By implication, both Hosking and Sztompka recognize the necessity of looking at the experience of the trusty. More specifically, Simpson (2007) concludes his extensive review of the history of trust research by suggesting that more understanding is needed of what he calls “partner effects,” or how relationship partners affect how the other, including the recipient of trust, thinks, feels, and behaves in trust-relevant situations (p. 604). After looking at the research on the biology of trust, Riedl and Javor (2012) state, “Another finding of our review is that research has focused on the trustor rather than the trustee” (p. 84), a discovery consistent with other forms of trust literature. As a result, they call for more investigations that focus on the trusty, as well as the interactions between them. Given these explicitly recognized and implicit or implied gaps in the literature, a research study designed to tap into the experiences of the trusty is therefore justified.

**Nature of the Study**

The methodology proposed for this study is heuristic inquiry. Heuristic inquiry requires the researcher to develop a question that is clear and concise yet holds great potential for understanding the experiences of the “co-researchers” (i.e., the research participants) (Moustakas, 1990, p. 46). Given the paucity of literature on the experiences of the trusty, heuristic inquiry is uniquely suited to provide an open-ended opportunity for trusties to express their perceptions and experiences without preconceived notions or limitations placed on them. The root meaning of *heuristic* is to discover or to find (Moustakas, 1990), which is exactly what is needed to understand the experiences of the trusty. Another justification for the use of heuristic inquiry is its emphasis on the experiences and input of the researcher himself, which is then combined with the expressions of the co-researchers. As Moustakas (1990) puts it, the
investigator’s inner-being is brought to bear on the inquiry. This inner, or tacit, knowledge is combined with that of the co-researchers’ expressions of personal experience so as to discover meanings that may lie within (Sela-Smith, 2002). As mentioned earlier, everyone must wrestle with what it means to trust and be trusted as essential elements of relationships in this life. As the researcher in this study, I cannot escape or separate myself from what it has meant for me to be trusted. To attempt complete objectivity could obscure the results by the denial of how my own experiences may shape my interactions with my co-researchers and their responses. Ironically, in an effort to understand the experiences of a trusty, researcher and co-researchers must themselves trust entering the unknown to allow new, unbiased knowledge to emerge.

In heuristic inquiry, the research question is of utmost importance. The researcher, according to Moustakas (1990), “is not only intimately and autobiographically related to the question but learns to love the question” (p. 43). The question for this study arises out of years of contemplation and experiences, which have led to a passionate pursuit of understanding the experiences of a trusty in marriage. Yet humility and reflexivity must characterize the research process. While personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings have contributed to the development of the question, I as the researcher desire to “surrender to the question” so that a personal transformation can take place (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 69). I must bring to this research who I am as a result of my experiences, including the question that burns within me, yet remain open to the transformative process of heuristic inquiry, wherein collaboration with research participants enlarges both them and me (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990; Sela-Smith, 2002).

The research question in this study is designed to adhere to Moustakas’s (1990) defining characteristics of heuristic inquiry:
(1) to reveal more fully the essence or meaning of a phenomenon of human experience; (2) to discover the qualitative aspects, rather than quantitative dimensions, of the phenomenon; (3) to engage one’s total self and evoke a personal and passionate involvement and active participation in the process; (4) to not seek to predict or to determine causal relationships; and (5) to illuminate through careful descriptions, illustrations, metaphors, poetry, dialogue, and other creative renderings rather than by measurements, ratings or scores. (p. 42)

The carefully crafted research question becomes the all-important beginning to the process of discovery in heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990). After much reflection, journaling, and editing, the research question for this study is: *In a committed, marital relationship, what is the experience of a husband when he believes he is trusted by his wife?* Inquiring about this impact in an open-ended way is an appropriate place to start in deepening our understanding of the experience of the recipient of trust. As previously stated, we have learned quite a bit about the experiences of the one struggling to trust, perhaps as a collective expression of our desire to be able to do so. The significance of this study is that it will provide a venue for acquiring more knowledge about the experiences of the one receiving trust, the value of which is perhaps so taken for granted that we assume it is understood more than it actually is. Providing time and space for the trusty to speak and represent his experiences may allow him to reflect in a novel way on what it means to be trusted, an emphasis that is often overshadowed if not neglected by the exhortation to trusties to earn by their trustworthiness the full measure of trust that they receive.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to develop intentional awareness of heuristic knowledge related to a husband’s perceptions and experiences, as a trusty, of his partner’s choice to trust him. To put it simply, the purpose is to know more about the perceptions and experience of husbands as the recipients of trust. As stated numerous times, the recipient of trust has been given little attention, placing, as it seems, much of the emphasis on the experiences of the trustor in a relationship. Yet as evidenced in the aforementioned research as well as that to come in Chapter Two, even if indirectly or implicitly, the recipient of trust has a unique, phenomenological perspective on being trusted or on the impact of trust on the relationship as a whole. The experiences of wives notwithstanding, talking with husbands about their experiences is a place to start.

To further clarify the parameters of the study, it will be limited to husbands because the literature points to the possibility that husbands may experience trust in a marriage differently than their wives (Gottman, 2011) and that trust may be experienced differently in marriage as opposed to nonmarital relationships (Larzelere & Huston, 1980). Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, and Rubin (2010) have suggested based on their research that women’s level of trust may have more of an impact than that of men since women usually influence the affective tone of relationships more than men. Studying 99 engaged, married, or divorced couples, Butler (1986) found that male partner trust was best explained by his partner’s trust in him, among other factors. Limiting co-researchers to husbands will also allow for more refined interpretation and identification of themes. Factors such as neurophysiology, culture, and gender-socialization may impact the experience of men and women differently as trusties, particularly within committed, marital relationships. Involving exclusively married men as co-researchers, including the fact
that I as the primary researcher am a married man, will produce results less likely confounded by factors generally unrelated to trust. In other words, the experiences of husbands as trusties will likely be more similar to one another as married men than their experiences may be to that of women. Research on wives’ experience of being trusted is also needed, which will be touched on in Chapter Five.

**Conceptual Framework**

An integrative conceptual framework of various theories, models, and concepts can be utilized to consider the experiences and perceptions of a trusty. In an effort to understand trust, one can start by placing it at the center of multiple layers of theoretical and empirical contributions (see Figure 1.1). This trust flows between two individuals, Person A and Person B, that act as both trustor and trusty simultaneously. Trust between individuals becomes a behavioral manifestation or cognitive attribution of the internal dispositions. Thibaut and Kelley’s (1959) interdependence theory, rooted in social exchange concepts such as personal and relational reward, cost, and profit (Burr, Hill, Nye, & Reiss, 1979; Van Lange & Balliet, 2015), lays a solid theoretical foundation for emphasizing how individuals interdependently seek relational closeness. Within this theory, social interaction, such as a dyadic trust interaction, may be understood as a function of Person A, Person B, and the relational situation \([\text{Interaction} = f(S, A, B)]\) (Van Lange & Balliet, 2015). From this perspective, trust interactions involve not only what is within individuals and what flows between them, but also situational and contextual factors contributing to the trust perceptions and experiences.
The social interaction represented in interdependence theory includes both distal and proximal determinants of social interactions that influence Person A and Person B. Various distal determinants of trust, such as attachment style, personality variables, impulsive trust, and relational commitment, are taken into account, as well as proximal variables such as emotions and cognitions that determine and are determined by the trust interaction (Van Lange & Balliet, 2015). By treating trust interactions as a function, a wide array of individual as well as situational inputs are linked interdependently to determine the interaction outcome; an approach
to understanding trust that arguably integrates intrapersonal as well as interpersonal conceptualizations of trust.

Among the myriad internal, dispositional factors that may influence trust, one’s attachment style and level of differentiation play significant roles in determining how trust is given or received. Building on Bowlby’s (1969) attachment theory principles originally applied to parent-child relationships, Mikulincer (1998) has done research to illuminate some of the associations between attachment and trust in dyadic adult relationships. In his discussion on attachment and trust, Mikulincer (1998) recognizes that trust and intimacy may be reciprocally related in that trust may promote intimacy, and intimacy, in turn, may increase trust. Each individual copes with trust-relevant situations based on his or her attachment style, a trust orientation that is likely to influence both the decision to trust and the experience of being trusted.

Bowen (1966, 1978) and more recently Bartle (1996) and Simpson (2007) demonstrate how differentiation of self can play a role in the mental, emotional, and interpersonal dynamics of an interdependent relationship with strong implications for trusting or being trusted. Differentiation of self emphasizes a healthy balance of relational togetherness and individuality allowing for autonomous choice rather than fusion or enmeshment in one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors (Bowen, 1966; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Nichols & Schwartz, 2004). With this differentiation in mind, the experiences of the trusty may be appropriately conceptualized apart from the trustor’s decision to trust, rather than a fused by-product of the trustworthiness of the trusty. Stated differently, trusting and being trusted can be understood in a balanced, differentiated sense recognizing both a connectedness and separateness in the experiences of the actors involved. The significance of differentiation should not be underestimated. If the
experience of the trustor can be understood both in its connection to as well as separateness from the trusty, then it is reasonable to inquire about its converse, the personal experiences of the trusty as they are connected to as well as separate from the choices of the trustor.

Working outwardly through the concentric layers of the conceptual framework for trust (see Figure 1.1), Murray and Holmes (2011, 2009), along with various other colleagues, have contributed closely related trust dynamic models to further illuminate trust-related tendencies and choices: the motivation management theory of mutual responsiveness and model of risk regulation in close relationships (Cavallo, Fizsimons, Holmes, 2009; Cavallo, Murray, & Holmes, 2014; Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006; Murray, et al., 2011; Murray et al., 2013). Assuming the interdependence explicated by Thibaut and Kelley (1959), these frameworks provide a deeper understanding of personal risk and motivation as well as choices to connect or self-protect. These frameworks also provide the greatest justification for seeing trust as a significant regulatory system for dyadic dependence, commitment, and intimacy. Prior to the development of these models, Wieselquist et al. (1999) developed their model of mutual cyclical growth. This model also captures relational elements such as dependence, commitment, vulnerability, and pro-relationship behavior related to the experience of dyadic trust while incorporating the critical element of transformation of motivation, a process in which immediate self-interest is sacrificed for broader relationship considerations.

Moving further out concentrically in the conceptual framework (see Figure 1.1), Simpson’s dyadic model of trust provides even more explanation for individual dispositional processes and normative relationship components that impact trust. According to Simpson (2007), trust diagnostic situations provide opportunities for trust to develop influenced by dispositional, interpersonal, and situational/contextual factors, harkening back once again to the
foundational interdependence theory laid out in the broader conceptual framework. Without going into unnecessary detail, these influences on trust are conceptual elements necessary to consider in trust interactions between partners when seeking to determine relational outcomes, such as perceptions of trust, perceptions of felt security, and the necessity of entering trust situations together. Moving back toward center, trust, as mentioned earlier, acts as an intrapersonal regulatory system that impacts moment-by-moment, trust-driven interpersonal behaviors (Cavallo et al., 2014). As a whole, this conceptual framework reflects the complex, systemic nature of trust linking intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual (including historical) processes.

Overall, perhaps the conceptual framework is better understood as nested cups fitting inside of each other and relating to each other conceptually, rather than a unidimensional image of concentric circles. Each level, or cup, may be examined individually, yet when all levels are nested together, a more profound understanding of dyadic trust emerges. Also, given that relationships are not static, all of these theories, models, and frameworks contribute to a deepening understanding of various possible relational trajectories into the future as well as retrospective perceptions of one’s relationship history. As can be recognized in the literature, a robust understanding is developing of the perceptions and experiences of trust primarily from the vantage point of the trustor, with strong yet infrequently recognized implications for the perceptions and experiences of the trusty. The relatively neglected perceptions and experiences of the trusty are what the proposed study seeks to address.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study, as is true of all research, is predicated on a certain set of assumptions. These assumptions about trust and its related interactive features are drawn from both empirical and
theoretical literature and set the stage for the proposed heuristic inquiry. The assumptions are as follows: (1) Trust is an essential element in any dyadic relationship, particularly that between husband and wife (Gottman, 2011; Larzelere & Huston, 1980; Wieselquist et al., 1999). (2) Trust is both an internal disposition and a relational experience with personal experiences of trust inextricably linked to the interdependence of marital partners (Cavallo et al., 2014; Miller & Rempel, 2004; Murray & Holmes, 2011; Simpson, 2007). Thus, trust may be examined both intrapersonally and interpersonally. (3) Since trust can be treated as a relational phenomenon, there is value in examining the experiences of both the trustor and trusty, with this study designed to examine the experiences of the trusty exclusively (Gottman, 2011; Murray & Holmes, 2011; Riedl & Javor, 2012; Siegel, 2010; Simpson, 2007; Zak et al., 2004). (4) Finally, knowing more about the experience of what it means to be trusted as a husband can contribute to education, enrichment, and intervention efforts for those seeking to experience maximized relational satisfaction within marriage (Gottman, 2011; Simpson, 2007).

A heuristic inquiry such as this study is as unique as the individuals that participate (Moustakas, 1990). The researcher’s perspective on trust is like no other, and each co-researcher has perceptions and experiences of being trusted that are deeply personal. Since internal, subjective experience, including tacit and intuitive knowledge, is the focus of inquiry, the purpose of the study is not to generalize the findings to any broader population (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2009; Moustakas, 1990). In fact, any attempt to generalize in such a fashion would be a great injustice, a minimizing of the unique personhood of the researcher and co-researchers. Yet trustworthiness of the findings will be maximized as the researcher responsibly and vigilantly engages with the literature, data, and co-researchers throughout the
study and seeks to make the results palatable to prospective readers (Moustakas, 1990). Methods to do so will be explicated further in Chapter Three.

That which is tacitly within us guides and reveals heuristic discovery (Moustakas, 1990). Tacit knowledge is “that internal place where experience, feeling, and meaning join together to form both a picture of the world and a way to navigate that world” (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 60). So, while a limitation of this study is that it will not result in empirical evidence producing positivistic and generalizable results, it will provide a transformative window into the lived experiences of those that participate. This limitation notwithstanding, in many ways this inquiry is limitless as it reaches, through self-inquiry and dialogue, into the “deepest currents of meaning and knowledge” as they relate to the perceptions and experiences of being trusted (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). Once these perceptions and experiences are captured and encapsulated at the conclusion of the study, the transferability of the findings may apply most uniquely to husbands like those in the study, which may in some ways constitute a weakness of the study. Yet the results may provide a springboard for future studies of various other trusty populations.

Finally, understanding the experiences of trusties may provide valuable knowledge, but it will not provide concrete conclusions for how to influence or enhance such experiences. Given trust’s intra- and interpersonal complexity, such conclusions will require further research into how these results may be integrated with previous knowledge on trust or how to identify effective education or intervention toward trust-relevant personal and relational satisfaction.

Significance of the Study

The case has been made that the experience of the trusty has been deemphasized or neglected in the trust literature to date. Given this fact, a somewhat surprising implication is that the proposed study need not go further than asking trusties about their perceptions and
experiences of being trusted. As tempting as it may be to pursue greater complexity, a basic foundation of knowledge related to the trusty must be laid prior to investigating additional, more complex relational experiences such as broken and renewed trust from the trusty’s perspective, the impact the experiences of the trusty may have on the trustor, or the relationship between trustworthiness and the expressed experiences of a trusty. Patience is required so as to not put the fabled cart before the horse in our understanding of the recipient of trust. A number of local, professional, and social change applications may result from a disciplined study of trusties.

The significance of a study on the experiences of trusties becomes increasingly clear when one looks at evidence associating high-trust relationships with increased satisfaction (Evans & Kreuger, 2015). Gottman (2011), in his most recent work on the science of trust, reported how when a husband trusts his wife, her relationship satisfaction is significantly higher; and when she trusts him, he engages in a lot fewer unloving acts. Also, how much a wife trusts her husband correlates strongly to slower blood velocity for both partners, a physiological sign that they feel calm and secure (Gottman, 2011), yet the husband’s trust for his wife does not have the same effect. Here, yet again, we find an example of an effect that trust can have on the recipient, not just on the one doing the trusting. Throughout Gottman’s work on trust, the emphasis, despite these findings, remains almost exclusively on how one partner can facilitate trust in the other. What it means to be trusted gets a scholarly nod and a wink but is ultimately relegated to a position of importance far below that of what it means to be able to trust.

Beyond the benefits trusting has for the one doing the trusting, trust also seems to carry a load of benefits for its recipient. In other words, trust may not primarily be an experience of an individual, but a dyadic phenomenon that provides mutual, even if differing, benefits for those involved. As previously stated, the vast majority of the literature focuses on the definition of
trust or the experience of the one doing the trusting, or the one whose trust has been violated, which neglects the perceptions and experiences of the trusty. The proposed study would take an initial step toward solving this problem by illuminating perceptions and experiences of the co-researchers. Gaining an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of the recipient of trust may provide useful insight for those that wish to receive trust, those that must grapple with giving it, and those that work on helping people restore trust, such as counselors, therapists, or clergy. As Bartle (1996) has suggested, if trust begets trust in a reciprocal or complexly circular fashion, then “this leads to implications for interventions at all levels of relationships” (p. 200). Increased knowledge about the trusty could arm individuals and couples with information to maximize healthy dynamics, such as empathy, decision making, and reconciliation. Furthermore, deeper understanding of the trusty may facilitate equitable treatment of the parties, both prior to and after relational transgressions.

Everyone finds himself or herself on the giving and receiving end of interpersonal trust. Just as Watzlawick, Beavin-Bavelas, and Jackson (1967) believed that an axiom of human communication is that one cannot not communicate, perhaps one also cannot not give or receive trust to some degree. To trust is certainly itself a vulnerable risk worth studying, but studying what it means to be trusted, to be the beneficiary of such a risky gift of trust, may also prove valuable in the scholarly pursuit of knowledge. One of my primary motivations for conducting this study was witnessing trust dynamics and conversations between couples in therapy. The imbalance in the literature toward the experiences of the trustor often seemed reflected in the couples’ discussions about trust as well. Trust is clearly critical to relational health, yet it may be possible that presuppositions and assumptions about how it is perceived and experienced could hinder optimal trust development for couples and optimal assessment and intervention among
professionals. Just as increased knowledge about the trusty could help individuals and couples, such knowledge could help counselors, therapists, and other professionals more competently assist those seeking to develop healthy levels of trust in their relationships.

Chapter Summary

This chapter included an introduction to a proposed study of husbands as trusties, looking at their experiences as recipients of their wives’ trust. Explicated in this chapter were the problem this study addresses, key terms and definitions, the purpose and nature of the study, research questions and objectives, and a conceptual framework supporting and justifying the study; all sufficiently addressed to lay the groundwork for such a study. Last, assumptions, limitations, and significance of the study were discussed. In the next chapter, an extensive review of relevant trust-related empirical literature will be presented that further justifies and undergirds the need for a heuristic study focusing on husbands’ experience of being trusted by their wives.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“Trust is power.”
—Duracell motto 2018

In Chapter One, a case was made for conducting a heuristic study on husbands as the recipients of trust, showing that little attention has been given to recipients in the scholarly literature. A conceptual framework was presented built primarily on Thibaut and Kelley’s (1959) interdependence theory, Mikulincer’s (1998) attachment-based understanding of trust, Bowen’s (1966) concept of differentiation of self, Murray and Holmes’s (2011) model of risk regulation, Wieselquist et al. (1999) model of mutual cyclical growth, and Simpson’s (2007) dyadic model of trust. This conceptual framework grounds this study on the principle that trust in marriage is complex and involves interpersonal issues, such as interdependence and risk regulation, as well as intrapersonal, dispositional issues, such as attachment and differentiation.

In order to provide a historical context and establish the need for this study, Chapter Two focuses on the empirical status of intrapersonal and interpersonal trust in dyadic relationships, including marriage, and clarifies the need for research focusing on the experience of trust for the trusty, particularly for husbands. The experience of the trusty is a missing piece in much of the current literature on marital trust. This literature review provides a critical analysis and synthesis of previous studies based on the aforementioned conceptual framework and therefore is generally organized according the following primary themes: (1) the intrapersonal experiences of the trustor and trusty and (2) the interpersonal experience of trust, with references to studies that directly or indirectly address the experience of the trusty. The literature review will also provide relevant empirical support for the proposed heuristic methodology.

In an effort to obtain the previous empirical literature, various key words and phrases were utilized as academic database search queries, such as: interpersonal trust, marital trust,
relational trust, marriage and trust, interpersonal trust, intrapersonal trust, influences on trust, the practice of trust, the benefits of trust, the experience of trust, and the recipient of trust. These searches were conducted through EBSCO Academic Search Complete, as well as by taking advantage of the search option to choose all databases for possible results. Google Scholar and references from pertinent literature were also used.

A few notable trends became evident in the literature search. First, trust has been traditionally difficult to define, which contributes to an unfortunate lack of clarity and cohesiveness in the trust literature (Evans & Krueger, 2015; Rempel et al., 1985; Simpson, 2007; Wieselquist et al., 1999). Second, the preponderance of trust research was conducted in the last 45 years or so when trust, within the social science literature, became relatively more clearly defined (Evans & Krueger, 2015; Larzalere & Huston, 1980; Rempel et al., 1985; Simpson, 2007). Third, in efforts to understand interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences of trust, nearly all studies emphasize either the experiences of the trustor or the interpersonal dynamics that ensue when trust becomes a relational goal (Murray, Derrick, Leder, & Holmes, 2008; Rempel et al., 1985; Shallcross & Simpson, 2012; Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994). Even when the recipient of trust is considered an interdependent actor in the exchange of trust, the trusty’s experiences and interests tended to be minimized (e.g., Larzalere & Huston, 1980; Rempel et al., 2010; Riedl & Javor, 2012; Wieselquist et al., 1999). This observation clarified the need for a study that focused on the experience of trusties, or the recipients of trust.

This review of empirical literature parses the experience of trust in a way that oversimplifies its nature yet is necessary for organization and understanding. One of the reasons trust is so complex is that it must be understood both in relational terms and as a personal perspective within an individual, influenced by numerous factors, including time. The past
clearly influences trust, not just by way of evidence of dependability, but in how it influences one’s memories, perceptions, and anticipated future (Luchies et al., 2013; Miller & Rempel, 2004; Rempel et al., 2010; Simpson, 2007). One’s present interactions are inextricably linked to memories of the past and thoughts about the future, even to the extent that present thoughts and feelings may alter memories, in essence changing history in the mind of the individual (Bartle, 1996; Gottman, 2011). Trust also launches one into a risky, unknown future that may take on predicted, anticipated, believed, or expected characteristics that have not yet happened or may never happen. Arguably, trust provides a bulwark of security within space and time, built up or torn down as the past, present, and future constantly collide. This complexity and multiplicity are what make trust challenging to define and study.

Before proceeding further into an explication of relevant research, the operational definition of dyadic trust is presented, as it appears in Chapter One. This definition incorporates trust’s multifaceted nature and is applicable to all or nearly all approaches to its study. The operational definition of trust for this study is: a situationally and relationally influenced personal disposition toward one’s partner that informs one’s view of the past as well as one’s present and future-oriented regulation of interpersonal risk, manifesting in trust-related actions, reactions, and interactions. As time and various interactions unfold, perceptual proclivities and behavioral propensities develop—the intrapersonal dimensions of trust. In this section intrapersonal processes that produce various perceptual tendencies will be examined, including empirical support for the existence of such tendencies.

At numerous points throughout the following literature review, the Trust Game is noted as a part of the methodology of many trust research studies. Berg et al. (1995) designed the now famous two-person Trust Game to study trust and reciprocity in an investment setting, and it has
become one of the most utilized measures for evaluating the behaviors and attitudes of trustors and trusties in various fields of study. In the game, Player 1 decides to give a certain amount of money to Player 2, knowing that Player 2 will have the option of giving money back. Both players theoretically trying to maximize what they have left after the exchanges (see Berg et al., 1995 for the Trust Game procedure). The amount given by Player 1 was originally interpreted as a manifestation of trust and the amount returned or reciprocated by Player 2 as a manifestation of trustworthiness or reciprocal trust. As will become evident in what follows, on occasion these initial interpretations have been refined and reinterpreted based on the results of subsequent research studies.

**The Intrapersonal Experience of the Trustor in Relation to the Trusty**

In the following section, various aspects of the intrapersonal experience of trust are considered, including trust as a regulatory system; impulsive and reflective trust; personal motives, values, and goals; trust and attachment; trust and differentiation of self; and additional individual dispositions and attributions. Given the emphasis within the literature on the experiences of the trustor, possible implications of the research for the trusty are considered, providing a rationale for this study.

**Trust as a Regulatory System**

Trust is a critical intrapersonal disposition impacting and impacted by interpersonal dynamics. Recently, Cavallo et al. (2014), seeking to incorporate previous trust research, described trust or distrust as a regulatory system used to reconcile the tension between approach-oriented connection goals and avoidance-oriented self-protection goals within a relationship. Incorporating both dispositional and relational dynamics, this regulatory system helps one assess for interpersonal safety or a lack thereof. Cavallo et al. describe internalized rules used to make
these decisions, one of which is: If one’s partner is accepting, then connect; if not accepting, then distance (i.e., protect oneself). If a partner complies with one’s desire for acceptance, then trust increases. The fact that trust may constitute such a critical intrapersonal regulatory system is central to an understanding of trust and demonstrates how interpersonal and intrapersonal trust determinants intersect.

Shining a spotlight on intrapersonal aspects of trust helps to reveal how trust is not simply the consequence of a trusty’s behavior. Cavallo et al. (2014) state that cognitive and behavioral strategies may be used to cast aside concerns about the breaking of the acceptance rule, as well as other risk-regulation rules. This possibility of intentional or reflective override is a critically important contribution to a definition of trust that includes the fact that one’s trust disposition is influenced by relational interactions but not determined by them. Risk regulation thoughts and actions may be unconscious, or reflexive, but they may also be consciously or reflectively chosen, influenced in part by one’s degree of interdependence, attachment, and differentiation; intrapersonal determinants that will be considered later. These facts become particularly relevant in looking at the experience of the trusty, who is not merely the causative agent of the trustor’s trust, but also the recipient of trust-based decisions that the trustor makes.

**Impulsive and Reflective Trust**

In an effort to illuminate the multifaceted nature of trust, Wilson et al. (2000) introduced the dual-attitude model of trust. As discussed in Chapter One, they argue that implicit and explicit attitudes toward the same object can coexist within one’s memory. Implicit attitudes have an unknown origin, activate automatically outside of awareness, and influence implicit responses beyond one’s control. Explicit attitudes are purposefully retrieved from memory, relate to experiences one is consciously aware of, and influence actions over which one has more
control. Explicit attitudes can change quickly and easily based on new circumstances and experiences, whereas implicit attitudes tend to persist and change slowly. There has been little research done to support this unique distinction as it pertains to trust, yet it corresponds rather logically with Murray et al.’s (2004) dual-process model of impulsive and reflective trust, introduced in Chapter One.

Murray et al. (2011) conducted a fascinating series of six related studies meant to illuminate impulsive and reflective trust. In the first two studies involving the subliminal conditioning of college students’ thoughts in relation to their partner, Murray et al. (2011) found evidence that associating positive words with a partner’s name, even if not consciously noticed, was associated with increased reflective trust in that partner, as well as an increased sense of closeness. Of equal importance is that such priming did not appear to influence one’s assessment of a partner’s general desirability. In the third and fourth studies in this series, Murray et al. found that participants high in impulsive trust not only were more willing to enter situations in which a partner may be more selfish or nonresponsive, but they also were less likely to be self-protective from a partner they perceived as rejecting. In the fifth and sixth studies, they found that aspects of working memory (i.e., reflective trust) and impulsive trust levels worked together to influence approach or withdrawal tendencies. Those low on impulsive trust and short on working memory (i.e., cognitively taxed) distanced themselves from a rejecting partner, and were slow to identify positive traits and fast to identify negative traits. But those high in impulsive trust and short on working memory approached a rejecting partner, and were faster to identify positive traits and slower to identify negative traits.

Of particular interest in this series of studies is the knowledge of how impulsive trust may interact with both reflective trust and working memory capacity. Among the authors’
conclusions is that low impulsive trust and depleted working memory may disrupt the benefits of higher reflective trust, even as a partner may present as trustworthy and responsive. These results lend a great deal of support to the idea that trusting a partner has to do with what is occurring both consciously and unconsciously within a trustor and may be only loosely related to the characteristics and actions of a trusty. If such is the case, understanding more about how the trusty experiences the behavior this produces in a trustor may be of great value.

In a similar vein to impulsive and reflective trust, Falvello, Vinson, Ferrari, and Todorov (2015) looked at how first impressions of faces may influence one’s formation of trust. They presented 100 to 500 faces to 34 male Princeton students, each face paired with positive, neutral, or negative behavior descriptions, and for only four and a half seconds each. A sample of those faces was shown again to the participants, without a corresponding behavioral description, and the participants were then asked to judge the trustworthiness of the person. They found that faces previously paired with positive and neutral behavioral descriptions were quickly recognized and deemed more trustworthy; faces with negative descriptions were deemed more untrustworthy, even though the faces and descriptions had only been seen once, were among anywhere from 100 to 500 faces, and had only been paired with a single behavioral act. Faces paired with negative behaviors also seemed to create a larger inference effect. Falvello et al. interpreted this to mean that negative behaviors left a stronger impression on the participants, leading them to recall it more readily and with more certainty than the positive or neutral behaviors.

Chang, Doll, van ’t Wout, Frank, and Sanfey (2010) also looked at how trustworthiness of faces impacts the decision to trust. They presented sets of faces previously judged as trustworthy or untrustworthy to 61 undergraduate students in the initial investment position of
the aforementioned *Trust Game*. Participants saw faces that they assumed were their partners and then decided how much of an initial allotment of $10 they would give to the partners. The researchers manipulated the partners’ reciprocity to represent high reciprocity or low reciprocity, or high or low amount given back. After multiple trials per participant, Chang et al. found that facial trustworthiness did influence participants’ initial investment amount, indicating that trustworthy faces may lead one to predict or expect more reciprocity. In addition, the researchers also discovered that in repeated trials, experience of reciprocity or a lack thereof quickly overrode one’s initial prediction based on facial trustworthiness. In other words, experiencing generous reciprocity led one to invest more in subsequent rounds, even with those that had untrustworthy faces. Chang et al. concluded that while fast automatic judgments of trustworthiness do appear to occur as a risk belief, akin to impulsive trust, experiences of trustworthy behavior by a partner may override such judgments rather quickly, akin to reflective trust.

Similarly, DeBruine (2002) conducted a creative study in which he took 40% of a participant’s face and digitally morphed it with 60% of an unknown face to produce a partner in the *Trust Game*. In his trials with 24 college students at an Ontario university, he found that participants trusted partners who resembled themselves in the *Trust Game* significantly more than they trusted other opponents, but they did not reward trusting moves by their partner any differently. Falvello et al.’s (2015), Chang et al.’s (2010), and DeBruine’s results complement Winston, Strange, O’Doherty, and Dolan’s (2002) discovery that subjects’ brain activity changed when judging a face as untrustworthy versus trustworthy. Activity in the amygdala, orbitofrontal cortex, right insula, and superior temporal sulcus was associated with visual judgments of untrustworthy faces, activity that may indicate the brain’s preconscious processing of possible
threat and the intentionality of others (i.e., impulsive trust). Falvello et al.’s, DeBruine’s, Chang et al.’s, and Winston et al.’s research combined indicates that one’s trust is influenced by factors outside of one’s conscious awareness, resulting in relatively impulsive trust-related behaviors in response to something as simple as the appearance of a partner’s face. Given that these studies were conducted with strangers as partners (or a stranger’s face morphed with one’s own), this is further evidence that a trusty may experience behaviors from one’s partner that are not unique to his relationship dynamics.

**Personal Motives, Values, and Goals**

Personal motives may also influence one’s experience of trust. McClintock (1972) proposed a set of motives for trusting that included: one’s own gain maximization, joint gain maximization, and other’s gain maximization, among other combinations of the above. McClintock recognized in this early theoretical work that joint gain maximization and other’s gain maximization allowed for the most trust in another person. Stated another way, collaboration and other-orientation paid dividends in the form of an increase in one’s personal trust. Deutsch (1973) speculated that trust resulted from a host of motivations that could include despair, social conformity, innocence, impulsiveness, virtue, masochism, faith, confidence, or a desire for risk-taking. Regardless of the type of motivation, Deutsch believed that an overriding motivation is self-interest. Even when virtue is the motivation, Deutsch thought that choosing to trust may be primarily to affirm one’s personal core values. Faith, while appearing other-centered, may motivate trust in the hope that one may personally never experience dreaded consequences of a lack of trustworthiness. Given the findings of studies that will be discussed later, in some respects and under certain conditions, he may have been quite accurate in his
assertions of such self-interested motives. Unfortunately, Deutsch did not include a form of motivation that involves sincere interest in the other’s well-being.

Simpson (2007), in his dyadic model of trust discussed in Chapter One, suggests that personal, moral, and structural goals and motives may come into play when deciding to trust. One may trust knowing that one is loved and cared for, knowing that one’s partner is morally committed to his or her promises, or knowing that the partner’s other relationships and possessions may be damaged if he or she does not fulfill promises or obligations. As insightful as Simpson’s ideas are, other-centered goals and motivations are not seriously considered in his recent work, as it was in McClintock’s much earlier work. In many ways, other-centered interpretations of motives appear to have fallen out of favor in the literature over the last couple of decades. The prospect is rarely if ever mentioned that one may trust as an other-centered act of love, with little to no self-interest involved. Yet this possibility as a motive for trusting must be considered alongside other more self-interest motives as a foundation for studying the effects that trust may have on a trusty.

In a series of six studies conducted with Cornell University students, Dunning et al. (2014) examined whether trust behavior could be a norm-driven behavior and whether, if so, this norm involves respect for the trusty’s character. In a meta-analysis of the data from these six studies, all of which utilized some form of the Trust Game, they found that trust was neither completely instrumental nor consequentialist in nature. People appeared to trust more than what one would expect because it was what they felt they should do and a way for them to avoid negative feelings associated with being less trusting, a finding consistent with Deutsch’s (1973) theoretical speculation decades earlier. The choice to trust was associated with positive feelings, but there was a stronger association between trust and the avoidance of emotions such as guilt.
and anxiety. In terms of respect for the trusty’s character as an influence, Dunning et al.’s final two studies indicated that trusting behavior was driven by the wish to avoid showing disrespect for the character of their interaction partners. In other words, trust was not related to treating the trusty’s character as a prerequisite for trusting, instead trust was considered what one should do as a respectful choice; a decision that could be interpreted as self- and/or other-centered.

The aforementioned discoveries about a trustor’s motives are consistent with the results of a Trust Game study by Yamagishi et al. (2015) in which they found that trust-related decisions were based on beliefs about trustworthiness as well as preferences for being a trustful person. Of particular interest is the fact that some of the data from these studies indicated that the decision to trust was driven more by an internal, moral standard than an external, societal norm. At times, even when the participant believed that others would not trust or trust would not be expected of them, he or she still chose to trust. Add to this the fact that the social expectation that appeared to have the greatest impact on the choice to trust was the expectation that the other person would reciprocate, and one may conclude that a decision to trust involves one’s personal moral convictions as well as the expectation that the trusty will also act with moral integrity.

To add to the complexity of understanding trustor motives, Ben-Ner and Halldorsson (2010) studied the motives of undergraduate students at the University of Minnesota and found that the amount sent by Player 1 in the Trust Game related only to unconditional kindness as opposed to various other possible attitudes and views that could have exerted an influence, such as risk attitudes, optimism, or faith in God. They also found that for trusties, the amount sent back by Player 2 did not relate to the amount sent by the trustor or to any reciprocity variables measured but instead to a sense of obligation to reward the trustor’s investment. Buchan, Croson, and Solnick (2008), using the Trust Game (which they called the Investment Game) with
754 undergraduate economics and business students, also found that the norm of obligation was a significant motivator behind trustworthiness and trusting alike. While this motivation is discussed here as an intrapersonal determinant, it arguably could be framed as an exogenous variable that is internalized as a contributor to the decision to trust. Still left to the imagination is how a trusty might experience trust rooted in such motivations.

In the literature, trust that may appear on the surface as somewhat other-centered may in actuality be quite self-centered, confounding both an understanding of the trustor as well as the possible experiences of a trusty. Studying general, attitudinal trust, or an individual’s belief-based assessment about the trustworthiness of other people, Yamagishi et al. (2015) found that pro-sociality of participants mediated the correlation found between an attitudinal measure of general trust and behavioral trust. Their participants seemed to prefer trusting, not as a means to a consequentialist end (i.e., what he, she, or the partner could get out of it) but out of a preference for being a trustful person and acting in a trustful way. Yamagishi et al. define “preference for trust” as “the satisfaction people derive from acting in a trustful manner and being a trustful person—that is, to have a self-identity as a trustful person” (p. 455) and suggest that more research needs to be done on this nonconsequentialist aspect of trust. If such a preference for trust exists as a motivator, then the trusty could be impacted by the manifestations of such a motive apart from the results of his or her personal trustworthiness.

**Trust and Attachment**

Another intrapersonal disposition and internal form of motivation in the decision to trust is one’s attachment style or working model. Bowlby’s (1973) attachment theory suggests that one’s attachment working models are formed through interactions with attachment figures, particularly early in life. These working models function throughout life to organize cognition,
affect, and behavior in close relationships. These concepts are easily integrated with the aforementioned discoveries about impulsive and reflective trust as well as motivations that reside within the trustor. For example, self-esteem, as an intrapersonal disposition, is a mediator between attachment and rejection sensitivity (Ishaq & Anis-ul-Haque, 2015), dispositional gratitude (Zhang, Zhang, Yang, & Li, 2017), and trust (Cavallo et al., 2014; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000), as well as a moderator between attachment orientation and subjective well-being (Li & Zheng, 2014). The significance of self-esteem as it relates to interpersonal risk regulation will be discussed in more detail later as it appears to be strongly associated with both attachment and risk regulation, and ultimately trust. Altogether, attachment plays a significant role in one’s decision to trust.

In a relatively early study looking at the relationship between attachment and interpersonal trust, Fuller and Fincham (1995) obtained conflicting results about the relationship between attachment and trust, depending on what measure of attachment was utilized. For example, using Hazan and Shaver’s (1987) categorical measure, an association between insecure attachment style and lower levels of trust was somewhat supported for husbands, but not wives. When Bartholomew’s (1990) dimensional measure was used, the opposite was true with attachment style and trust strongly associated, but not for husbands. These results are worth noting early in this discussion given that a great deal of attachment research uses one or both of these measures (e.g., Fuller & Fincham, 1995; Keelan, Dion, & Dion, 1994; Mikulincer, 1998). The review of attachment-related studies that follows should be interpreted with the knowledge that the type of attachment measure used in a study may influence the results (Fraley, Hudson, Heffernan, & Segal, 2015; Ravitz, Maunder, Hunter, S thankiya, & Lancee, 2010).
Mikulincer is a leading researcher of attachment style and attachment working models in adult relationships and has studied the relationship between attachment working models and the sense of trust. In a mixed-method study of college students in which self-reported attachment style was related to written comments about attachment-related memories, Mikulincer (1998) found that those that were secure had more accessible memories of trust-validation episodes, or instances with significant others that engendered trust. He also found that avoidant and anxious-ambivalent individuals accessed trust-violation episode memories more readily. Secure individuals reacted more emotionally to positive trust-related memories; anxious reacted to positive and negative memories; and avoidant showed little reaction to either.

In a second study with the same college students, Mikulincer (1998) found that secure individuals reported more trust in their relationships than insecure individuals. These findings are consistent with an earlier study by Keelan et al. (1994) in which the maintenance of trust for one’s partner over time was associated with attachment security among a sample of 137 college students. In addition, Mikulincer (1998) found that self-reported attachment style was related to relationship goals as they pertained to pursuing personal or relationship benefits or dealing with trust-violation events. Secure individuals focused on intimacy increase and constructive communication respectively; anxious-ambivalent on security seeking and ruminative worry; and avoidant on control attainment and distancing. In a similar third study, secure persons reported the highest number of trust-validation events whereas insecure reported the highest number of trust-violation events. In two final studies with the same population, Mikulincer reported that in response to various types of prompts, secure individuals responded most quickly to the words intimacy and talk; avoidant to intimacy, control, escape and worry; and anxious-ambivalent to intimacy, security, talk, and worry. These results clearly point to a sensitive, internal working
model of self and relationship of self to other that may be stimulated by something as simple as a relationship-oriented word. If such is the case, the experiences of a trusty must be more fully understood as an adult object of attachment.

Built on the model of risk regulation discussed in Chapter One, Khalifian and Barry (2016) studied the association among attachment, trust, and mindfulness. Given the choice between safety and vulnerability, self-protection or connection, they were interested in finding out whether mindfulness could increase one’s ability to regulate emotional distress during trust-relevant interactions. Higher mindfulness, they suggested, may allow one to be more engaged in the present moment while having difficult discussions remaining more connected to a partner, while lower mindfulness may lead to distraction from the moment, disengagement, and concomitant desire to protect oneself. What they found is that higher attachment avoidance and lower trust led to lower intimacy, yet higher attachment avoidance and higher trust led to higher intimacy. Counterintuitively, high trust in a partner seemed to buffer the influence of higher attachment avoidance. In terms of mindfulness, Khalifian and Barry’s findings suggested that higher trust in a partner buffers the impact of lower mindfulness. In addition, Khalifian and Barry found that more anxiously attached husbands experienced higher disengagement; perhaps counterintuitive as well. They suggested that anxious individuals may suppress emotions out of fear of rejection and abandonment, a suggestion consistent with Righetti et al.’s (2015) discovery that those low in trust tend to suppress emotions, which will be addressed more later. Perhaps the most relevant findings to the proposed study were that individuals experienced higher intimacy when trusted by their spouses, and individuals experienced lower intimacy with higher avoidance spouses. The discovery of this partner effect led these researchers to suggest that
more research is necessary to understand attachment, trust, and how partners may influence each other’s experience; research that the proposed study will seek to address.

Cumulatively, these results reveal a clear relationship between one’s attachment working model and one’s trust-related memories, experiences, goals, and coping strategies. Taken as a whole, secure individuals appear to prioritize intimacy increase; avoidant individuals prioritize control attainment; and anxious individuals prioritize security seeking. Within reason is the possibility that secure individuals elicit events that validate trust or choose to remember events as such, regardless of how others may objectively assess such events. Also reasonable to consider is that insecure individuals may elicit trust-violation events or remember events as such even if they were not so. These findings demonstrate how one’s memory retrieval and emotional experience in the present may be influenced by trust-related prompts, revealing an influence on trust that falls outside of the immediate relationship dynamics. Particularly relevant to this study is evidence that trust can be influenced by factors originating in the past, perhaps triggered by a trust-relevant interaction in the present, thus affecting the experiences of a trusty outside of his or her control. Trust, as Mikulincer (1998) suggests, may act not only as a response to a partner but also a “secure base” from which one may risk vulnerability and develop additional trust-related attitudes and actions. Mikulincer also observed that secure individuals appeared to be more capable of pursuing partner well-being rather than being a passive recipient of care and comfort. These are profound assertions! Within reason, then, is the possibility that just as loving actions spring forth from a loving internal disposition toward a partner, regardless of merit earned by the partner and involving inherent risk, trust may spring forth from a trusting internal disposition toward a partner, regardless of merit and despite inherent risk. Perhaps a secure attachment style allows one to more readily choose the more vulnerable and risky path of trusting one’s partner,
not only from a place of less anxiety but also a place of more love and care for the trusty. The impact on the trusty is certainly worth investigating.

**Trust and Differentiation of Self**

If attachment working model is closely related to one’s level of trust, then it is clear that one’s family of origin experience may have a profound impact on trust. A central concept from Bowen’s family systems theory that further illuminates this family of origin influence is the *differentiation of self*. As discussed in Chapter One, high differentiation of self indicates a greater capacity to be in close emotional contact with a partner without having one’s thoughts, emotions, and behaviors overly influenced by those of the partner. One can be both separate and connected in a way that fosters personal and relational health. Conversely, a lack of sufficient self-differentiation may inhibit interactions that can develop stronger trust (Ryder & Bartle, 1991). Bowen (1966, 1978) identified differentiation within the self and in relationships (Kerr, 1984). Often a lack of separation within oneself between emotional and cognitive functioning is reflected in a lack of differentiation in close relationships, and vice versa. Despite their logical and theoretical association, little research has been done linking differentiation of self to trust.

With these ideas about differentiation and family of origin in mind, Bartle (1996) designed a study to investigate the impact of family-of-origin experience and self-disclosure on relational trust. Given her family systems theoretical orientation, she hypothesized that, in addition to family-of-origin internalized influences, partner trust would be a circular rather than linear process in which partner trust development and dynamics would reflect an interdependent, ongoing process. Bartle measured trust, self-disclosure, and behavioral and emotional reactivity of the members of 53 established couples within a university community. Presented to participants by way of personalized scenarios in a behavioral and emotional reactivity
instrument, Bartle found that high emotional reactivity to events involving one’s parents was associated with a lower level of trust in one’s partner at the time of the study, and vice versa; particularly for men. While this association was not as strong for women, women who were comfortable with self-disclosing were better able to trust their partners, an association that did not hold true for men. Bartle suggested that if one’s present emotional reactivity to a scenario involving one’s parents can be interpreted as an indicator of differentiation, then men, in particular, may struggle with a sense of fusion (or a lack of differentiation) in intimate relationships. Thus, trust would prove even more risky than usual given the fused nature of one’s personal sense of well-being with the thoughts, feelings, and actions of a significant other. If Bartle is correct, differentiation of self may have a profound impact not only on the trustor’s willingness to trust, but on the trusty’s experience as he or she contends with the level of differentiation of one’s partner as well as his or her own level of differentiation.

Perhaps one of the most significant discoveries from Bartle’s (1996) study was the lack of a significant relationship between partners’ trust levels. In other words, her analysis did not confirm the idea that trust in one partner simply begets trust in the other. This is significant in that, theoretically, past and present relationship experiences may create a “filter through which all relationships are perceived, regardless of the ‘reality’ of a particular relationship” (Bartle, 1996, p. 208). A person’s relationship expectations, influenced by one’s past family-of-origin experiences, may exert a greater influence on one’s ability to trust, regardless of a trusty’s actual behavior in the present.

Overall, little research has been done as it pertains to the relationship between trust and differentiation of self. The proposed heuristic study seeks to illuminate husbands’ experiences of being trusted to not only understand the experiences but also lay a foundation for further
research. This study may shine further light on what appears to be an important relationship between trust and differentiation.

**Additional Personal Dispositions and Attributions**

Various other personal dispositions and attributions of others that do not fit as logically into previous headings may influence the experience of trust. The perception of time or time itself may impact trust dynamics. For example, Sutter and Kocher (2007) studied 662 participants from six different age groups in Austria and the Netherlands using the *Trust Game*. They found that trust is significantly higher in adult age groups than among children and adolescents. Campbell et al. (2010) suggest that a core component of trust is the stability of relationship evaluations across time. In a series of three studies—two diary studies, one involving a videotaped conflict discussion, and a computer-based reaction time task—Campbell et al. found that more trust was associated with less variability in relationship quality over time. Less trusting was associated with greater negative reactivity to daily conflict, corresponding to the belief that such conflict forecasted a more destructive future for the relationship. Subsequently, those who perceived more variability day to day also behaved more destructively during conflict discussions. All of these effects remained when neuroticism and mean level of relationship quality were statistically controlled. Of particular interest to the proposed study is that men who were involved with more trusting partners reported more stable relationship quality across time, independent of their own level of trust, a result that did not hold true for women. These results suggest that a short-term perspective versus a long-term perspective on the relationship can have a profound impact on trust-related beliefs and behaviors, and being trusted can affect men’s relationship quality in a unique way.
One’s desired level of certainty in life may have an impact on trust as well. In a study of 77 married couples, Sorrentino et al. (1995) found that uncertainty orientation and certainty orientation are associated with one’s experience of trust. An uncertainty-oriented person seeks to learn from new information when there is uncertainty about the self and environment, whereas a certainty-oriented person avoids situations that may present new or inconsistent information. Sorrentino et al. found that certainty-oriented men and women found moderate trust to be an aversive state, with low and high trust much more comfortable. The certainty-oriented were prone to tapping into preexisting beliefs about their relationships to manage present ambiguities and discomfort. Uncertainty-oriented individuals were much more influenced in their beliefs and feelings by daily interactions and were far less concerned about occasional mixed feelings. Uncertainty-oriented women with low trust were the least satisfied and affectionate with their partners given, in part and ironically, their willingness to attend to and assimilate any ongoing trust-related conflicts. Certainty-oriented individuals, particularly women, appeared to be unusually satisfied in low-trust relationships, due in part to the fact that the reality of their situation was free from ambiguity. Thus, paradoxically, low trust may lead to more satisfaction and affection for those that are certainty-oriented, and a relationship may be unsatisfying for those more attuned to uncertainty. This contradicts the belief that certainty-oriented individuals would always want to be sure their partners could be trusted, and uncertainty-oriented individuals would perhaps not be as concerned with day-to-day trust issues.

Rempel et al. (1985) conducted what is perhaps one of the most revealing studies when it comes to dispositions and attributional patterns in close relationships. In their study of 47 married, cohabiting, and dating couples in Ontario, Canada, they found that faith, or the belief that one’s partner will act in loving and caring ways whatever the future may hold, was the most
important aspect of trust. This faith of the trustor was also strongly correlated with one’s love for a partner. Furthermore, one’s faith strongly correlated with seeing a partner as intrinsically motivated to invest in the relationship. As is most often the case, the researchers tended toward an interpretation that attributed order or causation with intrinsic motivation of the trusty leading to more faith in the trustor, which would subsequently produce more love in the trustor. But the correlations could be interpreted differently. Equally feasible is the possibility that the love of the trustor could produce more faith, which when perceived by the trusty could produce more intrinsic motivation. In addition to these correlations, the love of the trustor was also strongly correlated to his or her own intrinsic motivation. Perhaps intrinsic motivation may lead one to lovingly invest in the relationship, communicating faith in the partner, which in turn could increase interactions that build trust. Given that this research was correlational in nature, it leaves open the possibility that what is true of the trustor may produce an effect in the trusty, which then reciprocally influences the level of trust in the trustor; more reason to investigate the experiences of the trusty.

Research into the biology of trust provides some compelling evidence for this trustor effect on the trusty. This is a relatively new area of study that has already provided some fascinating discoveries about trust, but its presentation here will be limited out of necessity. Nasally administered oxytocin has been shown to increase trust in humans (Kosfeld, Heinrichs, Zak, Fischbacher, & Fehr, 2005), unless the subject is aware that his or her trust has been perpetually breached (Baumgartner, Heinrichs, Vonlanthen, Fischbacher, & Fehr, 2008). Of particular relevance to this study is the fact that a study by Zak et al. (2005) revealed that when people are trusted, their brains release oxytocin, which predicts increased trustworthiness. Combined, these results demonstrate how exogenous oxytocin may produce more trust, which in
turn stimulates endogenous oxytocin in the trusty, which is related to increased trustworthiness. Logically, this could further increase endogenous oxytocin in the trustor, producing a positive feedback loop of trust and trustworthiness. Furthermore, this increase in oxytocin for both participants has been shown to enhance dopamine levels, increase synaptic serotonin, and inhibit amygdala excitatory information, making the interactions rewarding for those involved while experiencing a sense of calm and decreased fear, all while exerting their influence in an automatic, intuitive, and unconscious way (Riedl & Javor, 2012).

If trust involves risk, and risk can involve fear of the unknown, then distrust could logically involve a certain level of fear. Vinkers et al. (2010) studied 188 married, newlywed couples in the Netherlands to investigate a possible connection between partner disclosure, trust, and intrusive behavior, such as covertly reading e-mail or overtly and excessively meddling with a partner’s affairs. They found that trust can decrease the amount of intrusive behavior. Trust moderated the association between perceived low disclosure from a partner and intrusive behavior. Low disclosure, or rigid personal boundaries, may lead to doubt about a partner’s benevolence and honesty, and that doubt could be associated with fear. While Vinkers et al. could not explain the reasons behind this moderating effect, they speculated that trusting a partner may lead to more optimistic inferences about a partner’s lack of disclosure or lead to more constructive approaches to doubt and relational dissatisfaction. Such trust certainly benefits the trustor, but it clearly may benefit the trusty as well. Intrusive behavior tends to inhibit intimacy by increasing uncertainty in a relationship (Knobloch, 2008; Knobloch & Solomon, 2002). As indicated in this study, a lack of trust may lead one to act intrusively to reduce fear associated with uncertainty and doubt. Such behavior, while only one possible manifestation of a lack of trust, is bound to decrease intimacy in part due to the response of the
trusty to such violations. Furthermore, as indicated in this study, intrusive behavior is not merely a consequence of untrustworthy actions of a trusty but a behavioral choice of a partner that lacks trust. Untrustworthy behavior may certainly contribute to a degradation of trust, but it does not necessarily cause intrusive behavior that may diminish the relational satisfaction of both partners. According to this study, trust toward a trusty, despite potential untrustworthiness hidden by a lack of disclosure, may lead a partner to act in a more pro-relationship manner.

This section of the literature review has covered important aspects of the intrapersonal experience of the trustor and trusty. These experiences included trust as a regulatory system; impulsive and reflective trust; personal motives, values, and goals; trust and attachment; trust and differentiation of self; and a few additional related personal dispositions and attributions. What follows is a discussion of literature pertaining to the interpersonal experience of trust.

**The Interpersonal Experience of Trust**

In Robert Sternberg’s (1986) Triangular Theory of Love, trust is considered a significant aspect of intimacy. Erikson (1950) identified the ability to trust others as “the first task of the ego” (p. 221), a necessary precursor for successful adult relationships. Bowlby (1969) considered trust a critical element of a secure attachment. Trust has been understood, whether the focus of empirical enquiry or not, both as a personal attribute and a relational phenomenon predicated on dyadic interdependence. As stated earlier, it is challenging to parse the intrapersonal from the interpersonal components and experiences of trust. Doing so inevitably risks reducing a highly complex relational dynamic down to its constituent parts. Yet studying the various components of trust is necessary to seek understanding, just as it is necessary to look uniquely at the experiences of husbands as trusties. Broadening the lens to consider more processes rooted in relational interdependence also risks losing sight of the individual,
intrapersonal components. Yet the broader lens is necessary to contextualize the intrapersonal experiences. There is value in inquiring with trusties about their individual experiences of being trusted, as well as value in considering those experiences within the context of broader relational dynamics. In what follows, empirical studies will be examined that illuminate various interpersonal trust components of this dyadic interdependence, including love and commitment; motivation management; general risk attitudes and reciprocity; risk regulation and self-esteem; and relationship developmental trajectory.

**Love and Commitment**

As stated earlier, an interpersonal or dyadic emphasis in the literature is a relatively recent development. As the sophistication of trust research grew, so did its ability to analyze how trust relates to interdependence, love, and commitment between partners. Larzelere and Huston (1980) developed the Dyadic Trust Scale, built in part on their effort to synthesize and clarify previous definitions and studies of trust. Seeking to establish a valid and reliable trust scale, they also looked at the relationship between trust and love. In a study of 195 dating participants and 127 married participants, Larzelere and Huston found that dyadic trust and love were strongly correlated. Expecting to find that Partner A’s trust would correlate strongly with Partner B’s love, they instead found that Partner A’s trust in Partner B was more strongly associated with Partner A’s love for Partner B. They suggested that perhaps as one’s trust grows so does his or her love; or as trust erodes so does love. Not considered was an equally plausible interpretation that as one’s love grows so does one’s trust, which could also explain the correlation they discovered. Assuming that trust must be a prerequisite for increased love, a causal sequence their study could not establish, could result in the erroneous conclusion that one’s love for one’s partner is predicated on the partner’s trustworthiness. The real-world
implications of such a conclusion could have a profound impact on a trusty as he or she carries an unreasonably heavy burden of responsibility not only for one’s partner’s level of trust, but the partner’s level of love as well. This would seem to inevitably impact the experiences of a husband as he is trusted by his wife, a possibility that this study may illuminate.

Larzelere and Huston (1980) also discovered a curvilinear pattern of correlations between love and trust as related to the depth of the relationship over time. The strongest correlations were among exclusively dating and longer married couples, whereas the weakest correlations were among engaged, cohabiting, and newlywed couples. Larzelere and Huston put forth a tentative interpretation that this pattern could have to do with attributional patterns by the individuals involved. In other words, the individuals would trust as an effect of how they were thinking or feeling about the relationship at the time, such as hope for a secure future while dating or expectation of a secure future after being married longer. Thus, a stronger correlation was found between love and trust during these points in the development of the relationship. On the other hand, one may not have as much confidence in such a future if cohabiting or if making the transition to marriage, thus weakening the correlation between trust and love, regardless of the extent of love one has for a partner or the evident trustworthiness of a partner. Given that Larzelere and Huston conclude that dyadic trust is an important aspect of intimacy, it stands to reason that an understanding of both parties, not just the trustor, could provide a more complete understanding of this intimacy.

In an effort to study the relationship among trust, dependence, and commitment, Wieselquist et al. (1999) conducted two longitudinal studies. The first was with 53 couples, most dating but some engaged or married, over a 10-week period of time. Data gathered at the beginning, midpoint, and 10-week marks included a questionnaire, inventory, and open-ended
question responses. The second study involved 65 exclusively married couples over a 12-month period. Couples completed questionnaires at the beginning, six months, and 12-month intervals. Among the conclusions was the observation that trust enhanced commitment insofar as it produced enhanced dependence in the trustor, which in turn strengthened commitment. Strong commitment inhibited self-interested behavior and increased pro-relationship behavior (or a transformation of motivation, which will be discussed more later). Upon closer analysis, Wieselquist et al. found that as dependence increased so did commitment, which in turn enhanced willingness to engage in pro-relationship behavior. Such pro-relationship behavior engendered increased trust by the trusty (i.e., recipient of the trust), which increased dependence, commitment, and trust in the trustor, thus completing a full circle of interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics, which they called their Model of Mutual Cyclical Growth.

Embedded within these findings but not fully acknowledged by Wieselquist et al. (1999) is the departure-from-self-interest factor, related to the earlier discussion of McClintock’s (1972), Deutsch’s (1973), and Simpson’s (2007) work on intrapersonal motivations. Worth considering is the possibility that the choice to trust itself could be a departure from self-interest for the sake of and well-being of one’s partner. In other words, one may choose to transform his or her motivation to other-interest or pro-relationship behavior rather than self-interest purely as a loving gift to his or her partner. Wieselquist et al. did acknowledge that trust appears to be a function of circular causality among the individual, the partner, and the situation, yet still gravitated toward linear interpretations of trust that prioritize trust as a consequence of observed pro-relationship gestures. The individual’s personal ability to altruistically choose trust for the sake of the trusty, despite being an individual factor, is oddly neglected.
Motivation Management

Dyadic trust involves the individual, the partner, and the situation. Earlier in this review, various intrapersonal motivations were considered, but the motivation of the individuals, both as the trustor and trusty, cannot be considered apart from the trust-relevant situations they face, which Holmes and Rempel (1989) have referred to as diagnostic situations. Kelley and Thibaut (1978), Yovetich and Rusbult (1994), and Wieselquist et al. (1999) have all looked at what they referred to as transformation of motivation in these situations where an individual relinquishes his or her immediate self-interest to act on broader goals, values, and motives. In a study of undergraduate students at the University of North Carolina, Yovetich and Rusbult (1994) found evidence that the critical feature of transformation of motivation may be the ability to inhibit one’s impulse to react destructively; but they were unable to determine why one would choose to do so. The main point to consider here is that trust or a lack thereof may be the result of a transformation of motivation engaged in habitually that is rooted in motives that can change the outcome of trust-related interactions. Motivational factors may be at work, such as long-term relationship goals, social norms, or concern for a partner (Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994). Given the impact that such motivational factors and transformation of motivation may have on the trusty, these areas are given further consideration in what follows.

Motivation behind trust is often most evident during a certain type of diagnostic situation called a strain-test situation, or situation in which what is best for one partner involves considerable costs for the other (Shallcross & Simpson, 2012). Simpson’s dyadic model of trust (2007) and Murray and Holmes’s (2009) model of mutual responsiveness both look at how a couple will respond to each other during such situations. In an effort to understand such trust motivation, Shallcross and Simpson (2012) videotaped 92 married or cohabitating heterosexual
couples while they engaged in a strain-test discussion task. In this discussion, the couple chose their own topic that involved the goals of an asking partner and possible sacrifice by the responding partner. Shallcross and Simpson also measured the individuals’ chronic trust prior to the strain-test situation and state of trust after, as assessed by a commonly used trust scale. High or low chronic trust was an indicator of how dependable one thought a partner was and how much faith was put in him or her. One of the key findings was that those high in chronic trust were more accommodating and more collaborative during strain-test situations. Those high in chronic trust also became more trusting when their partners were less accommodating or had asked for larger sacrifices. Each partner’s motivation appeared to be influenced by personal dispositions as well as the strain-test nature of the dyadic interactions.

Shallcross and Simpson (2012) also found that partners that were more trusting were more accommodating, which in turn increased the asking partner’s state of trust. High chronic trust responders had more collaborative asking partners as well. Overall, those high in chronic trust appeared to take a longer-term, relationship-centered orientation toward the relationship, allowing more faith and sacrifice. This finding is consistent with Campbell et al.’s (2010) results discussed earlier in which they found evidence of more trust among those with a long-term orientation. All of these observations support the notion that trust may have a profound effect on not only the trustor but the trusty as well. Shallcross and Simpson went on to suggest that behavioral, cognitive, and emotional responses needed to be viewed as dyadic phenomena. In other words, the contributors to and results of the strain-test situation, particularly trust dynamics, cannot be understood without considering who the partners are and how they interact. This systemic understanding of trust dynamics provides solid justification for giving more attention to the experiences of the trusty.
Previous research has demonstrated that people high in trust are more willing to sacrifice in close relationships (Shallcross & Simpson, 2012; Wieselquist et al., 1999). A motive to pursue one’s personal interests may be transformed into a motive to sacrifice some or all of one’s personal interests for the sake of the relationship. Righetti et al. (2015) designed a study to look at the relationship among trust, sacrifice, and the communication of emotions during sacrifice. They used an experience sampling method with 130 romantically involved couples from the Netherlands in which participants were asked to report on a recent divergence of interests. Having completed trust and relationship satisfaction scales, the participants reported on who sacrificed, or gave up some of his or her interests; to what extent they engaged in emotional suppression during the sacrifice; and their levels of satisfaction with the sacrifice. Righetti and colleagues found that those with low versus high trust suppressed their emotions in order to avoid conflict during sacrifice, ultimately reporting less satisfaction with the outcome of the sacrifice. In other words, low trust individuals that sacrificed some personal benefits in the relationship to navigate divergence of interest expressed their emotions less during the sacrifice, particularly negative emotions. Righetti et al. surmised that those low in trust feared that expression of negative emotions would lead to further conflict and lack of responsiveness from a partner that one already believes is untrustworthy. Of particular interest in this study is that partner trustworthiness was not measured, leaving trust as a purely subjective judgment on the part of each participant. Just as untrustworthiness could be met with low trust, it is also equally plausible that trustworthiness could be met with low trust. In this case a trustworthy partner could be denied the communication of emotions, which subsequently could lower relational satisfaction for the low-trust partner and theoretically for the trustworthy partner as well.
In a creative study utilizing the *Trust Game*, Delgado-Marquez, Hurtado-Torres, and Aragon-Correa (2012) had participants engage in a modified version of the game. The trustor interacted with a friend, a friend of a friend, and a stranger. While a friend received more from the trustor than the friend of a friend, the friend of a friend received more than the stranger, which seems to indicate that the existence of a commonly trusted third party fosters a greater willingness to trust, arguably a form of transformation of motivation related to the reassuring factor of the trusted third party. This result has fascinating potential implications for understanding the experiences of a trusty. Perhaps it is possible that a decision to trust could be influenced by a trusted third party, such as a friend, therapist, or even God, in which case the trust interaction becomes triadic rather than dyadic, an interaction pattern that has received little to no attention at all.

### General Risk Attitudes and Reciprocity

Reciprocity as a practice or a norm may be a significant factor in trust dynamics. Whatever choice the trustor makes, the trusty always has the option to exploit the trustor for personal gain; thus, trust is clearly a decision that entails risk and may impact whether an individual engages in motivation transformation. A question to consider in the relationship between trust and risk is whether general risk attitudes or expectations of reciprocity are related to one’s willingness to trust. With 32 pairs of undergraduate students, Berg et al. (1995), the original creators of the *Trust Game*, used the game to demonstrate that subjects were willing to place trust in a human partner by risking a certain amount of money. They concluded that their motivation to risk was a belief that their partners would reciprocate; at least it appeared such trust had to do with expectation of reciprocity. More recent studies have challenged this interpretation (e.g., Dunning et al., 2014; Eckel & Wilson, 2004; Yamagishi et al., 2015). Berg et al. also
concluded that these results proved that self-interest alone did not determine how much money a person would risk.

Using the *Trust Game*, Eckel and Wilson (2004) studied the relationship among generalized risk attitudes, reciprocity, and the decision to trust. Among 232 university students, they found little evidence that general risk aversion is associated with the decision to trust in the *Trust Game*. Furthermore, the participants did not generally think of trusting as a risky gamble. Interestingly, Eckel and Wilson did find that more risk-seeking people were less likely to return money after having received a certain sum from the trustor, perhaps indicating a willingness to disregard social norms of reciprocity or obligation. Overall, Eckel and Wilson concluded that the decision to trust must be influenced by various other factors besides generalized risk attitudes.

Malhotra (2004), using the *Trust Game* with MBA students from a Midwestern university, discovered one such factor—self-interest. Both parties in the *Trust Game* made decisions based primarily on self-interest, a conclusion with which some theoreticians and researchers would likely concur (Brulhart & Usunier, 2012; Deutsch, 1973; Simpson, 2007). Trustors focused primarily on their personal risk rather than on how much their risk would benefit the trusties. They cared more about being smart than being nice and were most willing to trust when the risk was low. Trusties were relatively insensitive to the risks taken by trustors; instead, demonstrating reciprocity based on the benefits provided by the trustor. Stated simply, trustors cared more about personal risk, and trusties cared more about personal benefit, even when engaging in reciprocity. These findings have strong implications for the present study of trusties. In Malhotra’s study, it was clear that trustors did not fully consider, if much at all, what benefits their trust could have for the trusties. This lack of consideration appeared to impact the
level of reciprocity that the trustors received, even when trusties could accurately predict how important risk is to trustors. Neither party appeared to prioritize the other’s needs. Malhotra himself believed that further research on the differing perspectives of trustors and trusted parties would be of “critical importance” (p. 72).

In a study designed to determine whether this classic Trust Game actually measures trust, Houser, Schunk, and Winter (2006) had human subjects engage in the game with a human partner and a computerized partner. Houser et al. first tested the risk attitudes of 117 subjects at a German university. When these subjects engaged in the Trust Game with both a human partner and computerized partner, the results were illuminating. The risk attitudes distribution revealed a typical bell curve, yet the amount of money invested, or risked, with a human partner revealed a bimodal distribution pattern, with the most risk occurring at the extreme ends (i.e., 0 and 10 monetary units). The amount risked with the computerized partner was quite different, revealing a unimodal and bell-shaped distribution of amount invested. Furthermore, and critical to their conclusions, those high in risk seeking were significantly more likely to invest a lot with the computer but not with the human partner. The overall conclusion was that the Trust Game appeared to measure trust, distinctly from risk attitudes. An implication of this study is that trust may be influenced by preconceived notions about what it means to interact with a human, apart from general risk-taking attitudes and apart from any particular knowledge of the partner. Knowing that the computer would choose random amounts to return but the human would be motivated by other factors, even high risk-takers were unwilling to risk as much. Thus, a trusty in an interpersonal relationship, by implication, may experience less trust even from a person generally willing to engage in risk. A trustor’s general expectations of what it means to interact
with another human being may impact the trusty in unexpected ways, idiosyncratic expectations that the trustor may hold notwithstanding.

One final observation is worth making as it pertains to a possible intersection with the previous attachment literature. Without going into too much detail, utilizing the *Trust Game* with a sample of economics students, Evans and Krueger (2014) manipulated the amount of risk and temptation the players would experience (i.e., the trustor’s cost over benefit ratio and the trusty’s incentive to choose betrayal, respectively). They measured the trustor’s expectations of reciprocity then compared it to how much they chose to give to Partner 2 (i.e., the trusty). They found that trustors gave insufficient weight to their own expectations, overtrusting when the probability of reciprocity was low and undertrusting when the probability of reciprocity was high. Trustors also underestimated in general the probability of reciprocity. Evans and Krueger believed that these patterns suggested an aversion to betrayal that was more influential than the probability of the betrayal actually occurring. Personal risk appeared to weigh more heavily than probability of reciprocity. In relational terms this could mean that out of fear of betrayal (i.e., investing a fair amount only to receive little in return) a trustor may overinvest in a relationship despite low expectations of reciprocity, with the hope that such investment may result in more reciprocity than expected. Or a trustor may underinvest in a relationship despite expectations of high reciprocity out of fear that high investment would be met with lower investment than expected, a form of betrayal.

While Evans and Kreuger’s (2014) research certainly has implications for the experiences of a trusty, perhaps the most interesting implication of this research is in the authors’ recommendations of how to translate these results into business practices. Evans and Krueger stated, “Arguably, if an organization seeks to encourage trust among its members, the most direct
approach would be to reduce the trustor’s risk, increasing the benefits of reciprocity and decreasing the cost of betrayal” (p. 99). Translated into interpersonal terms, this would be equivalent to asking the trusty to be more trustworthy; certainly a worthwhile approach. Yet harkening back to the intrapersonal experiences and determinants of trust, facilitating changes within the trustor could prove effective as well, such as increasing differentiation, increasing attachment security, improving self-esteem, inquiring about personal values and motives, or exploring the influences on impulsive and reflective trust. There is already evidence that oxytocin helps someone overcome betrayal aversion (Riedl & Javor, 2012). In sum, perhaps that which reduces fear of betrayal within the trustor, or calibrates one’s risk regulation to a reasonable level, could have an effect that is greater than simply focusing on the trustworthiness of the trusty.

**Risk Regulation and Self-Esteem**

Trust is inherently risky (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982; Rousseau et al., 1998). To trust is to be vulnerable and open oneself up to the possibility of being hurt by one’s partner. Yet ironically, trust itself may act as a regulatory system to monitor such interpersonal risk (Cavallo et al., 2014). As mentioned earlier in its relationship to attachment, self-esteem also plays a significant role in the decision to connect or self-protect. While self-esteem certainly constitutes an intrapersonal dynamic, and could have been discussed above, it appears to be inseparably linked to discussions of interpersonal risk in the literature; thus, it will be discussed here.

Summing up the paradoxical results of much of the research on self-esteem and risk, Murray et al. (2008) stated, “Unfortunately, people low in self-esteem—the very people most in need of social connection—are, the least likely to take the kinds of interdependence risks that forge satisfying relationships” (pp. 453–454). Stated another way, low self-esteem may negatively
impact a relationship, regardless of partner characteristics, in ways that undermine the very gratification one seeks. Trust may be avoided, as an act of self-protection, with the potential to harm the very relationship with the person the trustor longs to trust.

Utilizing a cross-sectional sample of married couples and a longitudinal sample of dating couples, Murray et al. (2000) looked at the relationship between self-esteem and relationship security, a relationship they would later incorporate into their model of risk regulation. They found that individuals, among both married and dating individuals, used their own self-images as bases for their impressions of their partners’ perceptions of them. Those with low self-esteem believed their partners saw them negatively, with those with high self-esteem believing the opposite. To summarize their findings, those with low self-esteem underestimated their partners’ positive regard, which led to diminished regard for these partners and increased self-protection, which subsequently decreased relationship satisfaction. Those with high self-esteem felt more positively regarded in their partners’ eyes, which led to increased relationship satisfaction. Of particular interest to this study, longitudinally the more positively regarded partners felt initially, the greater the trust and relationship satisfaction later in the study, which was most often true for partners of those with high self-esteem. For all of these results, while actual (not perceived) positive regard by a partner did predict increased relationship well-being, for the most part, the relational impact of high or low self-esteem was not predicated on the actual regard; rather, the perceived regard mattered the most.

The goal of the aforementioned risk-regulation system is to “optimize the sense of safety or comfort that is possible given one’s relationship circumstances” (Murray et al., 2008, p. 429). Murray et al. (2008) tested the veracity of this risk-regulation system with a series of seven experiments in which they measured self-esteem and primed in various ways the connectedness
and self-protection goals of various-size groups of undergraduate psychology students at a northeast university. They found that those with low self-esteem in long-term relationships with greater reason to trust in the relationship’s stability actually expressed stronger self-protection concerns, whereas those with high self-esteem in such relationships were appropriately judicious, less self-protective, and more wanting of connection. Primed with scenarios or words involving relationship risk (which could arouse attachment-based seeking out of one’s partner), those with low self-esteem, despite desiring such connection, instead engaged an executive control, safety system that triggered distancing self-protection. For those with high self-esteem, priming also led to the engagement of an executive control, safety system, but it resulted in increased connection. Unexpectedly, they found that cognitively taxing an individual with low self-esteem (i.e., compromising one’s executive control) resulted in connection seeking, indicating that self-protection requires adequate executive control to achieve. Last, and of unique relevance to this study, high self-esteem individuals that had forgiven a partner of a relational transgression seemed to suppress self-protection goals when reminded of the hurt; whereas having forgiven a transgression actually increased self-protection for those with low self-esteem. This discovery is unique in that it involves relational transgressions, or scenarios in which trusties would have breached trust. Given the aforementioned findings, the trusty could have vastly different experiences of being forgiven depending on the self-esteem level of his or her partner (i.e., the trustor). One trusty could experience more connection after being forgiven, while another trusty could experience more distance. Overall, Murray et al. did not suggest that self-esteem caused all of what they discovered but suggested that it had moderating effects that could account for a trustor’s expectations of his or her partner’s regard for self, which could also involve the level of trust one has in a partner.
In a series of four studies conducted with male and female undergraduate students at a Canadian university, Cavallo et al. (2009) sought to gain a deeper understanding of the risk-regulation system in romantic relationships. Among their findings was that high self-esteem appeared to allow one to risk trusting a partner more than was true of someone with low self-esteem. In addition, one’s generalized approach/avoidance system, or one’s pattern of behavior in risky situations, was generally consistent with one’s willingness to risk trusting when faced with a threat to the relationship, and this willingness to risk was once again associated with high self-esteem. Cavallo et al. (2009) went on to conclude that there is evidence that a relationship threat seems to trigger a broader approach/avoidance system that is applied in other areas of life. Of particular interest was the fact that relationship stress for low self-esteem individuals did not lead to strengthened avoidance, but instead was associated more with diminished approach motivation. Stated another way, relationship stress seemed to lead one to resist approaching a partner rather than actively engage in avoidance, a fine distinction supported in Murray et al.’s (2008) study of risk regulation as well.

While Cavallo et al. (2009) did not directly address trust, trust has been clearly linked to risk. Their results indicate that the amount of risk a person is willing to take, and by implication perhaps how much trust one is willing to give, is related to one’s level of self-esteem and one’s more generalized approach to risk. Furthermore, for those with low self-esteem there appears to be a constant bent toward avoidance that is strengthened when one has reason to quell one’s motivation to approach in risky situations. This risk motivation factor is so powerful that MacKinnon and Boon (2012), studying 152 undergraduate psychology students, found that those with low trust in their partners may not only engage in self-protection themselves, but they would advise others to do likewise in risky situations. Those that trusted their partners advised
others to extend the benefit of the doubt to a partner in such situations. This study did not
determine whether such advice was followed, but such results reveal the possibility that
experiences of a trusty could be influenced by a third party. If it is true that these results can
inform our understanding of risk related to trust, then it is further evidence that one’s choice to
trust may have less to do with the trusty’s characteristics and behaviors than one might assume.
The trusty must grapple with such trust-related decisions on the part of his or her partner, which
provide experiences for the trusty that we know little about.

The more that is learned about the unique risk of trust, the clearer it becomes that trust is
influenced by myriad factors unrelated or loosely related to a trusty’s trustworthiness. As a
result of two experiments looking at trust-related risk and perspective-taking, Evans and Krueger
(2011) found that the risk to trust may be taken based more on one’s personal interests and less
on considerations of a trusty’s needs or desires. They found that low personal risk was
conducive to trust, and a trustor was most likely to consider the trusty’s perspective when risk
was low. But when risk was high, a quick decision was made not to trust. Evans and Krueger
suggested that people appear to reduce the complexity of trust decisions by approaching from an
egocentric perspective, seeing perspective-taking (i.e., considering the perspective of the trusty)
as more onerous and time-consuming. While this self-interest may be efficient in guarding
oneself, it may not always be effective since the decision to trust is based on one’s perception of
risk rather than the actual existence of risk. Not only may a trustor experience less intimacy with
a partner when this result is unnecessary, but a trusty may experience less intimacy as well if his
or her partner sees risk where there is little or none.

Murray et al. (2013) confirmed the negative effects of this unnecessary lack of trust and
intimacy in a study of 222 childless couples in first marriages between two and six months in
length. They gathered longitudinal data on various characteristics and attitudes, including self-esteem, neuroticism, attachment anxiety, trust, satisfaction, self-protective practices, and diary-recorded events and emotional experiences. They found that when people practiced greater self-protection, satisfaction declined more in low-risk relationships than in high-risk relationships. On the contrary, when people practiced less self-protection, satisfaction declined more in high-risk relationships than low-risk relationships. Also, those that trusted less practiced more daily self-protection. Exercising more self-protection explained the association between less trust and declines in satisfaction. To state these results simply, self-protection based on a lack of trust under low-risk relational circumstances produces a decrease in relational satisfaction. Thus, as Murray et al. point out, a paradox exists in that a person in a position to trust cannot gain evidence of trustworthiness without first risking trust. If trust cannot be given even in low-risk circumstances, then it should come as no surprise that relational satisfaction decreases. Such a decrease is likely related to compromised intimacy as a result of alienation of various kinds, negatively impacting both the trustor and trusty.

Many of the aforementioned findings indicate that risk is necessary to achieve intimacy, which makes sense when considered logically. Yet the decision to risk trusting, particularly those that have not definitively proven themselves trustworthy, may be considered dangerous gullibility, a conclusion that may appear true anecdotally. Without getting into too much detail on this tangential topic, research has provided little to no evidence for this gullibility assertion (Gurtman, 1992; Rotter, 1967; Rotter, 1980; & Yamagishi, Kikuchi, & Kosugi, 1999). As Rotter (1980) stated in his review of the trust and gullibility literature at the time of his writing, high trustors are no more likely to be gullible than low trustors. He suggests that high trustors trust until there is clear evidence that one cannot be trusted; low trustors will not trust until there is
clear evidence that one can be trusted. This fact, Rotter suggests, allows the high trustor to be more discerning of the signs of a lack of trustworthiness than the low trustor is capable of in a default state of low to no trust.

Trust in an interpersonal sense seems to be most relevant in situations that involve conflicting goals of relationship promotion and self-protection (Luchies et al., 2013). What is occurring intrapersonally intersects with one’s interest in the relationship or one’s partner interpersonally. Murray and Holmes (2009) introduced the aforementioned risk-regulation model of trust, which suggests that with strong trust one can afford to prioritize relationship promotion, whereas with weak trust self-protection is likely prioritized. Supporting this model, research conducted by Murray, Bellavia, Rose, and Griffin (2003) on married couples, showed that participants’ feelings of trust influenced self-regulatory responses following acute threats, such as conflict or bad partner behavior. Those that trusted that their partner would care and be responsive reported feeling closer resulting in connection behavior following an acute threat, whereas those less trusting displayed increased self-protection resulting in distancing behaviors.

Luchies et al. (2013) put the risk-regulation model of trust to the test by studying the trust memories of 69 undergraduate students over a six-month period. At various points in time, participants were asked to recall partner transgressions along with relational dynamics surrounding them. Later, participants were asked to recall these events, including their initial ratings of severity, amends, and forgiveness. Participants also completed questionnaires pertaining to trust, commitment, satisfaction, and attachment orientations. The results showed that stronger partner trust was associated with a more positive recall of one’s partner’s transgressions, both for short- and long-term memory. In three additional follow-up studies of undergraduate students, utilizing a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures, Luchies
et al. found additional support for the same conclusion. Luchies et al. interpreted these findings as supportive of Murray and Holmes’s (2009) risk-regulation model in that those with high trust could afford to prioritize the relationship over self-protection, and vice versa.

In these same studies, Luchies et al. (2013) found support for their Partner Moderation Hypothesis as well, which in essence states that biased memories will be stronger as related to others’ transgressions than one’s own. Of particular interest to the proposed study on the experiences and perceptions of trusties, the researchers acknowledged that this fact could make a perpetrator (i.e., transgressor) vulnerable to unforgiving decisions, as the victim creates a stronger bias against the perpetrator than him or herself. This self-serving bias makes sense given that trust of self may be easier than trust of other, yet it becomes an internal memory filter that may erode trust even further, impacting the experience of a trusty.

Molden and Finkel (2010) looked at the associations between self-regulatory priorities of 104 Northwestern University students and their levels of trust, commitment, and forgiveness patterns. They found that those with a promotion self-regulatory priority, or a tendency to prioritize attaining relational growth, tended to forgive based on a sense of trust rather than commitment. Whereas those with a prevention self-regulatory priority, or a tendency to prioritize maintaining security, tended to forgive based on a sense of commitment rather than trust. These results remained consistent when controlling for self-esteem and attachment security. Molden and Finkel believed that these results demonstrated how those that sought relational promotion were willing to risk, that is trust, that forgiveness could produce opportunity for growth. Those that prioritized their own security minimized the risk of relationship demise by forgiving out of a sense of commitment, which felt much less risky.
Many of the ideas presented in this section are logically related to Robert Weiss’s (1980) work on *negative sentiment override*; Hawkins, Carrere, and Gottman’s (2002) application of this sentiment override concept to couples’ negative perceptions of each other’s affect and behavior; and Gottman and Silver’s (1999) writing on negatively skewed recall of a couple’s relationship history due to sentiment override. What is missing from Luchies et al.’s analysis is the possibility that the Partner Moderation Hypothesis may hold true for imagined as well as real transgressions. In other words, biased memories or sentiment override may result in a lack of forgiveness or unjust treatment of a trusty, even if memories are completely false or affectively driven perceptions are entirely skewed. If a self-protective instinct predominates, then it may impact trust just as well as trust may impact the instinct to self-protect. These findings and possibilities are apt justification to further study the impact that trust may have on a trusty, given that trust may be withheld or given, at least in part, based on the internal motivations of the trustor.

In a study of 81 married or cohabiting couples, Miller and Rempel (2004) found that partner-enhancing attributions were positively associated with partner trust, particularly as it pertained to their experiences of conflict and problem-solving interactions at two points in time in a two-year period. Of particular interest is that Miller and Rempel concluded that high trust appeared to increase positive attributions just as such attributions appeared to increase trust. What Miller and Rempel were able to establish, given that their study spanned two years, is that the tendency to attribute positive motives to a partner was related to increases in trust that exceeded the assessment of a partner’s actual behavior, trustworthy or otherwise. This may lend credence to the assertion that trust is not simply a consequence of trustworthy actions. Trust as a
loving choice rooted in positive attributions could theoretically contribute to trustworthy actions, subsequently reinforcing positive attributions—benefits for the trusty that may go unnoticed.

Summarizing the research presented to this point on risk regulation, trust appears to provide not only an attachment-based launching point for relational vulnerability and intimacy, often mediated by healthy self-esteem, but also a regulatory system to monitor the dynamics of the relationship for the sake of making the decision to connect or self-protect. Dispositional low trust, apart from that which is in response to clear relational transgressions and a lack of safety, appears to work against an individual’s desire for relational intimacy and satisfaction.

Dispositional high trust appears to foster relational intimacy, including when full trustworthiness of the trusty is not completely evident, providing a more accurate lens through which to discern the actual state of relational security. To be intellectually astute, the relationship is not always clear between trust and relationship satisfaction in terms of which may come first or whether they must occur simultaneously. Regardless, the proposed study follows where the literature appears to lead—investigating in a general sense how the trust from a wife may be experienced by her husband, rather than how the behavior of the husband impacts the trust of his wife.

**Relationship Developmental Trajectory**

Concluding this section on interpersonal experiences of trust, prudence requires a brief look at a way that trust develops over time in a relationship. Trust is far from static. Knowledge presented above about the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspect of trust notwithstanding, trust changes across time and may differ in its roles and effects depending on when a couple may grapple with its existence, intrapersonally and interpersonally.

Fletcher, Simpson, and Thomas (2000) conducted a longitudinal study of 100 students in New Zealand that had been dating for four weeks or less at the beginning of the study. By
measuring partner and relationship ideals and perceptions at various points in time, they found that trust was quite high during this initial phase of the relationship. They speculated that trust may start high as a prerequisite for dating, may be more exchange-oriented than in later stages, may be focused more on predictability and dependability than on faith, and may be more fragile than at later stages. Trust this early in a relationship may well reflect hopes and dreams for the relationship, which could logically contribute to relational development just as much as it may be a reflection of it.

While this interpretation certainly seems feasible, once again there may be yet another. During the dating and long-married stages of a relationship, intentional, hope-filled love may increase one’s trust as he or she invests in the future of the relationship to the extent he or she can control (i.e., one can control one’s own love and trust but not how one’s partner loves or is trustworthy). To love and thus trust in such a way may feel safer with a strong marital history to build upon or, ironically, with no clear commitment to a future yet established. This interpretation would be consistent with Larzelere and Huston’s (1980) discovery that a curvilinear pattern of correlations exists between love and trust as related to the depth of the relationship. As discussed in the earlier section on love, the strongest correlations were among exclusively dating and longer married couples, whereas the lowest correlations were among engaged, cohabiting, and newlywed couples. Oddly yet logically, trusting as an act of love may feel more like a risk at the point of increased commitment to a long, uncertain future, even if one loves one’s partner and desires such a future together. The possibility that trust could be a loving choice points to the need for research that looks at how such a choice may impact the relationship or trusty.
This section of the literature has highlighted the research on the interpersonal experience of trust. Various facets of such experience were discussed, such as love and commitment; motivation management; general risk attitudes and reciprocity; risk regulation and self-esteem; and relationship developmental trajectory. The explication of research to this point on intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences of trust provides strong justification for emphasizing the unique perspective of the trusty.

**Justification for Emphasizing the Perspective of the Trusty**

Simpson’s (2007a, 2007b) review of the foundations of interpersonal trust is arguably one of the most comprehensive reviews of trust literature to date. In his conclusions, he makes the point that while certain dispositions, such as insecure attachment, weak differentiation, or low self-esteem may inhibit the development of trust in a partner, none of these must inevitably do so. Instead, he asserts, these individuals will likely need to be with partners that can help suppress or change these factors, such as in highly committed or rewarding relationships. He also suggests that more research is needed to understand both individuals in the relationship. Utilizing Simpson’s model as their theoretical framework, Kim et al. (2015), among a sample of 95 married couples married on average almost six years, found that both partners’ levels of trust had to be considered to understand changes in closeness during conflict. If just one partner was low in trust, the outcome was equally bad as if both partners were low in trust. Given their discovery, they went so far as to recommend an addendum to Simpson’s model—that trustor and trusty levels of trust must be examined separately and jointly to comprehend certain relationship outcomes. Simpson’s (2007) and Kim et al.’s (2015) insights are astute as they pertain to what a trustor and trusty may need individually and jointly, and practically beg for further research and understanding.
Focusing on the experiences of the trusty does have support in the literature, despite its relative lack of emphasis. Khalifian and Barry (2016) found that individuals whose spouses trusted them more experienced increased relational intimacy. Shallcross and Simpson (2012) discovered that high chronic trust askers (i.e., those making a request) in strain-test situations receive more accommodation from their responding partners when asked to sacrifice some of their own desires for the relationship. As discussed earlier, Mikulincer (1998) observed that secure individuals appeared to be more capable of pursuing partner well-being rather than being a passive recipient of care and comfort, which is consistent with the fact that individuals that trust their partners tend to be more selfless and attentive during challenging discussions (Shallcross & Simpson, 2012). The literature on transformation of motivation also points to the fact that an individual can transform his or her self-focused motivation into a form of trust that involves concern for the well-being of the partner or relationship (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Wieselquist et al., 1999; Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994).

Focusing on the perspective of men, and particularly husbands, has some support in the literature as well. Men, regardless of their own levels of trust, report more stable relationship quality across time with more trusting partners, with the same not holding true for women (Campbell et al., 2010). The literature points to the possibility that husbands may experience trust in a marriage differently than their wives (Gottman, 2011) and that trust may be experienced differently in marriage as opposed to nonmarital relationships (Larzelere & Huston, 1980). Butler (1986) found that male partner trust was best explained by his partner’s trust in him, among other factors. And finally, in their study of trust from a biological perspective, Riedl and Javor (2012) actually put out a call to the research community to conduct more investigations that focus on the trusty, as well as interactions between the trustor and trusty.
Perhaps Malhotra (2004) said it best when discussing the common historical results of playing the *Trust Game*. After pointing out how we now know that large trusting acts tend to make reciprocity more likely and more substantive, he went on to state, “It is unclear why this is the case” (p. 62). Asking husbands about their perceptions and experiences of being trusted by their wives may provide clarity in this important area of inquiry. Utilizing a qualitative, heuristic methodological approach can provide the best opportunity to gain new knowledge about the experiences of trusties from their own personal perspectives.

**Support for the Methodology of This Study**

Given what the scholarly literature reflects about the study of trust as presented here, a heuristic study (Moustakas, 1990) of trusties appears justified. As stated in Chapter One, the research question is as follows: *In a committed, marital relationship, what is the experience of a husband when he believes he is trusted by his wife?* In this literature review, a case has been made for how little this perspective has been investigated and valued. The perspective of the trustor has been granted much attention, if not privilege. Furthermore, various researchers, as indicated in the previous section, have specifically called for research that looks at the experiences of the trusty uniquely or the trusty-trustor relationship with equal emphasis on both experiences.

Taking a step back and looking at the broader picture of this literature review, it is noticeable that the *Trust Game* was used in much of the research, often played with perfect strangers or under manipulated circumstances. This research has been helpful, yet it does not tap into the perceptions and experiences of the trustor or trusty in intimate relationships and bases many of its conclusions on the outcome of behavioral choices (Yamagishi et al., 2015). Such a consequentialist view of trust risks obscuring the actual intentions behind trust-related decisions,
either by the trustor or trusty, given that the behavior merely serves as evidence of internal
cognitive, emotional, and relational processes. Also, perhaps the false belief that people function
almost exclusively out of self-interest, a belief supported by some yet challenged by others, has
intersected with an inquiry bias in the direction of the trustor to produce a relative vacuum of
attention given to the recipient of trust. Asking husbands to share their experiences of being
trusted by their wives in a heuristic fashion could provide much needed knowledge that more
quantitative methods could not provide.

Amazingly, among the literature reviewed here, not a single study was purely qualitative
in nature. A number of studies utilized journaling/diaries (e.g., Campbell et al., 2010; Murray et
al., 2013; Sorrentino et al., 1995) or couple discussions (e.g., Khalifian & Barry, 2016; Kim et
al., 2015) as data sources for analysis, which complemented quantitative measures in the
development of results and conclusions. This data has allowed for robust results and analysis but
is still primarily interpreted from the researchers’ perspectives.

Finally, as simplistic as this may sound, perhaps the best reason to conduct a heuristic
study of husbands and their experiences of being trusted by their wives is that they have not been
asked. There may be much there to discover by asking the right questions and allowing full
expression without the bounds of quantitative measures, a depth of discovery that Moustakas
(1990) believed could occur with heuristic inquiry.

Chapter Summary

This review has provided an extensive overview of existent literature pertaining to the
intrapersonal experience of the trustor and trusty, the interpersonal experience of trust, and a
justification for emphasizing the perspective of the trusty. As a result, a heuristic study seeking
to understand how husbands experience the trust of their wives appears firmly justified. Chapter
Three will provide a detailed description of the heuristic methodology proposed for the study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

“Underlying all other concepts in heuristic research, at the base of all heuristic discovery, is the power of revelation in tacit knowing…. To know and understand the nature, meanings, and essences of any human experience, one depends on the internal frame of reference of a person who has had, is having, or will have the experience.”

—Moustakas

In Chapters One and Two a case was made that the lion’s share of research to date looks at the experiences of the trustor and the dynamics between trustor and trusty. This emphasis has left a gap in the literature regarding the experiences of the trusty. In an effort to begin to fill this gap, the research design utilized in this study was heuristic inquiry, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the experiences of being trusted from the perspective of the trusty. What follows is a detailed description of the study design, including justification of its use, reiteration of the research question, a description of the context for the study, methods utilized for ethical protection of participants, the role of the researcher, criteria used to select co-researchers, data collection procedures including an interview guide, a review of how the data was analyzed, and a discussion of methods that were used to address validity and trustworthiness.

Heuristic Inquiry

When little is known about a topic, like the recipient of trust in marriage, heuristic inquiry provides the perfect qualitative methodology for discovery. Heuristic research is about discovery, seeking to tap into the inner, or tacit, knowledge of both the co-researchers (research participants) and the researcher (Moustakas, 1990; Sela-Smith, 2002). McLeod (2011) points out that qualitative research such as this allows the participants the opportunity to observe and make sense of their own thoughts and feelings. As mentioned in Chapters One and Two, trusties have not had enough opportunity to do so. Anecdotally one may assume that being trusted is a profound and deeply penetrating experience, yet empirically the trusty has not until this study
had the opportunity to freely reflect on and express his experience outside the bounds of other types of quantitative, mixed methods or qualitative studies. Numerical representation and statistical analysis quantify lived experience in a way that may lose its deeper, personal meaning. As far as other qualitative methods are concerned, neither grounded theory, case study, nor pure phenomenological designs maintain the essence of the person along with his experiences the way heuristic inquiry can (McLeod, 2011; Moustakas, 1990). For example, phenomenological research involves a level of detachment from the phenomenon in question, whereas heuristic inquiry stresses the interpersonal and experiential connectedness between the researcher and co-researchers (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). In heuristic research, discovery is not merely intellectual, statistical, or observational; instead it is deeply intuitive, personal, and meaningful (Moustakas, 1990), a method well suited to a deeply personal and relational construct such as interpersonal trust.

Discovery related to the research question is a result of six phases of heuristic research: initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). Initial engagement and immersion involve the researcher passionately pursuing an interest in the research question, then observing and recording its manifestations in the lives of the co-researchers as well as his own. The researcher thrusts himself into the heart of the question as the co-researchers explain and represent the depth of their experiences. Incubation and illumination involve taking a step back from the immersion process to allow for tacit and emergent understandings to arise within the researcher. The incubation period aids in the development of the new understanding, or the discovery of new illuminated knowledge of the experience. Following this revelatory period, the researcher studies the individual experiences of each co-researcher, then explicates the themes of his
findings by developing a composite representation of the experience of a husband trusted by his wife. Throughout the stages of this process, the researcher regularly checks back with the co-researchers to verify and validate the emerging understanding with additions, revisions, and concurrence (McLeod, 2011, Moustakas, 1990).

As stated, heuristic inquiry provides a unique opportunity to fill a gap in the trust literature; a gap that, if not addressed, may allow for false assumptions about the experience of the trusty or the dynamics between trusty and trustor. Perhaps of greatest concern is the possibility of assuming what a trusty is experiencing purely by way of behavioral observation or theoretical inference without actually asking. This study provides progress toward a more complete understanding by looking squarely at the trusty’s experiences of being trusted.

An additional justification for the use of heuristic inquiry is that I as the researcher have had experiences of being trusted by my wife over many years and would find it challenging if not impossible to fully bracket those experiences in the research process. Heuristic inquiry allows my own inner knowledge of being trusted to be carefully considered through a process of reflexivity, or systematic reflection on how I may personally influence the research process (Darawsheh, 2014; Moustakas, 1990). This reflexivity produces an even more robust understanding of the experience of a husband being trusted by his wife, a process that will be discussed in more detail later.

**Research Question**

The research question for this study emerged from years of interpersonal and professional experiences, and countless hours of contemplation and study of the issue of marital trust. The question adheres to Moustakas’s (1990) purposes in heuristic inquiry:
(1) to reveal more fully the essence or meaning of a phenomenon of human experience;
(2) to discover the qualitative aspects, rather than quantitative dimensions, of the
phenomenon; (3) to engage one’s total self and evoke a personal and passionate
involvement and active participation in the process; (4) to not seek to predict or to
determine causal relationships; and (5) to illuminate through careful descriptions,
illustrations, metaphors, poetry, dialogue, and other creative renderings rather than by
measurements, ratings or scores. (p. 42)

Given these parameters and pursuits, the research question for this study was:

*In a committed, marital relationship, what is the experience of a husband when he
believes he is trusted by his wife?*

This question allowed for breadth and depth of inquiry, tapping into the lived experience of the
husbands without unnecessary constraints. Husbands in committed, marital relationships that
believe they are trusted by their wives answered a series of open-ended questions that allowed
for free and full expression of their experience. These questions (the Interview Guide) are
delineated in the Data Collection Procedure section and Appendix A.

**Context for the Study**

Interviews of the 10 co-researchers were the primary method of data collection. An
interview was conducted in a quiet, private place in the home of a co-researcher or at an equally
quiet and private neutral location that a co-researcher found more comfortable (e.g., the
researcher’s workplace office). The goal was to be able to talk with the co-researcher in a
naturalistic, peaceful space so that he could access knowledge related to his experiences of being
trusted by his wife (Creswell, 2009). Anxiety related to too much internal or external noise
could limit the co-researchers’ abilities to access the full range of memories and tacit knowledge
(Cozolino, 2006). The conversations with the co-researchers were recorded and transcribed verbatim. A notepad was used by the researcher to take informal notes during the interviews, and efforts were made to minimize any distractions this may have caused.

**Methods for Protection of Participants**

Prior to obtaining participants, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was gained to ensure the ethical treatment of research participants (see Appendix B). Purposive sampling, or the purposeful selection of co-researchers with the goal of gaining understanding of the topic in question, was initially attempted to identify and select 10 husbands in committed, marital relationships for this heuristic inquiry, but these efforts proved unproductive (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). IRB-approved flyers providing a brief overview of the nature of and qualifications for the study were posted at three different suburban and rural locations outside of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania³, and prospective co-researchers were invited to contact the researcher directly by phone or e-mail. The selected sites were meant to allow for maximum variation, or a relatively diverse group of co-researchers that may have offered a variety of perspectives to avoid unnecessary homogeneity of experience (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2009). Ultimately, after receiving no responses to the flyers, IRB approval was gained to proceed with a snowball sampling technique, which was successful in recruiting 10 co-researchers. Representatives known by the researcher from various communities in the Harrisburg area were asked to refer prospective participants that they believed might qualify for the study. As participants were screened and selected, they were asked to refer others until the 10 co-

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³ Efforts were made to post flyers in the urban areas of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, with no success due to lack of response or policies that did not allow for it. Snowball sampling did produce participants from areas inside and outside of the Harrisburg area.
researchers were identified. While the goal was to gain representation from diverse communities, snowball sampling inevitably produced a relatively homogenous participant pool.

From the moment of first contact with a prospective co-researcher (via phone or e-mail), he was verbally assured of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the process to the degree the researcher could control. Since there was a screening process for selection of co-researchers (see Criteria for Selecting Co-Researchers below), full written consent for the entire study was obtained prior to the initiation of the screening and selection process (see Appendix C).

Prospective co-researchers were asked to review and sign a consent form delineating the purpose of the screening process, details about the nature of the study, and information about anonymity and confidentiality. To minimize the possibility of assumptions and discouragement on the part of those not selected, the researcher also explained in writing that various factors would ultimately influence the selection of final co-researchers. Once 10 co-researchers were selected from the eligibility pool, their initial consent was reviewed again to be certain of their complete understanding prior to the data collection process (i.e., at the time of the interview). The unique nature of anonymity and confidentiality for this type of study was made clear in the signed consent and was a part of what was reviewed again verbally prior to the commencement of data collection.

Given the deep, personal, and probing nature of heuristic inquiry, co-researchers were made fully aware of the purpose and methods used for the study prior to the completion of the screening instrument, at which time they were informed of their ability to opt out at that point if so desired. In the consent form, the researcher followed IRB protocol and generally explained the type of discovery for which the study was designed (see Appendix C). The consent also included a general statement about how the inquiry could potentially provide intrapersonal
benefits or risks, including but not limited to increased insight and emotional evocation, none of which was expected or guaranteed. While co-researchers were asked to make a commitment to participation in the full study, they were also made aware that they could choose to stop an interview or opt out of the study at any time should they become uncomfortable with the process. A referral list of counselors was available if these circumstances had arisen, which ultimately did not occur. All written data collected, including researcher notes and documents produced by co-researchers, was kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office. All digital recordings were uploaded into password protected computers (i.e., the researcher’s and transcriptionist’s laptops) following the interviews, then deleted from the recording device. Further verbal explanation about the study as a whole was provided at any point throughout the study if requested by co-researchers.

Beyond protecting the co-researcher’s basic privacy, the purpose of anonymity and confidentiality in heuristic inquiry is to allow for rapport-building and honest discussion (Baez, 2002). As a part of the consent process, the co-researcher was reassured that his comments related to his wife would not be shared with her and that pseudonyms would be used for the co-researchers throughout the research and documentation process. Every measure taken to protect the confidentiality of the co-researchers was meant to put them at ease and provide them with the opportunity to make informed decisions about what they chose to share.

Another area of confidentiality to consider in this type of study is that of deductive disclosure, in which a reader may deduce the identity of a co-researcher based on contextual clues provided in the analysis, presentation, and publication of data (Kaiser, 2009; Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008). Following what Kaiser (2009) refers to as an “alternative approach to maintaining confidentiality” (p. 1636), the co-researchers were informed of various possible
audiences for dissemination of the study results. These audiences may include the following:
dissertation committee, professional community by way of journal publications, attendees of
professional conferences by way of presentations, students of Messiah College under my
tutelage, those accessing my dissertation by way of online dissertation publication platforms, lay
readers by way of popular publications, and possibly the co-researchers and their families
themselves. Co-researchers were made aware of this type of deductive disclosure in the
informed consent and again at the time of the interview and were able to use this knowledge to
assess their comfortability with this type of risk prior to proceeding. By gaining consent in this
manner, the researcher is not unnecessarily limited in what data is ultimately published.
Discussions of data use and confidentiality continued throughout the study as was deemed
necessary by the interest of the co-researchers and the nature of the disclosure during the process
(Kaiser, 2009).

**Role of the Researcher**

In heuristic inquiry, the researcher not only interviews the co-researchers, but he bears in
mind his own experience throughout the data collection and analysis process as well. Moustakas
(1990) describes heuristic inquiry as flowing “out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration”
(p. 11), a process meant to be entered into fully throughout by both researcher and co-
researchers. Findings are invariably the result of a synthesis of researcher and co-researcher
perspectives (Darawsheh, 2014). Discussing reflexivity in qualitative research, Darawsheh
(2014) went so far as to write that “the tone of writing in a [qualitative research] report needs to
be confessional rather than solely realist” (p. 561). While this overstates the role reflexivity took
in this study, I as the researcher did have subjective biases and presuppositions that were best
recognized at the outset and throughout the study as they arose.
I have for a matter of years now personally reflected on many aspects of trust including the following: my own knowledge and experience of being trusted by my wife; the trust-related experiences of clients I have counseled; the fundamental and critical nature of trust in interpersonal relationships; the concept of trust from a biblical perspective; and the ongoing elucidation and revision of the research question. I have pondered, prayed about, discussed, questioned, and struggled with trust; particularly what it means to be trusted. At times, I was awash in the subject, while at others I set it aside until I could pursue it again. One may say the question had become a bit of an obsession, ripe for heuristic inquiry.

As a marriage and family therapist and human development and family science educator, experience after experience, story after story, have contributed to the question in my mind of how trust may impact its recipient. I have watched relationships end for lack of trust and witnessed relationships heal or thrive with its presence. After years of pondering and pontificating about trust, I believed it was time to study it. As an initial stage of the heuristic inquiry process, I journaled my thoughts about trust. I needed to get a better grasp on what was “in me” that made me so passionate about trust. So many questions arose. So many speculations took shape. These were some of my presuppositions and biases that I had to mindfully acknowledge as I approached a deeper understanding of being the recipient of trust alongside 10 other husbands. Given my intimate knowledge and passion about the subject of trust, and my desire to develop a deep understanding of the experience of being trusted to disseminate to the field, a heuristic method was the most effective means of answering the research question.

Criteria for Selecting Co-Researchers

The selection of co-researchers is a sensitive and important process in heuristic inquiry. In this study, the key characteristics of a co-researcher were that he believed he was trusted by
his wife to a high degree in a significant number of areas in his marriage and that he was willing to enter deep, personal conversation about this experience of being trusted. To determine that the co-researchers did consider themselves to be trusted, a screening instrument was used in the co-researcher selection process (see Appendix D). After the initial phone contact was made with a prospective co-researcher, the nature of the research was explained, and the consent had been signed, the screening instrument was e-mailed to the prospect. The instrument asked for basic demographic information, such as age, years married, ethnicity, and address. An inclusion criterion of being married for at least five years was used for selection as well.

This screening instrument also contained a list of areas of the husband’s marriage in which he may or may not believe he was trusted. The development of this instrument was informed by the content of Rempel et al.’s (1985) Trust Scale, Larzalere and Huston’s Dyadic Trust Scale (1980), and the personal and professional experiences of the researcher. The researcher also refined the instrument with the assistance of a professional colleague who is an experienced clinical psychologist, as well as pilot testing with six men. With the research question in mind of gaining a deep understanding of the experience of the trusties, an eligibility cutoff point was established. If a prospective co-researcher checked that he believed he was trusted in at least 75% of the possible areas on the instrument, then he qualified for selection. While this cutoff point was somewhat arbitrary, it represented greater than 50%, which does not represent much belief in the trust of one’s wife, and less than 100%, which is an unrealistic belief in trust to expect in any marriage. Splitting the difference between 50% and 100% provided a threshold for acceptance that was greater than the majority of the listed areas in a marriage included on the instrument. If a prospective co-researcher qualified for the study based on
demographic information and screening instrument results, he was offered the opportunity to participate.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Heuristic research requires an extensive amount of data collection. During the data collection process, the researcher and co-researchers engage in genuine dialogue about the topic until the stories of their experiences come to a natural close (Moustakas, 1990). This dialogue involves “cooperative sharing” contributed to by both researcher and co-researchers and begins with a set of open-ended interview questions (Moustakas, 1990, p. 47). The conversation then flows freely in a more informal conversational style, allowing a deep, collaborative understanding of the topic to emerge. For this type of dialogue to exist, security, empathy, flexibility, and freedom of expression must be facilitated by the researcher in the hope that the co-researchers will respond with authentic sharing (Sim & Wright, 2002). To help facilitate such safety, I assured co-researchers that they were not being evaluated or analyzed, which may have been explicitly or implicitly assumed given my role as a therapist and professor. This, and other issues that may have hindered open expression, were also addressed throughout the process as they emerged; although few such issues arose after the conversations began. Ironically, as the researcher and co-researchers discussed the experience of being trusted, trust had to be built quickly and sustained throughout the process.

In preparation for the interview, the co-researchers were sent the list of questions on the interview guide. Each co-researcher was given the option to write a letter to his spouse explaining his experience of being trusted by her as a way to facilitate reflection on a topic that may not have received much attention prior to the in-depth interview process. If they would choose to write the letter, the co-researchers were instructed to utilize the interview questions to
spark ideas that may be written in the letter and instructed not to give the letters to their spouses. At the time of the interview, the co-researchers that chose to write the letter were encouraged to draw from the letter if so desired when answering questions and were asked if they were willing to provide the letter to the researcher as additional data. Interviews were recorded and responses were transcribed verbatim by a hired transcriptionist who also signed a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix E). Any other items produced by the researcher and co-researchers (i.e., reflective journaling, notes) were also gathered by the researcher and utilized as data in the analysis process.

The interview guide included the following questions and prompts pertaining to areas of their marriage in which they believed they were trusted:

- How would you describe your experience of being trusted by your wife (If the process is slow to get started, the co-researcher may be asked to close his eyes and visualize a time when he felt trusted)?
- What feelings, thoughts, perceptions, bodily sensations, situations, memories, and so forth are related in some way to this experience?
- What stands out for you as you consider what it is like to be trusted by your wife?
- What else happens to you when you believe you are trusted by your wife that may be harder to put into words?
- Please explain any other aspects or meanings of this experience that you have not yet shared.
- Have you shared all of the significant aspects of your experience of being trusted by your wife? If not, what else would you like to share?
• If talking about your experience is not sufficient, how else can you represent or express what it is like to be trusted by your wife (e.g., journaling, meaningful objects, music, art, poetry, etc.)?

• There is no end point to this conversation until the conclusion of the analysis period.

If there is anything else you would like to add, feel free to let me know.

When the interview came to a natural conclusion, the researcher explained that the co-researcher may choose to add responses to the data at any point up to the conclusion of the analysis period. The researcher explained how he would revisit the data with the co-researcher, transcribed or otherwise, during the immersion and incubation stages to check for accuracy and allow for additions and revisions by the co-researchers.

As indicated by one of the interview questions above, co-researchers were asked to represent their experiences not only in verbal responses to interview questions but also in various other personally authored or created documents, such as diaries, journals, poetry, or artwork. These creative representations would allow the co-researchers alternate ways to capture the essence of the experience of being trusted that were not bound by the structure of the interview itself (McLeod, 2011).

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis for this study was guided primarily by the heuristic inquiry protocol (Moustakas, 1994) but also reflected elements of a phenomenological analysis coding process (Moustakas, 1990). As previously stated, heuristic inquiry entails six phases: initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). At the time of the interviews, initial engagement had already occurred, and the immersion process was underway. Immersion involved gathering data from all
co-researchers and entering it deeply with the goal of comprehensive apprehension (Moustakas, 1990). Information gathered about each individual co-researcher’s experience became, for a time, relatively all-consuming, considered carefully in thought, feeling, experience, and along with the reflexively considered influences of the researcher’s own experience. After immersion by way of the interview process occurred with all co-researchers in succession, the researcher distanced himself from the data for a brief period of rest, a time during which the data incubated in reflection, enabling “the inner tacit dimension to reach its full possibilities” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). Then the researcher returned once again to the data from the co-researchers (after it was all transcribed by a third party) and returned to each co-researcher to check for accuracy of expression.

The data interpretation and coding procedure for the transcripts of the interviews followed steps used in phenomenological analysis. The first reading of a transcript was for the purpose of becoming as familiar with the account as possible without taking notes or considering possible themes (Smith & Osborn, 2008). In the subsequent reading of the transcript, general notes were taken in the margins, and circling and underlining was done related to words or phrases that were repeated, indicative of emerging themes (Alase, 2017). In the third reading, themes and categorizations in the pattern of responses started to become clear as well as “similarities and differences, echoes, amplifications and contradictions in what a person [was] saying” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 67). After the third reading, such emerging themes and categorizations were compiled into separate written lists representing each co-researcher individually. Each co-researcher was given an opportunity to clarify, respond to, or add to his list of emerging themes and subthemes. Throughout this interpretation process, additional notes were taken related to the ongoing process of reflexivity as I considered how my own
characteristics may have influenced each interview. After engaging in this process for all 10 co-researchers, notes, annotations, and additional feedback from co-researchers were reviewed for aggregate emerging themes, which were then compiled into a master list. This aggregate list was sent to all co-researchers for a final opportunity to provide feedback. The finalized list of such themes comprised superordinate themes and subthemes in preparation for the explication stage (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

When the researcher was confident that all input had been received from the co-researchers, a process of explication was entered in which a composite depiction of co-researchers’ experiences was created. This composite depiction was built from aspects of the interview data, such as themes, exemplars (i.e., quotes), illustrations, and exemplary narratives that captured as closely as possible the essence of the experience of being trusted by one’s spouse. Explication of such a depiction of the experience of being trusted also continued to bear in mind the researcher’s own experiences, allowing for the emergence of fresh awareness as a result of the profound encounter of researcher and co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994). Both the composite depiction and individual representations for each co-researcher were utilized in the explication of results in Chapter Five.

Following explication came the final stage of heuristic inquiry—creative synthesis. This synthesis became the final representation of lengthy processes of immersion, illumination, and explication in relation to the topic and question, and appears toward the end of Chapter Five. The researcher sought to creatively capture the essence and scope of the experience of being trusted through the composition of a “poem, story, drawing, painting, or by some other creative form” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32). The creative synthesis was meant to erupt in meaningful
articulation and representation from within the researcher as he contemplated the true depth and breadth of understanding gained throughout the heuristic processes.

**Methods for Addressing Validity or Trustworthiness**

Moustakas (1990) asserted that in heuristic inquiry the ultimate judgment of validity lies in the hands of the researcher since he is the only one that enters so deeply and passionately into the phenomenon and experience in question. The research results are considered valid to the extent that the presentation truly captures the meaning and essence of the experience of being trusted (Moustakas, 1990). While it may be true that the researcher becomes most intimately acquainted with the tacit and emergent knowledge about the question, various other methods must also be used to address validity and trustworthiness beyond that of the experience of the researcher.

In a concise overview of trustworthiness in qualitative research, Connelly (2016) outlined the five criteria, often credited to the collective work of Lincoln and Guba (1994, 1985), all of which were considered in this study: credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity. Under each criterion may fall various procedures used to establish a form of trustworthiness. What follows is a brief explanation of each criterion along with procedures relevant to this study.

**Credibility** refers to the confidence in the truth of the study and its findings and is analogous to internal validity in quantitative research (Connelly, 2016). Perhaps one of the most important procedures to ensure credibility is member checking or informant feedback, in which the researcher systematically obtains feedback from the co-researchers about the data, interpretations, and conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). In this study, feedback was obtained to verify content of interview transcripts (i.e., immediately
following each transcription), following the incubation period during analysis (i.e., after all
transcripts were complete, had been systematically reviewed and coded for themes, and had been
set aside for a brief incubation period), and toward the end of the study (i.e., following
explication but prior to creative synthesis). Methodological triangulation, or the use of multiple
data collection modes, was utilized as well (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Suter, 2009). In this
study, the researcher triangulated a husband’s interview responses with his letter to his wife, if he
chose to write it, and any other forms of feedback that the co-researcher chose to represent his
experience. As a final way of establishing credibility, the researcher engaged in “iterative
questioning of the data, returning to examine it several times” throughout the immersion and
interpretation processes, a procedure that may also contribute to credibility (Onwuegbuzie &

Researcher reflexivity is a critical aspect of heuristic research that may be used to
increase the credibility of relevant findings (Darawsheh, 2014; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).
Reflexivity refers to the ongoing process of self-reflection that I engaged in with the purpose of
generating awareness about my actions, feelings, and perceptions related to what it means to be
trusted as a husband by his wife (Darawsheh, 2014). Qualitative, in particular heuristic, research
involves active and collaborative construction of knowledge (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). I as
the researcher did not simply report the facts as related to objective data, but actively constructed
interpretations while checking on those interpretations with co-researchers and reflexively
questioning within myself how they came about. I continually asked myself, “What do I know?”
critically interrogates the self in relation to the research” (Suter, 2009, p. 85). Two primary
benefits of reflexivity are to pursue bracketing of my own preconceptions that could potentially
taint the research process and conclusions and to control biases that may influence the research process (Darawsheh, 2014). Two sources of researcher bias may exist: the effects of the researcher on the co-researchers and the effects of the co-researchers on the researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994). By bracketing and controlling for biases in this study, I more readily and accurately ruled out rival interpretations or spurious relations that may have proven interesting yet would not have been an accurate depiction of the experiences of the co-researchers (Darawsheh, 2014; Suter, 2009).

Dependability refers to stability of data over time and is similar to reliability in quantitative research (Connelly, 2016). Given the relatively short period of time data was collected, little could be done to ensure dependability. Nevertheless, to maximize a sense of dependability, member checking provided an opportunity for co-researchers to check the data and conclusions at various points in the process. This allowed them to amend their responses if they felt they had not accurately reflected how they would typically experience being trusted. Reviewing the data and conclusions at various points in time also provided a more robust sense of dependability (McLeod, 2011).

Confirmability refers to the degree findings are consistent and could be repeated, somewhat analogous to objectivity in quantitative research (Connelly, 2016). In other words, is the influence of the researcher sufficiently controlled so that co-researcher answers are not unduly influenced and may be repeated under similar circumstances? As mentioned earlier, heuristic inquiry requires deep, intense personal involvement of the researcher with the co-researchers. Such involvement lacks objectivity by design, and as such may impact confirmability, particularly if the process does not involve reflexivity. One way that reflexivity established some level of confirmability was for me to recognize the impact I may have had in
the interview process. Concerted effort was exerted throughout the study to resist leading or influencing answers to the research question.

Transferability refers to the extent that the findings may be useful to others beyond the research study itself, similar to generalization in quantitative research (Connelly, 2016). Clearly, statistical generalization is not relevant in a qualitative study, but a rich, detailed account of the co-researcher’s experiences could allow readers the opportunity to relate to the conclusions and transfer the results to their own situations (Connelly, 2016). While for the most part the findings were unique to those participating in the study, the hope is that unique knowledge of the experience of being trusted has emerged that may be useful for those considering their own experiences of trust, for counseling couples, or as the basis for further research.

Last, authenticity is the extent to which the researcher realistically depicts participants’ lives (Connelly, 2016). Like transferability, authenticity may be established by providing a “rich and thick,” detailed description of the co-researchers’ experiences (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 244). In this study, detailed and complete verbatim transcripts maximized the ability to find meaning in the words and depictions of the co-researchers rather than in the potentially biased interpretations of the researcher. Exemplars, or quotes from participants, were used to demonstrate themes identified from the co-researchers (Suter, 2009), both in the immersion and explication stages of the study. The goal is for these exemplars to bridge the interpretive gap between the expressed experience of the co-researchers and minds of the readers of this study. The potential for capturing authentic, deep meaning in the lives of the co-researchers is one of the strengths of heuristic inquiry. The depth of knowledge that has been attained through this study has no equal in quantitative research.
Chapter Summary

Heuristic inquiry can provide a novel and exciting approach to understanding husbands’ experiences of being trusted by their wives. Chapter Three has provided a detailed overview of the heuristic methodology utilized for this study. The overview included an explanation of heuristic inquiry applied to the specifics of the study, the research question, context for the study, methods for protection of participants, role of the researcher, criteria for selecting co-researchers, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, and methods for addressing validity or trustworthiness. Chapter Four includes a detailed description of the findings of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Researcher: “How would you describe your experience of being trusted by your wife?”
Leo: “Peace of mind, a sanctuary from the world ... the ability to soar above life’s challenges.”

This dissertation study was a heuristic investigation of the experience of husbands related to the trust they believe they receive from their wives. In Chapter One the author presented an introduction to the proposed study of husbands as trusties, including an explication of the problem the study would address, key terms and definitions, the purpose and nature of the study, research questions and objectives, and a conceptual framework supporting and justifying the study. Chapter Two contained an extensive overview of existent literature pertaining to the intrapersonal experience of the trustor and trusty, the interpersonal experience of trust, and an emphasis on the perspective of the trusty; all meant to justify the proposed heuristic study of how husbands experience the trust of their wives. Chapter Three provided a detailed overview of the heuristic methodology, including an explanation of heuristic inquiry applied to the specifics of the study, the research question, context for the study, methods for protection of participants, role of the researcher, criteria for selecting co-researchers, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, and methods for addressing validity or trustworthiness.

This chapter contains information about the process of how the study was conducted and key findings, including themes and subthemes associated with intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences of trust, reflecting the review of extant literature presented in Chapter Two. Also covered in this chapter are additional considerations in interpreting the results, including contextual and situational factors, as well as evidence of quality showing how the study followed procedures to ensure accuracy of data.

The research question for this study was: In a committed, marital relationship, what is the experience of a husband when he believes he is trusted by his wife? Qualitative data in response
to this research question were gathered through semistructured interviews, feedback received by way of member checking at three separate times throughout the study, and a letter written to the co-researcher’s wife, if he chose to write one (this was optional and two of the 10 co-researchers chose to do so). All recorded interviews were transcribed by a hired transcriptionist. As discussed in Chapter Three, all six phases of the heuristic methodology recommended by Moustakas (1990) were followed—initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis (p. 27). In sum, after the initial interview and prior to reviewing the interview content, the transcription was sent back to each co-researcher for review and feedback. The time co-researchers spent reviewing their transcripts allowed for an incubation period during which the researcher could become temporarily removed from the process for the sake of reflective respite. Upon receiving feedback from all co-researchers, the researcher engaged in an illumination process of careful and methodical data analysis, ultimately compiling an outline of emerging themes and subthemes that was then sent to each co-researcher for further review. Then after consolidating and refining the major themes and subthemes utilizing the feedback, a composite description of the experience of being trusted was sent to the co-researchers for one final review prior to explication of the results.

Participants

In this chapter, the author presents findings that emerged from deep engagement with 10 husbands around their experiences of being trusted by their wives. Prior to explication of the themes and subthemes, basic demographic data is provided to serve as context for the findings.

Demographic Information

The critical inclusion criteria for participation in this study was simply, beyond having been married at least five years, that a husband have a high degree of belief in the trust of his
wife. All of the men that participated in the study were married, with the exception of one that
had been married to his wife for 49 years until her passing approximately 12 years ago. This co-
researcher was deemed eligible since, despite his wife’s passing, he could reflect on his
experience of being trusted by his wife, a unique scenario not considered prior to recruitment
efforts but rich in data nonetheless. This gentleman had remained unmarried and based all of his
reflections on his 49-year marriage to his late wife. Nine of the men were in their first marriages,
while one was in his second, having been previously married and divorced. He based his
reflections on being trusted on his second marriage of five years. The average number of years
married for the entire group was 25.2, ranging from five years (the co-researcher’s second
marriage) to 46 years. The average age of the husbands was 53.7 years, ranging from ages 34 to
81 (Table 4.1 depicts co-researchers’ pseudonyms, ages, and lengths of marriage).

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<td><strong>Participant Pseudonym</strong></td>
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Efforts were made to maximize ethnic diversity and minimize geographical diversity, but initial efforts recruiting at three diverse community locations with flyers produced no participants. Snowball sampling ultimately produced all 10 participants but did not achieve either endeavor as intended. Nine of the 10 men identified as Caucasian while one identified as Hispanic/White. Nine out of the 10 men lived within a 15-mile radius of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, while one lived 45 miles outside of Harrisburg. Also, while such demographic information was not solicited, the interviews revealed that all 10 co-researchers identified as Christians, a fact that may be relevant in understanding some of the findings.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, a participant screening instrument was used to determine a prospective participant’s level of belief in the trust of his wife (see Appendix D). To qualify, a participant needed to check off at least 15 of the 20 areas of marriage in which he could be trusted. Seven of the qualifying participants checked all 20 areas, and three checked 16 out of 20. Interestingly, the three husbands that marked 16 areas were three of the four youngest husbands married for the shortest amount of time, not including the co-researcher that had remarried. Furthermore, all three did not mark the item “my time management outside of work” as an area in which they believed they were trusted. Two of the three did not mark “our extended family” or “my control over my emotions.” While these men qualified for the study based on their overall responses on the screening instrument, and these observations are not directly relevant to this study, this commonality is noteworthy and may indicate a need for further research.

Basic demographic information has been provided in this section to allow the reader to determine transferability of the findings beyond the study itself, a process similar to generalizability in quantitative research (Connelly, 2016). This information also lays a
foundation for the authenticity of the co-researchers’ experiences, further explicated in the findings that follow (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

**Findings**

**The Interview**

The experiences of trusties in interpersonal relationships has been generally neglected in the literature, as argued and established in Chapters One and Two. The purpose of this study was to allow for the full expression of such experiences by a select group of 10 husbands in relation to their wives’ trust for them. In an effort to solicit a “rich and thick,” detailed description of these experiences (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 244), questions were posed in the initial interview as they pertained to the areas of their marriage in which they believed they were trusted (Table 4.2 includes the interview questions that were provided to the co-researchers prior to the in-person interview).

<table>
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<td><strong>Interview Guide</strong></td>
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- How would you describe your experience of being trusted by your wife?
- What feelings, thoughts, perceptions, bodily sensations, situations, memories, and so forth are related in some way to this experience?
- What stands out for you as you consider what it is like to be trusted by your wife?
- What else happens to you when you believe you are trusted by your wife that may be harder to put into words?
- Please explain any other aspects or meanings of this experience that you have not yet shared.
Have you shared all of the significant aspects of your experience of being trusted by your wife? If not, what else would you like to share?

If talking about your experience is not sufficient, how else can you represent or express what it is like to be trusted by your wife (e.g., journaling, meaningful objects, music, art, etc.)?

What else would you like to share from your letter you wrote prior to our conversation if you chose to do so?

There is no end point up until ________ (date). If there is anything else you would like to add, feel free to let me know.

This list of questions was sent to each recipient prior to the interview so that he could prepare his thoughts and use the questions to write the letter to his wife, if he chose to do so. At the time of the interview and after completing the full consent process and explaining the nature of the interview process, the researcher asked the first question verbatim, as stated above, explaining that all of the rest of the questions were simply various ways of getting at that overarching question. Beyond that point in the interview, the conversation did not necessarily adhere strictly to the interview guide, but the conversation flowed collaboratively in an effort to form a deep understanding of the co-researcher’s experience of being trusted by his wife (Moustakas, 1990, 1994). As stated in Chapter Three, the researcher sought to engage in a dialogue built on security, empathy, flexibility, and freedom of expression, with access to the full interview guide for both researcher and co-researcher if needed (Sim & Wright, 2002).
Upon gaining experience in conducting the interviews, the researcher developed two additional questions that worked well in soliciting a fuller expression of experiences. The first was:

Allow yourself to imagine, if you will, that your wife does not trust you for some reason. For a moment allow your thoughts and feelings to develop as if you were not trusted by her. Now bring yourself back to the reality in which you are trusted by her. By allowing yourself to enter that state for a moment, does it help you consider other aspects of what it means to you to be trusted by your wife?

This question seemed to create a contrast effect that allowed some co-researchers to consider what might be lost without trust, thus recognizing what experiences exist because of its presence. For example, when this question was posed to Chuck, he was asked if this way of thinking helped him recognize the contrast and be able to talk more about what it is like to be trusted by his wife. In response he stated, “I think it does, because when I was first presented with this idea to even be in this conversation with you, I started thinking, wow, I’ve never really thought about her trusting me, and now I’m thinking about her trusting me.” This sentiment was quite common, which will be discussed more in what follows. Chuck, like others, seemed more accustomed to thinking about how he might not be trusted rather than how he is.

The second question that proved helpful to some was: “Imagine that you go home today and walk up to your wife and say, ‘I appreciate the fact that you trust me because …’ How would you complete that statement?” This question was particularly powerful. By having the co-researcher imagine a deeply personal moment of communication with his wife, he seemed to be able to shift his thinking about his experiences out of the realm of cognitive analysis and into the realm of interpersonal experience, even if only imagined. For example, one of the co-
researchers, Caleb, who was struggling to articulate what his wife’s trust meant to him, opened up in unique ways when asked this question. He immediately said in response, “I feel safe in our relationship….” After more than 30 minutes of discussion, this was the first time he mentioned safety, which seemed to only come to mind when imagining speaking directly to his wife. When asked why imagining speaking directly to his wife made a difference Caleb stated, “Because it’s not an assignment, at that point.” In other words, he seemed to be saying, his response was no longer just an answer to a question on a page or a question asked from the interview guide; it was personal and meaningful. To be clear, these questions were not utilized in some of the earlier interviews, during which such questions were not particularly necessary to solicit responses. They were developed out of necessity to help some of the men in later interviews express themselves more fully.

The Co-Researcher Experience

Prior to presenting the themes, it seems appropriate at this point to share a common sentiment that did not qualify as a theme related to the research question, but appeared significant nonetheless. This sentiment was an expression of appreciation for being asked to think through what it means to be trusted by their wives. Many co-researchers simply expressed thanks for being given the opportunity to talk about their experiences of being trusted. As stated earlier, along with being thankful, Chuck said, “When I was first presented with this idea to even be in this conversation with you, I started thinking, wow, I’ve never really thought about her trusting me, and now I’m thinking about her trusting me.” Jacob, another co-researcher, stated, “It was good for me to think about this.” Co-researcher Anthony articulated this sentiment by saying,
I’ve been in this experience of being trusted. It was a lot of fun to unpack it…. Yeah, so I’ve taken it for granted, and maybe until I receive questions like these, I really didn’t reflect on it too much. I took it for granted.

Similarly, Ben stated,

It’s interesting that, that was another thing I think I took for granted, that I had my wife’s trust, until … you were doing this study. And I thought, oh, that’s an interesting perspective. That’s—and it’s an important perspective. So, I hadn’t given it a thought up until then.

In the consent process for this study, it was made clear that no particular benefit of the study process was guaranteed to the participants. Yet, at least some felt that being given the opportunity to discuss their experience of being trusted by their wives had value in and of itself.

Overall, this study was designed to tap into the co-researchers’ tacit knowledge of what it means to be trusted by their wives (Moustakas, 1990). Tacit knowledge is “that internal place where experience, feeling, and meaning join together to form both a picture of the world and a way to navigate that world” (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 60). The researcher engaged with the co-researchers in ways that revealed experience, feeling, and meaning in relation to being trusted by their wives. As evidenced by the aforementioned quotes about their experiences with the study itself, engaging in deep conversation and reflection brought to the surface tacit knowledge of extant, ongoing, and often taken-for-granted experiences of being trusted by their wives; experiences that had profound impact on how they were navigating their lives, yet often outside of their conscious awareness. This tacit knowledge emerged and was given voice, illuminating numerous themes and subthemes. Such is the value of heuristic discovery.
Identification of Themes and Subthemes

The content of the interviews provided a wealth of rich qualitative data for analysis and heuristic discovery. As mentioned, each co-researcher had the opportunity to review his transcript prior to each phase of the analysis. Once the co-researcher was comfortable with the content of the interview, the researcher read through the interview without taking notes or considering possible themes, consistent with the recommendation of Smith and Osborn (2008). Following the recommendation of Alase (2017), in the second reading, interesting words or phrases were circled, general notes were taken in the margins, statements were underlined, and sections were circled or highlighted with an eye toward emerging themes. Returning to a recommendation of Smith and Osborn (2008), the researcher reviewed the content a third time with the goal of recognizing themes, categorizations, and patterns of response related to the research question. After the third reading, the researcher handwrote a list of the co-researchers’ most direct and relevant responses related to his experience of being trusted by his wife. Themes from each individual interview were noted when apparent, but common responses were liberally noted even if themes were not clearly developed.

After completing the aforementioned data analysis process for all 10 interviews, a process of aggregating potential themes and subthemes commenced. All handwritten lists were typed, printed out in a large font, and cut into individual statements, ideas, and emerging themes. The statements were numbered to correspond with the source co-researcher. Then a lengthy process of grouping similar responses began. As the groupings came together, aggregate themes and subthemes began to emerge. This process went through various stages of organizing and reorganizing until all printed statements had been categorized, including a set of outlying responses. Following this process, the aggregate emerging themes and subthemes were typed
and sent via personal e-mail to each co-researcher for review and feedback (see Appendix F for the instructions attached to this document). Any feedback received was then carefully reviewed and incorporated into the emerging themes and subthemes.

**Explication of Themes and Subthemes**

For this study, the operational definition of trust established in Chapter One was: a situationally and relationally influenced personal disposition toward one’s partner that informs one’s view of the past as well as one’s present and future-oriented regulation of interpersonal risk, manifesting in trust-related actions, reactions, and interactions. This definition reflects how trust may be experienced intrapersonally and interpersonally. What follows is an explication of the various themes and subthemes that emerged from the researcher’s interactions and communication with the co-researchers as they pertain to the research question. Consistent with the organizational structure found in Chapter Two for the discussion of extant literature on trust, the themes are grouped according to whether they reflect an intrapersonal or interpersonal experience of the husbands related to being trusted by their wives. Pertinent contextual and situational factors are discussed when relevant.

As suggested in Chapter Two, literature on trust tends to parse the experience of trust in a way that simplifies its nature for the sake of organization and understanding. While this may be necessary at times, it also risks obscuring the true nature of trust in its fullest, multifaceted experience. This risk exists in the explication of themes that follows. A theme that is categorized as intrapersonal is likely inseparable from interpersonal and contextual factors. And that which is categorized as interpersonal likely has a recursive relationship with intrapersonal manifestations. Certain aspects of the inextricable nature of the intrapersonal and interpersonal,
as revealed in the data, will be discussed briefly at different points in this chapter and in more
detail in Chapter Five.

Themes and Subthemes Related to Intrapersonal Experience of Trust

In this section, major themes and subthemes primarily related to the co-researchers’
intrapersonal experience of being trusted by their wives are delineated and explicated, each with
the corresponding data to support its veracity (see Figure 4.1 for an overview of intrapersonal
themes and subthemes).

![Figure 4.1: Overview of intrapersonal themes and subthemes](image)

**Deep satisfaction.**

To be trusted by one’s wife is deeply satisfying and something to be treasured. All 10 co-
researchers expressed this sentiment in one way or another, describing the experience of being
trusted with such words as *joy, happiness, gratifying, content, wonderful, tremendous, blessing,
remarkable, pleasant, satisfying,* and even “*my precious*” (a reference to The One Ring in *The
Lord of the Rings*). Josh put it this way:
[My wife’s trust] makes me feel, it makes me feel, um, what is the word? Content, happy, joyful, um, secure. I feel secure that I have her trust…. I feel like this is maybe the greatest thing that has been entrusted to me.

Ben stated, “Well, just it’s such a—it’s something you can’t take for granted in the world we live in. So, when you’re—when you find yourself in that position, it’s just this tremendous, joyful thing.” He went on to say, in perhaps the most succinct expression of deep satisfaction, “I mean, what do you have, if you don’t have trust?” And when the researcher asked Daniel, “Was that a good feeling, then, to know that she was willing to trust you?” his answer best represented the enthusiasm that often accompanied the expressions of deep satisfaction: “Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, yes. Yes.”

Chuck had a wonderful expression of this deep satisfaction as well. He stated, It’s not just something out there nebulous we’re talking about trust; oh, trust, trust, trust. It’s, it’s palpable. It’s something that’s so, like foundational to who we are as a safe couple that’s like—you hear people say, oh, you guys are so wonderful. And then you’re like, well, you haven’t seen us when we’re not wonderful. [laughter] Um, but it is wonderful. It’s really wonderful, and I’m so blessed.

Looking at the range of expressions, such as Chuck’s, it was clear that the co-researchers had been given a gift of great value. When asked to think about and talk about the trust of their wives, it was as if their eyes were opened anew to the fact that they had this deeply satisfying, precious gift in their possession.

**Thankfulness.**

While the expression of deep satisfaction was common to all co-researchers, many specifically articulated thankfulness. When asked about his thoughts and feelings related to
being trusted by his wife, Leo, married 46 years, stated, “Fortunate and thankful. I’m just thankful to the Lord that we have as good a relationship as it is. I still think of her as my sweetheart.” He related her trust to the quality of their relationship, for which he is thankful. Daniel, when speaking of his late wife of 49 years, reflected uniquely on how his wife had trusted him to pursue higher education when he was younger, even away from his family for periods of time. He stated, “And she never had any reservation. She would look at it as a time of exploration…. And, you know, I can’t thank her enough for that.” Even approximately 12 years after the passing of his wife, he spoke so fondly and thankfully of the trusting support she provided him many years ago.

Chuck, married seven years, related his thankfulness to not only the trust of his wife, but his opportunity to reflect on it:

Yeah, and I’m thankful for this kind of [discussion for the research study], because how far could I go down a path of, like, ignorance to this? Like, it was exposed in a way that’s like, wow, she really does [trust me]. Like, I wasn’t dwelling on this. I wasn’t thinking about this. And now I have. And I’m so thankful, because I’m, like, I have something that’s really wonderful.

Bradley, married nine years, had a slightly different reason for his thankfulness. The discussion inspired him to talk about two ways that he was not particularly trustworthy early in their marriage. When asked whether that made him doubt whether he deserved his wife’s trust, which she had given him anyhow, he stated,

It’s like a manifestation of God’s grace. It’s unmerited favor. It’s like … I didn’t deserve it. She didn’t have to do it that way, but she did. And so, like, I can mostly just be thankful for it.
When asked to think for a moment about what it might be like to not be trusted by his wife, then return to thinking about the fact that she does trust him, Anthony, married 28 years, stated, “I think gratitude. Yeah, I mean, just gratitude.” Experiencing the trust of their wives was clearly deeply satisfying, often accompanied by thankfulness. The co-researchers knew they had something of great value that was not to be taken for granted.

**An understanding that his wife’s trust is a privilege not to be taken for granted.**

All 10 co-researchers expressed in one way or another what a privilege it was to be trusted by their wives. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2018) defines *privilege* as a right or immunity granted as a peculiar benefit, advantage, or favor. The co-researchers, on top of speaking of satisfaction and thankfulness, also recognized how being trusted was a special, or peculiar, benefit granted rather uniquely and perhaps exclusively to them as husbands. And while it was granted, it was not to be taken for granted. Josh stated, “This [grace and trust] may be the most valued thing that I could possibly have from a human being.” Ben reflected, “Well, just it’s such a—it’s something you can’t take for granted in the world we live in.” He later went on to say, “This is a great, I don’t know, privilege, or whatever, to be trusted by someone.”

Anthony, when thinking about how grateful he was to be trusted by his wife, said, “I think it’s easy to take for granted, too, you know, because [my wife] has been [my wife] since I married her, you know, so.” When discussing the co-researchers’ experiences earlier, a quote from Ben was shared that indicated the benefit he gained from participating in the study. There was more that Ben said at that moment that conveyed this sense of privilege:

It’s interesting that, that was another thing I think I took for granted, that I had my wife’s trust, until … you were doing this study. And I thought, oh, that’s an interesting perspective. That’s—and it’s an important perspective. So, I hadn’t given it a thought up
until then. It was something I took for granted. And it shouldn’t be taken for granted.

But that’s made me look at it and say, this is a wonderful thing. This is a great, I don’t know, privilege, or whatever, to be trusted by someone.

This expression by Ben was quite common, in that when trust existed, particularly for many years, it was apparently easy to take for granted. The men would live their lives with the trust of their wives without consciously recognizing its impact. But once recognized and focused upon, the co-researchers agreed that it was not to be taken for granted. Jacob put it this way:

Um, at the risk of sounding trite, it is a wonderful position to be in to know that I am trusted by her. And we will say it, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, just express our appreciation to one another that we have that trust.

For Jacob, his deep satisfaction with being trusted seemed to require an expression of appreciation to his wife so as to not take such a privilege for granted.

With this sense of privilege comes a sense of being special. To receive the trust of their wives was to be granted a privileged status. The co-researchers’ expression of this often conveyed a sense of intimacy and being loved, both of which will be discussed in depth under other themes later in this chapter. But two quotes capture the nature of this sense of privilege.

With a big grin on his face, Josh said,

So how does it make me feel? Important. To be trusted is to feel important. To be trusted is to be held in—it’s good to feel held in high regard. It is—I mean, I believe this. I know I’m her favorite.

Lewis stated,

It builds closeness and intimacy. It would say to me that I’m in an elite group to receive that level of trust in something that she would be passionate about. That would make me
feel close and special … it’s not something that would be entrusted to just anyone…. So, and I think that reinforces. I mean, on some level, I think spouse is the ultimate, elite group…. So, I think if anything [her trust] maybe reinforces that she would say “I do” all over again type of a thing.

So whether it was a general expression of trust or trust granted for something specific, part of being trusted by their wives was to experience a unique privilege, not granted to just anyone and not to be taken for granted.

Finally, Bradley had a great deal to say on this matter of privilege and not taking it for granted. Following his expression of thankfulness he went on to say, “I mean, you don’t want to abuse it, you don’t want to take advantage of it. It’s not owed to me in any sort of way, so …”

Asked to expound upon what it means to him to have his wife’s trust that he believes is not owed to him in any way, Bradley stated,

Um, I guess that it feeds gratitude, as we already discussed, and also just not being complacent and taking it for granted. Like, since it’s not, I’m not owed it, and it’s not a requirement, like, um, like, I can’t require it, I guess is what I’m saying. I shouldn’t just say, oh, well, yeah, of course she trusts me; not to just get comfortable with it.

For many, like Bradley, this privilege not to be taken for granted seemed to correspond with a certain level of conviction to maintain that which is not, but perhaps should be, recognized more often in the marriage.

_A sense of responsibility or inspiration to maintain the trust._

For six of the 10 husbands, recognizing the privilege of being trusted by their wives and not taking it for granted was not quite enough. The experience of being trusted brought with it a sense of responsibility or inspiration to do something to maintain that trust. Josh stated it quite
simply: “Oh, there’s a responsibility to maintain that [trust], for sure. Absolutely. That’s a sacred trust.” Related to this, Josh later in the conversation stated, “I would never want to compromise that vulnerability.” He was referring to the vulnerability his wife experiences by trusting him. Jacob reflected on how trust “is something that is very hard to achieve, but very easy to lose” and how he “would not want to do anything to jeopardize that.” Jacob, when discussing how his wife trusts him regardless of the fact that she had been hurt in a previous relationship, stated, “Well, it makes me very grateful that she is doing that, and deeply appreciative of it. And I would not want to do anything to jeopardize that.” But it went further for Jacob. In a letter written to his wife, he stated, “The reward of knowing that I am fully trusted incentivizes me to maintain that complete trust.” He was not alone in this sentiment.

Anthony had a lot to say about his sense of responsibility and inspiration to maintain his wife’s trust. He said,

That’s what’s funny, too, is in being trusted in a way I think probably, at least the way I’m motivated is it almost makes you work harder to earn that trust that you already have…. I want to show my appreciation back, so I’m going to earn that trust that she already has for me.

Little did Anthony know that he is far from the only one motivated to maintain the trust his wife already seems to have in him. Bradley put it this way: “It’s an extra—I guess it’s an extra motivator, or a helpful motivator, or a means of God graciously making it easier to do the right thing kind of thing.” As stated earlier, Chuck simply stated, “Because of the trust extended, I’ve wanted it to be more so,” and later asked himself the question, “I’ve got trust. How do I keep that?”
An intriguing circular and reciprocal relationship exists in these efforts to maintain the trust that the husbands so value. Many of the husbands expressed in one way or another how they wished to maintain the trust by way of trustworthiness. In other words, they wanted to continue to be worthy of the trust they had already been given and that they deeply value. Yet, interestingly, not a single husband said that his wife required him to perfectly earn her trust or be completely or perfectly worthy of her trust. For example, a few moments after Anthony said, “I want to show my appreciation back, so I’m going to earn that trust that she already has for me,” he added, “I don’t feel that I have to earn it, or I have to prove myself.” This idea will be discussed in more detail later when looking at the theme of grace in this chapter and in Chapter Five when revisiting the trust literature and conceptual framework.

**Validation through positive regard.**

Of all of the themes, this was perhaps the most difficult to define succinctly. Positive regard itself, in many forms, was experienced by many of the co-researchers, yet the positive regard meant something even more significant to the men—validation. Not insignificant in this discussion is the risk of confusing the theme with thoughts of Carl Rogers and *unconditional* positive regard, thus this theme will be labeled as simply *validation through positive regard* as it seems to capture the essence of diverse expressions in this area. Included among the expressions are experiences of feeling loved, respected, affirmed, valued, supported, and believed in; eight of the men explicitly communicated the experience of validation by way of some form of positive regard as a result of their wives’ trust. As will be discussed in the various subthemes to follow, that which was being validated as a result of the positive regard may have differed from husband to husband. For example, the trust of one’s wife experienced as positive regard in the form of respect may have communicated a validation of one’s decision making. Or positive regard in the
form of love communicated a validation of one’s inherent worth as a man and husband. Some husbands did communicate experiencing some aspects of their wives’ positive regard as unconditional, such as an experience of unconditional love. But to include *unconditional* in front of *positive regard* would be to speculate beyond the expressions of some of the co-researchers in this area and perhaps obscure a pure thematic understanding of the experience of being trusted.

**Loved.**

To three of the men, to be trusted was to specifically feel loved and to experience a sense of validation as a result of that love. Arguably, other men expressed feeling loved by way of related expressions. At times, the men would begin to speak of trust and love interchangeably, as if they would experience them similarly. And to complicate the matter, when discussing trust, co-researchers would talk about various ways that they felt loved as a result, but without explicitly referring to love. Upon further discussion it became clear that trust was a narrower expression of a broader experience of being loved. The love of a wife would be expressed through trust, and trust would be experienced as love, in its many expressions. As Anthony considered this relationship, he simply stated, “And so, um, maybe that’s one way she has demonstrated her love, is just through her trust.” Daniel expressed a similar notion:

> [Trusting me in various decisions] made me feel that I was a loved husband … because she—and it was never anything that made me think, you know, by the back door she’s trying to lead into something. I mean, we just didn’t have that kind of relationship.

Jacob expressed his experience of love and trust this way:

> And to know that [my wife] trusts me is part of her expression of unconditional love that just as whatever thing I do that hurts her or offends her doesn’t make her stop loving me.
It also doesn’t make her stop trusting me. And it allows me to understand grace more fully.

Jacob’s expression captures the relationship among three experiences that so many of the men articulated in their own unique ways: trust, love, and grace. Grace will be discussed fully as an interpersonal experience of trust. Not all husbands added the unconditional element, but many men experienced trust that did not require perfection, which seemed to be experienced as unconditional love, a deeply validating experience. Noteworthy is the fact that not a single husband spoke of this trust and love as a license to be untrustworthy, even if they were experienced as unconditional.

**Respected.**

Being trusted often led to feeling respected, which was also a validating experience. What may have been noticed to this point in the discussion of themes, Anthony, age 51 and married 28 years, had quite a way with words and tended to represent and encapsulate many of the themes and subthemes related to experiencing the trust of his wife, including that of feeling respected. One could say he epitomized the intrapersonal themes and subthemes or exemplified in his words what it means for a husband to be trusted by his wife, a fortuitous finding consistent with a possible outcome of Moustakas’s (1990) heuristic research design (See Figure 4.2). Referring to the letter he wrote to his wife about being trusted by her and its relationship to respect, Anthony said,

> And I think even earlier in my letter I kind of put those things [love and trust] together and kind of again goes to that whole love and respect thing that you feel really respected when you’re trusted, right?

The relationship between trust and respect resonated with Caleb. He spoke of it this way:
I think guys crave respect from their wives, and I think [trust] goes with respect…. I think if my wife respects me—let’s say—I’ll reframe what respect is. Let’s say if she thinks that I’m making good choices, or she thinks I’m doing well through my job, or she thinks I’m a good example through the youth group, I feel like, like a grading system. She’s proud of the husband that she has. I don’t think that she could trust you if she didn’t respect you. If she—if you broke her trust, I think it would also bring down her respect for you. She would feel like you lied to her in some way, so the respect kind of diminishes just as the trust does. Or it could, I don’t know, it’s really hard for me because I hadn’t thought about this before, but I don’t know if my wife could trust me unless she had a fair amount of respect for me. If she didn’t respect the way I made decisions, she certainly wouldn’t trust me with money or with the kids…. I’ll stick with my idea that I think they go together, because I don’t think that I could feel trusted if I felt like she wasn’t fully behind me from a respect issue, too.

This lengthy quote was included to reflect yet another circular, recursive relationship between trust and another relationship experience or phenomenon. As he processed his experience of being trusted, it was as if he was unsure of what would come first, trust or respect, but he concluded that they were certainly related in his experience somehow. Worth mentioning again at this point is how intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences of trust are inextricably linked, arguably inseparable in their conceptualization. A belief that one is trusted can also be experienced as an intrapersonal belief that one is respected, resulting in a sense of validation. This related belief is intrapersonal, yet it is established interpersonally. Perhaps all themes and subthemes could be framed this way, but for the sake of organization as it relates to previous literature, themes, and subthemes, such as respect, they are categorized as intrapersonal or
interpersonal according to what the co-researchers seemed to emphasize most as they articulated their experiences.

To conclude the discussion of the subtheme of feeling respected and tie it to the next, when asked to reflect more on what it feels like to have his trustworthiness acknowledged by way of his wife’s trust, Lewis stated, “I hear respect from her, that, um, that I’m valued.” Later he added, “I think there’s a sense of validating worth. I mean, it does come back to respect, and, you know, I feel like I’m seen as good enough to warrant that.” Not only did Lewis relate trust and respect, but he related them both to a validation of his value and worth.

*Valued, affirmed, and supported.*

Part of being positively regarded as an experience of trust was feeling valued, affirmed, and supported in various ways; again, all ways of experiencing validation. Caleb expressed this in many ways. He said, “I can relax in the decisions I’m making and what I’m doing because I—she already believes in me and that I’m doing the right thing.” When asked to consider what he might say to his wife directly about his experience of her trust, he said, “I feel that she’s behind me and that she believes in me. I think there’s something really powerful in knowing that somebody sees the good in you…. It makes me feel valuable…. ” Caleb felt valued and affirmed by his wife’s trust, which conveyed belief in him. Anthony, married 28 years, expressed this idea and more when he said, “I think when you have someone who believes the best in you, it helps you not just believe the best in them but start living more that way, as well.” The positive regard Anthony experienced from his wife was both affirming and inspiring, consistent with the subtheme earlier about maintaining trust.

Lewis articulated his sense of value, affirmation, and support by saying, “Where there’s [trust] it’s that, you know, feeling of support and a positive, you know, just general positive
vibe.” Daniel, reflecting on his wife’s trust, expressed his sense of affirmation beautifully by stating, “When she said yes [to marrying me], you know, that was the beginning of a line of trust that she put all her confidence and desire to have companionship in me.” For Daniel, his wife’s “yes” meant that she trusted him enough to place her confidence in him.

In sum, to experience trust as validation through positive regard, husbands tended to feel loved, respected, valued, affirmed, and supported. As stated, this theme, along with its corresponding subthemes, was the most challenging to define. Looking back over all of the data received from the co-researchers, the case could be made that positive regard, and most specifically experiencing love as a result of the trust of their wives, permeated all other experiences of being trusted, even if the specific words used here to describe the theme and subthemes were not always utilized by the co-researchers themselves.

**Affirmation of doing what is right.**

Another theme that emerged was affirmation of doing what is right. Six of the husbands spoke explicitly of this experience of affirmation as a result of receiving the trust of their wives. What was considered *right* for the husbands differed a bit from person to person, as might be expected given the moral connotation of the word *right*. Despite the differences, the common sentiment seemed to be that when a co-researcher’s wife trusted him, it was an indicator and affirmation that he was doing something that should be done right and needed to be done right, in his mind and/or in the mind of his wife. Also, that which was *right* could be related to a specific belief or value, such as the belief that God requires him to be trustworthy, or it could simply be general affirmation that he was doing the right thing by being as trustworthy as he believed he should be in relation to his wife’s trust. As Ben put it, “That’s what marriage ought to be, that the two people can trust each other.” Given the homogenous nature of the co-researchers in
terms of their common Christian faith, it is quite possible that this theme reflects unique experiences related to a Christian set of beliefs regarding trust in marriage. Nevertheless, the theme was quite strong among this set of co-researchers.

Bradley, age 34 and husband of nine years, placed a great deal of emphasis on this affirmation. When discussing his experience of his wife’s trust, he said,

It’s some barometer of some sort of relational health…. So it’s not the only barometer of me doing what’s right. But I think it could at least be a useful tool in considering, okay, like, am I listening well? Am I responding appropriately to her concerns? A bit later in the conversation he added, “I just keep coming back to depth and validation that I’m at least possibly doing the right thing.” He valued the health of his marriage and experienced his wife’s trust as an affirmation that he was doing what was right to that end. As the discussion continued, Bradley clarified some of what he was affirmed in doing right by saying, “Without trust it would be the superficial relationship and that’s—it’s not what I want. It’s not what we’re supposed to have. It would not be pleasant.” These quotes from Bradley capture how what is right could be his trustworthiness, the overall health of his marriage, what he personally believes is right, or what his wife believes is right. Regardless of which belief or value was sought after most, his wife’s trust in him was an affirmation that he achieved, or at least might have been achieving, his desire to do what is right.

Caleb had quite a bit to say about doing the right thing, as evidenced by a series of short quotes: “She knows that I have her and our two daughters as a priority.” “She can trust the types of decisions that I’m making so that there was—there wasn’t like a selfish motive to my decisions.” “Spiritual leader of the house was a way that I felt trusted.” “You don’t have someone doubting all of your decisions, but you feel like you can be who you are supposed to be,
that she’s going to be behind you.” “I can relax in the decisions I’m making and what I’m doing because I—she already believes in me and that I’m doing the right thing.” “We’ve been able to work together [as a result of trust, which] makes me feel like I’m doing something right.” “It makes me proud of myself that I’m at least making good decisions and on the right track.” And finally, “There’s more a sense of not trying to prove myself to her, but that sense of peace that we’re in a place where she would believe that I’m doing the right thing.” Reflect in each of these quotes is the idea that there is a standard, value, or belief that is being achieved and acknowledged by way of receiving his wife’s trust. Caleb seemed to convey a sense of affirmation and confidence in their relationship because he could know, by her trust, that he was doing the right thing.

A few additional expressions by the co-researchers support the theme of affirmation of doing what is right. When talking about how blessed he felt to have the trust of his wife, Ben stated, “It’s a great relationship, as marriage ought to be, um, by God’s design.” Caleb said, “I was proud of us; that as a couple that we could trust in each other.” And in a lengthier expression of his sense of what is right, Lewis stated,

I expect trust, because I feel I tried to live in a way that would warrant that, you know, I think. So I think there’s a, um, I think what I’m experiencing is in line with what I would expect to experience. So, I think there’s a—there’s a, yeah, it’s an alignment there, so it just feels correct and normal…. If it was otherwise, like, if I felt like I was deserving of trust and not receiving it, then I think there would be more of an awareness and kind of a—it would be something that I would be more cognizant of. So I think it’s just something that just is, because it should be.
For Lewis, part of his experience of being trusted by his wife was a belief that, given his sense of his own trustworthiness, her trust was an affirmation that things were as they should be. The alignment between trustworthiness and trust was correct in his view, and it is what he would expect, given what he believes to be right in their relationship. All of these expressions by the various husbands are predicated on a standard, value, or belief to which he, like Lewis, was comparing his experiencing; a standard that he used to conduct their relationship and that her trust in him seemed to affirm was done rightly.

In review to this point, the men’s experiences of being trusted by their wives involved deep satisfaction and an understanding that they were experiencing a privilege not to be taken for granted. Their wives’ trust provided a sense of validation through positive regard and affirmation of doing what is right. With the compilation of these experiences, perhaps the final intrapersonal theme of peace and security will come as no surprise.

**Peace and security.**

A theme that became exceedingly evident among all of the co-researchers was the experience of peace and security as a result of their wives’ trust. While not exactly the same, peace and security will be addressed together since they tended to go hand in hand in their expression. This peace seems to reflect a sense of harmony or tranquility in the marriage that exists alongside a sense of security, or freedom from danger, fear, or anxiety. As they relate to the experience of being trusted, these appear to be two sides of the same coin, so to speak. Interestingly, both peace and security may be defined as a type of freedom, with peace not just being the existence of harmony or tranquility, but also “freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2018). This common notion of freedom
will be discussed in great depth in the next session where freedom itself, in many forms, emerged as one of the strongest interpersonal themes.

This theme of peace and security began to emerge in the very first interview. Leo, age 68 and married 46 years, stated as his first thoughts on being trusted by his wife, “Well, my initial thoughts were—came to my mind are peace of mind, a sanctuary from the world, uh, the ability to soar above life’s challenges, and think more clearly.” What a beautiful image this is of soaring above life’s challenges, as if his wife’s trust allows him to spread his wings and look down on, from a position of clarity, that which could cause fear and anxiety. Also, in this quote, Leo combined peace with sanctuary, arguably both sides of the peace-security coin. Later he added,

Well, the feeling comes with—back to the initial answer to your question—peace of mind. I don’t have to worry about, I can take on life’s challenges better, whether it’s work related, or outside-relationships related, if I know that my relationship with my wife is as good as it can be, and, you know, trusting and no jealousy, and I don’t have to worry about that.

In no uncertain terms, Leo expressed how he could share his thoughts and feelings without fear.

In all, Leo mentioned “peace of mind” five times during the initial interview and reaffirmed this in his feedback during a member check.

Josh, married 28 years, when reflecting on his wife’s trust, stated, “It makes me feel, it makes me feel, um, what is the word? Content, happy, joyful, um, secure. I feel secure that I have her trust…. I feel like this is maybe the greatest thing that has been entrusted to me.” This quote is fascinating in that Josh says that trust has been entrusted to him. This evokes an image of Josh’s wife handing him an object of great value in a way that leads him to feel he must care
for it as well as she would herself. For Josh, having her trust is a deeply satisfying privilege that provides security despite, or perhaps as a result of, such responsibility being entrusted to him. Later in the interview Josh added,

So, to have that level of trust is a security, is a vulnerability I would never want to disregard or crush or damage in any way, even though I know in the next 29 years of marriage I’ll dent it and ding it and be stupid from time to time with it, just as she would. In this quote, the imagery continues as the entrusting of his wife’s vulnerability via her trust is spoken of as an object that could be dented and dinged, yet somehow this contributes to an experience of security on Josh’s part. Regardless of how this association might be explained, the security stands out in Josh’s mind.

This theme of peace and security emerged in a unique way in the discussion with Caleb. While using the preestablished interview questions, Caleb had given some small indications that he felt secure, such as “There’s a little bit of relax” or “I can relax in the decisions I’m making and what I’m doing.” But one of his most sincere and heartfelt expressions seemed to come after asking him what he would say directly to his wife to express his appreciation for her trust. He immediately said, “I feel safe in our relationship,” which was not how he had expressed himself to that point. That he feels safe would be the first thing he would want her to know. That seems rather significant and contributes to the strength of this theme. Lewis, after discussing the intimacy and freedom that trust brings, said, “So having that trust is—has a sense of, you know, being in that relationship can then be a sanctuary, or more of a restful experience. It’s a calming type of situation.”

Anthony expressed this peace and security in a unique way when thinking about what it might be like to not be trusted by his wife. He stated,
Never believing in one another, that we’re out to demonize each other, you know. But it’s just know that—of other relationships where it just seems like there’s this tension and misinterpretation all the time. And to me that—it would feel like, man, I already got enough enemies, kind of, out in the world. I don’t need to go home to that skepticism…. Kind of a haven, right?

His question implies that at home, with a trusting wife, he feels safe and secure; his wife’s trust provides a haven from stresses of the world.

In two final quotes that support the experience of safety and security by being trusted, Chuck and Caleb relate their experiences to their sets of spiritual beliefs. Chuck said,

I don’t know how a family can even go down the path of marriage without, without God in the middle of it. Like, I don’t know how, because it is so easy to go down these spirals of not trusting, not caring for somebody in a way that is expressing that trust and that safe place to be. I just—I think it’s so easy to go right to not trusting. So, to me it’s a God thing, at the highest level.

Caleb expressed similar sentiments when he said,

I think that starts with our faith, and when I thought about trust I thought about—I thought it came easier to us because we have this idea of trusting God, of trusting that you don’t know what tomorrow is, or you don’t know what a year is or 10 years is, but you’ve gotten through something that you wouldn’t have picked for yourself, and that you came out okay.

Both Chuck and Caleb seemed to relate a sense of peace and security in God that contributed to their experiences of being trusted by their wives. While these are just a few expressions to support this theme, safety and security was treasured by all co-researchers. This safety and
security had so many implications, one of which emerged enough to be considered a related subtheme.

**Safety to be open and honest.**

At the risk of delving into an area of experience that relates well to the relational freedom theme that will be discussed later, part of what it means for the husbands to experience peace and security appears to be the safety to be open and honest with their wives. Jacob, married five years to his second wife, said, “And so that level of trust, and knowing that she’s there, and she knows that I am there, that I’m not going anywhere, allows us to really open up to one another and, for the most part, not hold anything back.” As indicated here, Jacob seemed to convey mutual giving and receiving of trust and a deep sense of mutual commitment that acted as prerequisites for the openness he described. There may be more at play in facilitating this openness than just his experience of being trusted, yet when asked to reflect on his experience, this is what Jacob chose to say. Once again, clearly, trust dynamics are complex and multifaceted, both intrapersonal and interpersonal, yet what comes to mind when speaking of their experience of being trusted, such as this openness, is valuable information in deepening an understanding of trust.

Anthony had much to say about this safety to be open and honest as well:

So, I think for me, being in a relationship that is really defined by trust and faithfulness, um, I like using the word *freeing*. You know, free to be yourself, um, not feeling like you have to try to figure out where the other person’s coming from, you know….. And I don’t have to figure out which [name of wife] it is that I have to talk to today…. I think trust is like vulnerability. Okay, so, um, you experience a vulnerability from somebody, or you experience being trusted by somebody. It in turn frees you up to return the favor, and so
I, for me, it’s about being more true to yourself; more honest. Yeah, so I guess vulnerability is another word I use to describe that…. It allows me to be more vulnerable. But I think, again, when you—it’s just like this circular thing: When you exhibit trust, then you earn trust. And I think that’s part of what happened in my relationship with [my wife] is she is so trusting, and so it’s a reciprocal relationship. And again, it’s like vulnerability. You know, the more she shows me who she is, the more you show who you are, and it—so, it’s freeing.

Anthony’s words, once again exemplifying so many of the themes and subthemes, tie together much of what men experienced when trusted by their wives. Alongside experiences like freedom and the ability to trust his wife more, he mentions how he can be more vulnerable, or be more himself, when his wife demonstrates vulnerability by trusting him. The idea that he can trust her more because she trusts him was oddly a rare expression among the men, a result that will be discussed more in Chapter Five.

The idea that a wife’s trust indicates vulnerability, which in turn can lead to more vulnerability or openness on the part of a husband, resonated with Bradley as well. He stated, If she doesn’t trust me, then she’s not going to open up to me about her concerns, then there—whether I trust her or not, I’m probably not going to do the one-sided thing and say, “Well, even though you don’t trust me, but I trust you, and so I’ll open up to you.”

Throughout the communication with Bradley it became evident that the depth of his relationship with his wife, as opposed to superficiality, was important to him, and her trust for him meant vulnerability and openness on her part, which allowed him to do the same. Simply put, his wife’s indicators of trust for him were important contributors to relational depth.
Lewis, as demonstrated earlier in the discussion of this primary theme of peace and security, expressed how his marriage could be a “sanctuary” as a result of trust. Including more of what he said in that context reveals his sense of safety in being open and honest. Lewis said, The normal experience is, you know, freedom to talk about everything, to be open, to be sharing, to be—to not have that, I guess, burden of just something weighing. There’s something not right between us and that’s, you know, so having that trust is—has a sense of, you know, being in that relationship can then be a sanctuary.

Earlier in the interview, Lewis had said the following:

I can be open to her about everything and not feel like, if I say something, she’s going to assume the worst, then I’m opening myself up to interrogation. So, there’s a freedom to share what I’m doing, even to the point where, you know, if I’m feeling like I’m in a compromised position and I’m struggling with areas of integrity, that I feel the freedom to share that with her…. I don’t feel a sense of judgment because of that.

So for Lewis, the safety to be open and honest also meant the vulnerability to share his failures, knowing that his wife’s trust included a lack of judgment; a reasonable expectation of trustworthiness notwithstanding. For Lewis, just like many of the other co-researchers, the safety to be open and honest was a part of the peace and security experienced as a result of his wife’s trust.

In this section, themes and subthemes were explicated reflecting the husbands’ intrapersonal experience of being trusted by their wives. This included: the experience of deep satisfaction, often with expressions of thankfulness; a recognition of being granted a privilege not to be taken for granted, often with a corresponding sense of responsibility or inspiration to maintain the trust of their wives; validation through positive regard, often indicated by
experiences of being loved, respected, valued, affirmed, and supported; affirmation of doing what is right; and the experience of peace and security, often with a sense of safety to be open and honest with their wives. In the following section, themes and subthemes primarily reflecting interpersonal dynamics of trust are explicated.

![Themes and Subthemes Related to Interpersonal Experience of Trust](image)

*Figure 4.2:* Themes and subthemes related to the intrapersonal experience of being trusted, all of which were exemplified by co-researcher Anthony

**Themes and Subthemes Related to Interpersonal Experience of Trust**

In this section, major themes and subthemes primarily related to the co-researchers’ interpersonal experience of being trusted by their wives are delineated and explicated, each with corresponding data to support its veracity. As previously stated, parsing intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics of trust, while perhaps helpful for simplifying a complex phenomenon, also risks obscuring the lived reality of the phenomenon of trust. What makes these interpersonal themes distinct from the intrapersonal themes is that they may be perceived as experiences related to being trusted that constitute a core reality of the relationship itself versus just an intrapersonal, or personal, experience of the trust in the relationship. Arguably these experiences help hold the marriage together; they are shared experiences inextricably linked to
personal experienced both as trustors and trusties. Acknowledged is the fact that the intrapersonal themes mentioned above may be understood this way as well, yet there was something that made them seem deeply and uniquely intrapersonal, as opposed to the interpersonal themes that follow (see Figure 4.3 for an overview of interpersonal themes).

![Figure 4.3: Overview of interpersonal themes and subthemes]

**Intimacy.**

According to Sternberg (2018), intimacy includes feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness in loving relationships. This describes well what co-researchers experienced in their marriages when trusted by their wives. As is true of many of the themes and subthemes discussed herein as they relate to the trust of the wife and the experience of the husband, to assume that intimacy is caused by trust, or vice versa, may be a mistake, unless explicitly stated as such by a particular co-researcher. Thus, such assumptions will be avoided in the explication of the theme of intimacy, as it is particularly challenging to ascertain causation or correlation, not to mention how such conclusions would be inappropriate in heuristic research. Whatever the
association, intimacy in many forms was clearly an experience accompanying being trusted. Intimacy in general will be discussed first, then the subthemes of peace of mind and evidence that his wife is receiving his love.

Intimacy can be expressed and experienced in myriad ways between husband and wife. All 10 co-researchers expressed a sense of intimacy as a result of being trusted, some more explicitly than others. Leo, married 46 years, and Daniel, married 49 years before the passing of his wife, were the two that spoke least directly to the experience of intimacy, but the theme was still evident. Leo saw his marriage as a “sanctuary” in which he could “share thoughts and feelings without fear.” These previously discussed intrapersonal experiences seemed inseparable from the intimacy he shared with his wife. Daniel reflected on how his wife’s trust made him feel “loved” and how his wife’s risk to trust him led him to believe she saw him as a “worthy companion.” As he reflected on his many years with his wife before her passing, his deep love for her and the closeness he had felt, and still feels, were exceedingly evident. Perhaps pulling from his memories of being trusted, versus a present reality like the other co-researchers, limited his direct expressions of intimacy. Regardless, while difficult to convey here in words what it was like to sit and speak with Daniel, it was clear that the trust of his wife was a part of the intimacy they shared.

The way Jacob reflected on his experiences captured the essence of the link between being trusted and experiencing intimacy. He stated, “And so the thing that holds [the components of marriage—physical, spiritual, emotional] together is intimacy. And the thing that underwrites that intimacy is trust.” He continued, “And so that level of trust, and knowing that she’s there, and she knows that I am there, that I’m not going anywhere … allows us to really open up to one another and, for the most part, not hold anything back.” Jacob’s experience of
being trusted reflected a sense of togetherness and presence. Later in the interview, he shared that “in an atmosphere where there is trust, there’s very much the idea that we’re on the same team and we’re willing to work together.” Trust helped hold them together.

Ben, married 45 years, put his expression of intimacy this way:

I mean, what do you have if you don’t have trust? If there’s any nagging suspicions there, that would have to—a—bring with it an amount of, um, separation … relational separation. Which, when you have the trust, then you have your closeness.

Ben’s expression reveals the dichotomy of intimate closeness versus relational separation, seemingly moderated by the existence of trust. Lewis, married 22 years, said,

I think [trust] builds closeness and intimacy. It would say to me that I’m in an elite group to receive that level of trust in something that she would be that passionate about. That would make me feel close and special.

Lewis’s experience of closeness, or intimacy, with his wife was enhanced when she would trust him with something she was passionate about; a sharing that made him feel special and close with her.

As mentioned earlier, intimacy includes connectedness and bondedness, two words that convey coherence and wholeness versus separateness and fragmentation. In perhaps the most profound expression of intimacy, Josh described being trusted by his wife as “having a sense of fullness … wholeness, fullness. Not having it would be kind of a theft.” Later in the conversation he clarified what he meant as he spoke of experiencing his wife’s trust. Josh exclaimed, “And, so, it’s, yeah, it’s—like Lord of the Rings, it’s ‘my precious.’ It is … it’s my precious … and like The Lord of the Rings, you didn’t want to be separated from your precious.” And if this vivid comparison was not enough, he continued with the following about trust:
That’s wove—come on, that’s woven through the whole thing…. You saw the interstitium? You saw the interstitium article? They’ve just discovered the largest organ in the human body. It’s called the interstitium. It lies below, just below, the skin, and it covers every blood vessel and everything. It’s the most—it’s the organ that you would never be able to separate from anything else, so integrated, so a part. That’s—I think that’s trust in this body. This one body we call marriage.

While Josh’s description of the experience of trust most certainly involves more than just his experience of his wife’s trust, it must be noted that these words were spoken in response to inquiries about his experience of her trust. These results do not necessarily indicate that the experience of being trusted by their wives stands apart, somehow separate from other intrapersonal or interpersonal dynamics. But when asked to reflect on the experience of being trusted, in many cases it led to profound thoughts about the grander purpose of trust in the marriage. In other words, the trust a husband experienced was recognized as a part of trust in the marriage as a whole—and the trust was beautiful and critical. The words of Ben seem appropriate to repeat: “I mean, what do you have if you don’t have trust?”

**Peace of mind.**

Peace of mind will likely be perceived as an intrapersonal experience of trust, and it was discussed as an aspect of the intrapersonal theme of peace and security. Yet this experience seemed to be associated rather closely with the co-researchers’ experience of intimacy in their marriages as well; enough to be considered a subtheme under intimacy. In most of the following expressions, the husband talked about hypothetical negative aspects of his marriage that he did not have to experience due to peace of mind; experiences that if present would compromise intimacy. In one case the husband clearly articulated what trust allowed him to experience with
his wife due to peace of mind, which could easily be applied to the expressions of other co-
researchers, even if they had not stated so specifically and clearly. So, whether peace of mind
was experienced as the result of something positive or the removal of something negative, it was
so clearly expressed by five of the husbands that it constitutes a significant subtheme under
intimacy.

Leo chose peace of mind as a theme for himself. He described his experience many
ways, including:

peace of mind, a sanctuary from the world … peace of mind, knowing that [my wife]
trusts me and various other things that gives me confidence to face the world … peace of
mind, knowing that—I think that each one of us has the best interest of the other one—
person in mind at all times … mutual peace of mind, a mutual understanding that we
would never intentionally want to hurt each other.

Leo made it clear that the peace of mind was not just his own, but his wife’s as well; an intimate
peace they shared together fostered by the trust his wife had for him.

For the following co-researchers, the experience of trust seemed to displace other less
desirable experiences, which contributed to peace of mind and increased intimacy. Ben said,
“You don’t have that nagging feeling being expressed” and “She’s not suspicious.” Anthony
stated how his experience of being trusted included “never believing in one another that we’re
out to demonize each other” and “I don’t have to figure out which [wife’s name] it is that I have
to talk to today.” Lewis said, “I can be open to her about everything and not feel like, if I say
something, she’s going to assume the worst.” Caleb felt that the trust of his wife displaced some
potentially uncomfortable dynamics as well. He said, “I don’t have to justify everything that I
do” and “You don’t have someone doubting all of your decisions.” When talking about what it would be like to not have his wife’s trust, Caleb stated,

I have a sense of peace, or I have a pride in our relationship that I don’t feel like I have to justify myself all the time. That’s what I would feel. Like when you were talking about it, it just felt like it would just always be in the back of my mind. What have I done today and how would it look like to her if she was always watching what I was doing and how would I explain something to her that maybe she wouldn’t understand? Could it be misconstrued? Like that would be a lot of mental energy.

By implication, Caleb was talking about mental energy he does not have to exert, allowing for peace of mind because he is trusted by his wife.

Chuck had some similar experiences. He said, “I don’t have to walk on eggshells around her” and “She’s never once questioned my integrity.” And in a poignant moment of realization of what he does have in the trust of his wife, he also described what his marriage might be like without it:

Just utter kind of devastation. So, it’s very—it’s just this spiral that could be, I failed, she’s acknowledging and expressing this lack of trust in the failures and misgivings and that I’m failing and failing and failing, and just going down and down and down. And sooner, you know, you’re sitting there going this is hopeless. I don’t have that.

Those last four words, “I don’t have that,” seemed to convey a sense of joy and relief, appreciation and peace of mind. These husbands appeared to have profound understanding of the peace of mind they experience by what they have in the trust of their wives and what they do not have to grapple with that could steal that peace. The experience of being trusted produces
intimacy that includes peace of mind, knowing that the intimacy is not compromised. They do not have to deal with “that” enemy of intimacy, and they are glad.

**Evidence that his wife is receiving his love.**

Three husbands expressed an experience that seemed rather important as a subtheme under intimacy despite the fact that others did not explicitly mention it. Part of experiencing intimacy for these men was knowing that their wives were receiving the love they were giving. In some ways, these men cherished the fact that their wives’ trust indicated that they felt loved, including love expressed through trustworthiness. This experience is included among interpersonal themes and subthemes because it was in essence unselfish; an experience that brought great joy and satisfaction to the men as an indicator of intimacy with their wives.

Bradley articulated this experience in the most profound way. From the start of the interview it was apparent that he was struggling to articulate the experience of being trusted by his wife; not because he was not trusted, but because he was not accustomed to, or perhaps comfortable, doing so. Late in the interview, one of the main reasons became clear—he was afraid that talking about personal benefits he received from his wife would be selfish, and to be selfish in such a way would be inconsistent with his values. Bradley stated,

I feel like there’s this, there’s this tension, because, like, I really don’t want to be selfish, and so I don’t know if my answers are that way because I’m trying not to be selfish, or because I’m actually not selfish.

Bradley’s comments to that point in the interview primarily reflected his wife’s experience of trusting him. For the most part, his approach to speaking about his experience meant speaking about hers. He so loved his wife that he was struggling to know if he could consider his own experience of being trusted without that meaning he was being selfish, unloving. Just prior to
these comments, Bradley had said that his wife’s trust for him “allows her to have—it allows her to have a better experience, or a better marriage.” Right after talking about trying to not be selfish, he said, “Sure, it feels better to be trusted,” but whatever that trust meant to him paled in comparison to the joy he received knowing that his wife was happy in their marriage, a fact that allowed them to have a deep, satisfying, and intimate marriage. To be clear, Bradley’s experience of being trusted by his wife was dominated by his deep desire to know that her trust of him meant that she was receiving his unselfish love; so much so he was uncomfortable speaking of his experience.

Lewis also shared how his wife’s trust indicated how she was receiving his love. He stated,

That it—if my behaviors are motivated out of my love for her, and she’s receiving that, and she’s there, by trusting she’s not questioning that, it’s you know, so that then affirms that, you know, that I can be confident that my attempts to express love are received as such.

When asked what he might say if he would express his appreciation directly to his wife for her trust, he stated,

By you trusting me that helps me know that you’re receiving my love; that you’re experiencing that I love you; that you’re not worried that I’m, you know, cheating on you or doing things behind your back; that you can be confident that my actions and behaviors are in your best interest; that, I guess that you accept me for who I am.

As seen here, Lewis clarified some of what he meant by his wife receiving his love. She could know that he had her best interest in mind, and she would not have to worry that he was being untrustworthy. Interestingly, after talking about the benefit to his wife that provides a good
experience for him, he tags on, “You accept me for who I am.” This is yet another indicator of the intersection of intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences. While his primary interest was in his wife’s experience of trust in their relationship, it had a personal impact on Lewis in the form of feeling accepted. Her experience, his experience, and their experience all appear inseparable.

To review all of the themes and subthemes to this point, one sees that with trust there are at least three experiences—yours, mine, and ours; and they are best understood in concert with one another. The shared intimacy related to being trusted involved a personal experience that for some men did not seem like a personal experience at all, but, ironically, an experience for the one giving her trust.

Finally, Caleb had something to say about the experience of his wife as well. He said, “She can trust the types of decisions that I’m making so that there was—there wasn’t like a selfish motive to my decisions.” Caleb later added,

I’m thankful that there’s someone that knows me well enough that she knows me and still believes that I’m going in the right direction, that I’m making good choices, that I have hopefully what’s best for us in mind and not, we talked about it, not being selfish or not being only what would be good for me.

His wife’s trust seemed to produce a fulfilling experience for him, knowing that his wife was receiving the benefits of his unselfish love. In all of the accounts reflected in this theme, the experience of trust from one’s wife reflected a sense of closeness to one’s wife—his, hers, and theirs.

**Experience of grace.**

*Grace* is often considered a religious term related to an attribute or act of God, yet by definition, it need not be so limited in its understanding. Grace can mean approval, favor,
pardon, or privilege, and may involve kindness, courtesy, clemency or assistance (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2018), all of which may simply be human, relational experiences. L. LeRon Shults (personal communication, 2000) once shared that grace, religious or not, is a fundamentally relational concept. In its presence a relationship is allowed to continue; in its absence a relationship is cut off. From a religious perspective, when the grace of God is experienced, the relationship with Him can continue. When the grace of a relationship partner is experienced, arguably the same relational continuance may be the result. In this study, seven of the 10 co-researchers spoke of experiencing grace from their wives as a result of their trust. As a reminder, all 10 co-researchers were Christians, professing faith in God, which may have influenced how they spoke of this experience. Nonetheless, the theme was undeniable and constituted one of the strongest themes that emerged. At the risk of invoking purely religious overtones, this theme will be described as it was spoken of—the experience of grace.

Anthony, the exemplar of what it means to be trusted by one’s wife, had the most to say about his experience of grace. The word *grace* had come up a couple times in conversation and when asked to clarify, Anthony said,

> It kind of goes back to what I was—oh, man, it’s so much like our relationships with Christ, you know, that it’s grace. That you’re so appreciative of that grace that you want to reciprocate, you know, and so grace comes with a lot of trust. No strings attached, you know.

At this point, Anthony was excited about this connection between trust and grace that had emerged in conversation and added, “Grace, I think—boy—it may be a deeper form of trust. Maybe it’s ultimate trust is grace.” Exactly what he meant here is elusive, yet he seemed to be speaking of an experience of unconditional or unmerited acceptance from his wife that was
inspiring. When Anthony wrote of his experience of trust directly to his wife, he stated, “It is amazing how being trusted by you gives such stability and grace in other relationships.” So not only did he experience grace by way of her trust, this grace provided stability and further grace in other relationships.

Leo reflected a similar notion of grace. He said,

Because she has extended grace and forgiveness to me, then I, in turn, would be more prone to extend more grace and more forgiveness to her…. And I think the more trust we have with each other, the more grace and forgiveness we’re able to extend.

Upon reviewing his own words after the interview, Leo felt it was important to clarify what he meant by grace. He wrote,

I need to define grace. The word grace was perfect for my purpose, but I will do my best to explain what I meant. When I said that she seemed to be extending more grace to me, I meant she was showing me genuine goodwill and loving-kindness freely, not begrudgingly or reluctantly.

In this clarification, Leo may have articulated what so many of the other men experienced as well.

Chuck seemed astounded by his wife’s trust in him, calling it “remarkable” and “supernatural.” He said,

I mean, that’s—when she could go toward an untrusting thought; when she could go towards a, um, you know, giving me a hard time for something in a way that could be expressed as not trusting me or, you know, I can start perceiving that she’s not trusting me, she’s saying, in her mind, from my perspective, she’s saying, I can trust him here. I’m going to extend grace towards him. I’m going to be merciful in this area.
A bit later he continued, saying,

Yeah, that’s to me like a gracious thing … the freedom to fail, in that … and she’s gracious, even so. She’s extending that freedom to fail, as much as I don’t want to fail.

Chuck realized that he made mistakes but experienced his wife’s trust as grace, a freedom to fail even as he did not want to fail.

Harkening back to Shults’s description of grace, the husbands seemed to realize that their wives’ trust kept the relationships alive even when they could have been cut off by their mistakes, or untrustworthy lapses, past or present. Jacob put it this way:

And to know that [my wife] trusts me is part of her expression of unconditional love that just as whatever thing I do that hurts her or offends her doesn’t make her stop loving me. It also doesn’t make her stop trusting me. And it allows me to understand grace more fully.

Relating this to his faith, he went on to say, “Well, the fact that my shortcomings are not a deal breaker with respect to my relationship with her, just like the fact that my sin is not a deal breaker with respect to my relationship with Christ.” As Bradley put it, relating God’s grace to that of his wife, “It’s like a manifestation of God’s grace. It’s unmerited favor.” What appears to be the case for Jacob, Bradley, and other co-researchers is that being trusted is an act of grace; generally unmerited favor that is experienced as love despite one’s shortcomings.

Josh described his experience of trust by saying, “Just giving the benefit of the doubt” and,

We realized, stop expecting perfection from each other and live with who we—that’s really freeing, actually. To not expect perfection … yeah, it makes it easier to apologize, by the way, knowing that … there’s a space there where you allow basic mistakes.
Lewis stated,

If I’m feeling like I’m in a compromised position and I’m struggling with areas of integrity, that I feel the freedom to share that with her, and there’s a level of understanding that that’s normative and so I don’t feel a sense of judgment because of that.

In nearly all of the expressions about experiencing grace, there seemed to be incongruity between having the trust of one’s wife while not feeling the need to be perfectly trustworthy. Logically, one might believe that trustworthiness elicits trust in a linear fashion. But in these scenarios it appeared that trust, as an act of loving grace, could possibly be what leads to the lifting of the burden of perfection on the husband, which in turn inspires more trustworthy behavior. If that is the case, the incongruity disappears. Overall, the trust of these husbands’ wives freed them to pursue trustworthiness without the burden of perfection and in the light of their wives’, as Leo put it, “genuine goodwill and loving-kindness.” And worth adding is that not a single co-researcher interpreted this grace as license to be untrustworthy, which may not be the case for all husbands when acting as the recipients of trust. Whether it would be handled well by all husbands or not, trust, including grace, granted these co-researchers a cherished form of relational freedom.

**Freedom.**

To this point it is clear that a wife’s trust can produce a number of significant experiences for a husband. Perhaps the most significant of all is the experience of freedom. From the very first interview through the last and beyond, every husband in his own unique way communicated how being trusted by his wife was freeing, both inside and outside of the relationship. This freedom was often tied to the other intrapersonal and interpersonal themes, making it seem like a
pervasive experience or an experience that encompasses, transcends, or emerges from the others, which more research could help determine.

Leo, the very first co-researcher interviewed, articulated this freedom so well that his words will be used to capture the essence of this theme. He said,

Other descriptive words are *freedom* and *security* to experience the best marriage has to offer. If I’m not right with [my wife], then my security is challenged, and, um, if there’s nothing between us that’s negative, then that gives me freedom to do my work—to have relationship with other people.

Later in the interview he added,

It frees my mind to take on challenges that otherwise I wouldn’t have the—as much ability to face those challenges knowing that my home life and relationship was intact—untethered ability … it frees up more of my thought process ability, if I’m not hampered by a lack of trust on [my wife’s] part.

And in what proved to be words that would capture much of what the other co-researchers would later say, Leo stated with great pride and joy that the peace and confidence he has as a result of his wife’s trust allows him to freely “soar above life’s challenges.” For Leo and others, being trusted brought an experience of freedom both within and outside of their marriages. They spoke as if they could spread their wings to be themselves, enjoy the intimacy of their marriage, and proceed boldly into their world, tethered to the security of their wives, but with an untethered ability to engage the world with peace and confidence.

*Freedom inside the marriage.*

Being trusted provided husbands with a sense of freedom in their marriages. Anthony stated,
So, for me it’s been freeing to be in this relationship, because my own family of origin really exhibited more distrust and, actually, even more than that, unhealthy relationships. So, I think, for me, being in a relationship that is really defined by trust and faithfulness, um, I like using the word *freeing*.

Later he added, “You know, part of what I love about—and this is another part of the freedom piece, is giving each other the benefit of the doubt.” This benefit of the doubt that he relates to freedom could also be related to the aforementioned themes of validation, peace, intimacy, grace, and so forth, demonstrating how related the various experiences of being trusted are that contribute to freedom. Included in Anthony’s thoughts was a letter he chose to write to his wife about her trust. He wrote, “It is freeing to be trusted by you,” demonstrating that he had the desire to share this with her directly.

Lewis also felt this freedom in his marriage. He stated, “I think there’s a sense of freedom then, where I can be open to her about everything and not feel like, if I say something, she’s going to assume the worst.” Ben shared how if he did not have his wife’s trust, that would be a weight you’d have to carry around…. You would lose the things, the blessing and the joy and the freedom would all either diminish or disappear…. I think that would be a burden, and you’d have to really want to grapple with that and try to get some victory there and—because that could give you ulcers.

By thinking about the freedom he would lose without his wife’s trust, Ben recognized the freedom he had with it. Her trust lifted the burden and relieved the stress of its absence. For many of the co-researchers, the experience of freedom with trust often came as a result of not having had it at one time or imagining what life would be like without it. Having the trust of their wives meant being unencumbered by unnecessary relationship struggles. As Lewis put it,
“Freedom to talk about everything, to be open, to be sharing, to be—to not have that, I guess, burden of just something weighing.”

Ben articulated a link between freedom inside the marriage and freedom outside the marriage. He remarked,

I have this freedom to go and she’s not going to worry about me. And she’s not going to make an issue of it, because she believes I’m doing something very worthwhile, and I’m not neglecting her. We spend a lot of time together. Um, so, you know, we—it gives you freedom…. You don’t have that nagging feeling being expressed.

Daniel also was able to express his sense of freedom both within and outside of his marriage. When discussing the trust of his wife, Daniel was proud of how he was trusted to make decisions about things such as finances, their home, church, work, education, and conference travel. More than once he said, “She never had any reservations.” While Daniel did not use the word freedom, it was clear that with his wife’s trust he felt free to do what he thought was important for himself, his marriage, and for others. He made it clear that many good things happened that would not have happened without his wife’s trust.

**Freedom outside the marriage.**

What came as somewhat of a surprise was just how much trust from a husband’s wife contributed to a sense of freedom outside the marriage. Leo said,

Well, the feeling comes with—back to the initial answer to your question—peace of mind. I don’t have to worry about—I can take on life’s challenges better, whether it’s work related, or outside-relationship related, if I know that my relationship with my wife is as good as it can be, and, you know, trusting and no jealousy, and I don’t have to worry about that.
Leo said his wife’s trust gave him “confidence to face the world.” Anthony agreed with this idea. He talked about how his wife’s trust allowed him to grow as a leader at work and mentor other couples; mentoring that often occurred with his wife. In his letter to his wife, he told her, “Trust has enabled us to spend time apart for work and personal development without fear of growing apart.” Anthony even went so far as to tell his wife, “Because you believe the best in me, I want to believe the best in others. Because you don’t prejudge my motives, I try to give others the benefit of the doubt.” In this beautiful expression of his experience of trust, he reflects how the trust from his wife enables and empowers him to trust others.

Finally, Caleb had a lot to say about the effects of his wife’s trust outside of their marriage. He said, “It allows me to be more bold in being myself and following what I think is God’s calling for my life,” and “I could do my normal day-to-day stuff and not feel like I had to somehow prove myself.” Later he added, “I’m free to go to work, go volunteer somewhere, do something not with her, and she isn’t, in the back of her mind, questioning what my motives are, or where I am or what I’m doing.” Overall, freedom outside of the marriage did not mean from the marriage. To be trusted by one’s wife seemed to provide a firm, satisfying foundation in the marriage from which one could launch into a world of opportunities and responsibilities; a sense of freedom the men relished.

**Anthony: Exemplification of a Husband’s Experience of Being Trusted by His Wife**

As previously mentioned, upon explication of the themes and subthemes, Anthony emerged as an exemplification of a husband’s experience of being trusted by his wife. In other words, Anthony explicitly expressed nearly all of the aforementioned intrapersonal and interpersonal themes and subthemes, with the exception of the theme of “affirmation of doing what is right” and the subtheme of “evidence that his wife is receiving his love,” although
arguably both were implicit in his words. Such exemplification by one co-researcher is fortunate indeed, indicating that all or nearly all themes can characterize a single husband’s experience of being trusted by his wife.

Figure 4.4 represents Anthony as an exemplification of the intrapersonal and interpersonal themes and subthemes. Anthony’s intrapersonal experience of being trusted by his wife included deep satisfaction reflected in gratitude for his wife’s trust and a sense of responsibility to maintain the privilege of having her trust. He experienced feeling loved, respected, valued, affirmed, and supported as aspects of his wife’s validation through positive regard—all due to her trust in him. And Anthony experienced a profound sense of peace and security, including the safety to be open and honest with his wife as a result of her trust. Anthony’s interpersonal experience of being trusted by his wife included peace of mind and an experience of receiving grace. These were perhaps components of an even deeper sense of freedom inside and outside of their relationship as an aspect of his experience of being trusted by his wife. Altogether, being trusted was clearly of great value to Anthony. As the final words of the letter he wrote to his wife expressing his experience of being trusted, he shared the lyrics of a song, with a small yet significant addition at the end (in all capital letters, as he wrote it):

For every mountain I have climbed
Every raging river crossed
You were the treasure I longed to find
Without your love I would be lost
Let the world stop turning
Let the sun stop burning
Let them tell me love’s not worth going through
If it all falls apart

I will know deep in my heart

The only dream that mattered had come true

In this life, I was loved by you

In this life, I was loved … AND TRUSTED by you!\(^4\)

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**Figure 4.4:** Themes and subthemes related to the intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences of being trusted, all of which were exemplified by co-researcher Anthony

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**Contextual and Situational Factors to Consider in the Findings**

As indicated in the conceptual framework presented in Chapter One, despite studying it in an isolated way, the experience of being trusted should not be considered in a vacuum, apart from other influencing factors. Lewis’s thoughts are particularly relevant in considering

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\(^4\) The lyrics written in Anthony’s letter to his wife were taken from "**In This Life,**" a song written by Mike Reid and Allen Shamblin and recorded by American country music singer Collin Raye, released in July 1992 from his CD **In This Life.**
contextual and situational factors in the experience of trust. His thoughts were unique, not constituting a common theme, but beg for consideration and further investigation of such factors. For example, Lewis, when providing feedback on his interview transcript, stated,

It occurred to me that my experience of being trusted changes with the nature of my wife’s trust. I think it is very different when trusted to be (character), do (complete a task), or decide (bring original thought and solutions)…. All this to say that the idea of trust can take many forms with vastly different feelings based on what is meant by the word trust.

While Lewis was not the only co-researcher to reflect on different types of trust and trust-related scenarios, he was the only one to communicate how he continued to reflect about these trust dynamics following the interview.

Additional contextual and situation factors that may influence the results include: the types of trust-relevant situations the couple may have faced together historically; the length of their relationship before and after marrying; the ages of the co-researchers and their spouses; whether the co-researcher is in his first or subsequent marriage; spiritual or religious beliefs and practices; various circumstances the co-researcher may have been facing at the time of the interview; and personal or family-of-origin experiences one brings into the marriage. Prudence requires bearing in mind the existence of such factors when interpreting the results of this study, yet reason and careful methodology allow value to be found in the isolation of the experience of being trusted in the pursuit of deeper understanding.

**Additional Considerations in Interpreting the Results**

An additional consideration when looking at the results of this study is whether the themes truly reflect the experience of being trusted by one’s wife. The experience of a trustor or
trust, as represented in the conceptual framework in Chapter One, is a deeply interdependent experience influenced not only by personal and relationship characteristics, but also myriad other factors, including trust-relevant situations, various contextual factors, experiences in the past, and expectations for the future. In this study, every effort was made to isolate a husband’s experience of being trusted by his wife, but interpretation of these findings should consider how such experience may be inextricably linked to other trust-related factors. Could the experience of being trusted be predicated on unique characteristics of one’s wife? Could the experience of being trusted have a great deal to do with a husband’s history of trustworthiness or lack thereof? Questions and considerations such as these should be kept in mind in interpretation and transferability as well as in the development of future research on the subject and will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Five.

Trust, as argued throughout the foundations of this study, is complex, making trust and trustworthiness difficult to address independent of each other in any relationship, including in the relationship between researcher and co-researcher. Discussing the trustworthiness of results related to the experience of being trusted adds interesting layers to the processes of interpretation and explication. Questions arise, such as: Can I as the researcher trust what I received from the co-researchers as being an accurate representation of their experiences of being trusted by their wives? Can I trust that I have not obscured the data based on my own biases and presuppositions? And did the co-researchers see me as trustworthy enough to share their deepest thoughts and feelings about their experiences? While studying the experience of being trusted, these questions of trust in the heuristic inquiry process must be reflexively considered in the interpretation of the results.
Entering the intimate dialogue of this study required a rapidly developed sense of trust and trustworthiness between myself and the co-researchers, at least at a rudimentary level. The trust granted to me as the researcher was greatly appreciated, providing a temporary and satisfying sense of closeness and freedom in discussion that was a privilege the co-researchers were not obligated to grant. Interestingly, these experiences were a pale and much less intimate reflection of some of the aforementioned themes experienced by the men with their wives. While full analysis of how trust in the research relationship may have impacted an accurate understanding of a husband’s experience of being trusted by his wife goes well beyond the scope of this study, the hope is that this trust in the researcher/co-researcher relationship helped to provide quality, trustworthy results.

**Evidence of Quality**

In Chapter Four, methods addressing validity or trustworthiness of this study were discussed. The research results are considered valid to the extent that the presentation truly captures the meaning and essence of the experiences of the husbands of being trusted by their wives (Moustakas, 1990). Various methods were employed in this study to address the five criteria for trustworthiness outlined by Connelly (2016): credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity. Methods used in this study to address all five criteria are discussed in what follows.

Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of the study and its findings and is analogous to internal validity in quantitative research, and dependability refers to stability of data over time, similar to reliability in quantitative research (Connelly, 2016). Member checking, or informant feedback, was utilized in this study to maximize both credibility and dependability. The researcher solicited feedback about the interview transcript content prior to analysis,
feedback about the emerging themes and subthemes, and feedback about the finalized themes and subthemes. All 10 co-researchers provided feedback about the transcript content and the emerging themes and subthemes, but only three co-researchers chose to respond to a request for feedback about the finalized themes. The three that responded had no additional changes to recommend and affirmed the quality of the themes. While it may be assumed that the other seven had no feedback to provide at this point, it is unknown as to why they did not respond.

Credibility was also maximized by the triangulation of additional material provided by the co-researchers in response to the initial interview questions or member checks. Two co-researchers chose to write letters to their wives explaining their experiences of being trusted by them. Four co-researchers provided additional input about their experiences at the time of the first member check, which was triangulated with the original data and emerging themes (see Appendix G for an example of an e-mail from a co-researcher providing clarification about his interview comments). Additionally, as proposed, the researcher engaged in “iterative questioning of the data, returning to examine it several times” throughout the immersion and interpretation processes, a process discussed earlier in this chapter and a procedure that may also contribute to dependability (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 435).

A final method used to maximize credibility was reflexivity on the part of the researcher. Such reflexivity also addresses confirmability, which refers to the degree findings are consistent and could be repeated, somewhat analogous to objectivity in quantitative research (Connelly, 2016). The researcher engaged in an ongoing process of self-reflection with the purpose of generating awareness about his actions, feelings, and perceptions related to what it means to be trusted as a husband by his wife (Darawsheh, 2014). Due to the active process of interpretation of data necessary in heuristic research, such reflexivity was practiced to minimize
bias that could obscure the understanding of the experience of being trusted. The researcher’s reflexivity included journaling about thoughts and feelings related to the interview experiences, emerging themes, and personal attitudes and experiences related to being trusted by his wife (see Appendix H for journal excerpt).

Transferability refers to the extent that the findings may be useful to others beyond the research study itself, similar to generalization in quantitative research, and authenticity is the extent to which the researcher realistically depicts participants’ lives (Connelly, 2016). To maximize quality in these areas, the researcher sought a “rich and thick” account of the co-researchers’ experiences by providing the research questions ahead of time, allowing reflection prior to the interview, as well as facilitating an interview discussion that maximized the expression of their experiences (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 244). During the interview, the researcher provided a safe and open atmosphere for deep dialogue, stimulating conversation meant to follow the lead of the co-researcher with minimal to no leading questions or comments (see Appendix I for interview transcript example). While statistical generalization is clearly not the goal in heuristic research, every effort was made to explicate the findings, including rich and thick descriptions conveyed in the words of the co-researchers. Despite the limited, nonrepresentative, and somewhat homogenous nature of the co-researchers in this study (e.g., Christian faith among all participants), extensive data was obtained that may serve as a foundation for further research. As evidenced in this chapter, numerous quotes were used to support the veracity of the themes and subthemes. The goal of such accurate representation is to allow the reader to trust the authenticity of the results and transfer the discoveries herein to the experiences of being trusted unique to their own purposes and venues.
Conclusion

This chapter contained information about the process of how the study was conducted and key findings, including themes and subthemes associated with intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences of trust, reflecting the review of extant literature presented in Chapter Two. Also covered in this chapter were additional considerations in interpreting the results, including contextual and situational factors, as well as evidence of quality showing how the study followed procedures to ensure accuracy of data. As a conclusion to this heuristic study, Chapter Five will include in-depth interpretation and discussion of these findings as they relate to previous research and the researcher’s conceptual framework. This discussion will culminate in implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“True love does not come by finding the perfect person, but by learning to see an imperfect person perfectly.”
—Jason Jordan

In this final chapter, the researcher provides a brief overview of the study in its entirety, including a summary of the findings, followed by in-depth discussion of the results. Interpretations of the findings are presented along with implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further study. The chapter culminates with reflections on the researcher’s experience with the research process, a creative synthesis of the results, and a conclusion to the research study.

Study Overview

This heuristic study was conducted to seek answers to the research question: In a committed, marital relationship, what is the experience of a husband when he believes he is trusted by his wife? As established in Chapters One and Two, the lion’s share of the trust research to date has been on the trustor or the relationship between the trustor and trusty, yet research is sparse pertaining to the experience of being a trusty. Thus, with little precedent in the literature and the need to start building basic knowledge about the experience of being trusted, this study was designed to provide husbands an opportunity to express their experiences of being trusted by their wives. Discovery of various themes and subthemes was the result of the first five of the six phases of heuristic research: initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). Further explication will occur in this chapter as the themes and subthemes are interpreted in light of previous literature and on their own merit. Creative synthesis will be included in the concluding section of this chapter as well.
A husband’s experience of being trusted by his wife, according to the 10 co-researchers with whom the researcher engaged in deep conversation, tended to involve the following themes and subthemes. Under the general heading of intrapersonal experiences of trust, being trusted by one’s wife produced a deep sense of satisfaction, often accompanied by explicit expressions of thankfulness. In addition, many men expressed an understanding that having the trust of one’s wife is a privilege not to be taken for granted. Furthermore, there was a corresponding sense of responsibility or inspiration to maintain that trust. In a different vein, being trusted was experienced as validation through positive regard. This positive regard was based in many cases on the belief that they were loved, respected, valued, affirmed, and supported. The experience of being trusted by their wives spoke volumes to the husbands through these various manifestations of positive regard.

Two additional primary themes emerged in the area of intrapersonal experiences of being trusted. Many of the husbands expressed how their wives’ trust conveyed affirmation of doing what is right. In other words, her trust was an indicator and acknowledgment that they were doing rightly that which they believed they should as a husband. The final theme in the intrapersonal domain emerged as one of the strongest. Being trusted by their wives led to experiences of peace and security, including for many a sense of safety to be open and honest, even about their shortcomings. The themes and subthemes that emerged in the intrapersonal experience of trust domain seemed to reflect a personal and internal experience of being trusted, yet they were clearly inextricably linked to the interpersonal themes that will be discussed in what follows.

While difficult to separate from the intrapersonal themes, various experiences of being trusted seemed most logically conceptualized as interpersonal experiences of being trusted. The
first theme was a profound experience of intimacy with their wives, or feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness. Being trusted led to myriad types of intimacy experiences unique to the couples, yet regardless of how intimacy was described, being trusted was pivotal to such experiences. A subtheme that emerged with intimacy was peace of mind. Similar to the peace and security intrapersonal experience mentioned previously, this particular expression of peace of mind was related to closeness a husband felt with his wife. By being trusted, the men spoke extensively about how the trust added positivity and removed negativity from their marriage, which could work for or against their intimacy, respectively. Thus, peace of mind was a unique aspect of intimacy experienced as a result of a wife’s trust. In addition to peace of mind, many husbands saw their wives’ trust as evidence of receiving their love. In an intriguing twist, husbands often felt closer, more intimate, with their wives when the wives’ trust indicated to them that their efforts to love were being received. What could appear to be an expression of what the wife was experiencing with her trust was actually an expression of the thoughts and feelings of intimacy nurtured within the husband by the knowledge that one’s wife felt loved enough to trust.

A common expression of the experience of being trusted was that of receiving grace. In this context, grace expressed through trust seemed to mean that a wife would lovingly allow for relational continuance and closeness even in the face of adversity, personal growth, or even certain transgressions. In other words, the husbands often realized that they were not entirely trustworthy despite their efforts, or there may have been reasons beyond their control that could erode trust. Yet their wives’ trust was a way to graciously communicate desires to remain in the relationship and not hold their husbands’ shortcomings, real or perceived, against them. In many conversations with the co-researchers, once the word grace came up, men would slide into using
trust and grace interchangeably as if they were experienced similarly. As will be discussed later, this relationship between trust and grace in particular begs for further inquiry.

Last, the theme of freedom emerged as one of the strongest themes overall. To be trusted by one’s wife was freeing, both inside and outside of the relationship. The men spoke of being able to be themselves, enjoy the intimacy of their marriage, and proceed boldly into their world, tethered to the security of their wives but with an untethered ability to engage the world with peace and confidence. Their marriages, characterized in part by the trust of their wives, provided a firm and satisfying foundation from which they could launch into a world of opportunities and responsibilities.

In sum, the experience of being trusted by one’s wife, according to the co-researchers, included all or nearly all of the following: deep satisfaction with a sense of thankfulness; an understanding that the trust was a privilege not to be taken for granted that led to a sense of responsibility or inspiration to maintain such trust; validation through positive regard that was often received as expressions of being loved, respected, valued, affirmed, and supported; affirmation of doing what is right for their wives; peace and security, including the safety to be open and honest; intimacy in its many forms, including peace of mind and evidence that their wives were receiving their love; experiences of grace, despite imperfections, shortcomings, or strain in the relationship; and freedom inside and outside of the marriage to grow and thrive. To be trusted was deeply satisfying for the men, an experience many had never reflected on before but were thankful to have been given the opportunity to do so as a part of this study.
Interpretation of Findings

In this section, the findings of this study will be discussed in terms of how they are informed by and can inform the extant literature on dyadic trust. In Chapter One a conceptual framework of various theories, models, and concepts was proposed to assist in contextualizing the experiences and perceptions of a trusty (see Figure 5.6). The review of the literature presented in Chapter Two was organized into two primary sections, The Intrapersonal Experience of the Trustor in Relation to the Trusty and The Interpersonal Experience of Trust, followed by a brief justification for emphasizing the perspective of the trusty. In Chapter Four, the findings related to the husbands as trusties were organized according to intrapersonal and interpersonal themes and subthemes (see Figure 5.1), parallel to the intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences of trustors in Chapter Two. The interpretations and discussion of the present study on trusties as it relates to previous knowledge of trust dynamics will be similarly organized, first addressing the unique experience of the trusty, due to its unique relevance to the present study, on to intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences, then to an expansion of the conceptual framework integrating the present findings. Finally, the findings will be discussed in
light of the operational definition of trust proposed in Chapter One and in relation to the concept of trustworthiness.

**Present Findings and Previous Knowledge About the Experience of the Trusty**

As argued in Chapters One and Two and as the results of this study suggest, the experience of the trusty deserves more attention than it has received in the literature to date. Previous evidence does exist that the experience of a trusty is significant, but such evidence is limited. At this point, a brief and compact review of such evidence in relation to the present findings lays a foundation for a more extensive review of trust literature not as directly related to the unique trusty experience identified in this study. Righetti et al. (2015) and Khalifian and Barry (2016) found that individuals whose spouses trusted them more experienced increased relational intimacy, consistent with the *intimacy* theme that emerged in this study. Shallcross and Simpson (2012) discovered that high chronic trust askers (i.e., those making a request) in strain-test situations received more accommodation from their responding partners when asked to sacrifice some of their own desires for the relationship, consistent with the *privilege and responsibility* theme and subtheme in this study. As discussed earlier, Mikulincer (1998) observed that secure individuals appeared to be more capable of pursuing partner well-being, at times resulting in being more trusting, a finding consistent with various themes and subthemes reflecting a sense of well-being, such as *peace, security, and freedom*. And as Campbell et al. (2010) found, men, regardless of their own level of trust, reported more stable relationship quality across time with more trusting partners, with the same not holding true for women; a finding completely consistent with the *satisfaction, affirmation, peace, security, and intimacy* themes, just to name a few.
In large part, this study has confirmed some of what is already known about a trusty and added unique knowledge about a husband’s experience of being trusted by his wife. In what follows, this knowledge is discussed in relation to extant research that was not specifically about the trusty’s experience. This discussion is much more extensive than this section about the trusty given the fact that the vast majority of the research has focused on the trustor, the relationship between the trustor and trusty, and the construct of trust itself. Prudent to note is how the following analysis is engaged in carefully to avoid undue speculation and assumption of associations where they do not logically exist. By design, this heuristic study of 10 husbands’ experience of being trusted by their wives is not generalizable in the quantitative sense, yet the discoveries herein can be considered trustworthy and may be responsibly transferred and applied to similar situations, including the related research that follows.

**Present Findings and Previous Knowledge of Intrapersonal Trust**

In the literature review in Chapter Two, the intrapersonal experience of the trustor in relation to the trusty was broken down into the following subsections: trust as a regulatory system; impulsive and reflective trust; personal motives, values, and goals; trust and attachment; trust and differentiation of self; and additional personal dispositions and attributions. By necessity due to the paucity of research on the trusty’s experience, the emphasis in the review was on intrapersonal aspects of the trustor and dynamics between a trustor and trusty. This study of husbands’ experience of being trusted by their wives contributes to an understanding of trust dynamics by expanding knowledge of the trusty. Given that the present findings relate strongly to some of the aforementioned intrapersonal areas and loosely to others, various aspects of intrapersonal trust will be discussed hereafter in an integrated and synthesized manner.
The findings of this study clearly reveal what can be considered not only experiences but benefits as a result of being trusted, a discovery that provides a lens through which to see all of the discussion of the results. The range of experiences expressed by the husbands was overwhelmingly positive, including intrapersonal themes such as deep satisfaction as well as peace and security. Furthermore, being trusted was not considered a negative experience in any way by any of the husbands, with the possible exception of the weight of responsibility they often felt to maintain the trust, an experience not considered negative but a natural by-product of the privilege of being trusted.

Given the veritable lack of research on the unique experiences of a trusty, one approach to the discussion of the present findings is to compare the experience of a trusty to the role trust may play in the life of the trustor. In one of the more recent and robust conclusions about trust, Cavallo et al. (2014) described trust as a regulatory system used to reconcile the tension between approach-oriented connection goals and avoidance-oriented self-protection goals within a relationship; a weighing of benefits and costs. One rule engaged as a part of this regulatory system is if one’s partner is accepting, then connect, but if he or she is not accepting, then self-protect. Connecting may involve trusting whereas self-protection may involve withdrawing trust. Interestingly, Cavallo et al. stated that cognitive and behavioral strategies may be used to cast aside concerns about the breaking of the acceptance rule, as well as other risk-regulation

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5 One co-researcher did briefly mention in member-checking communication after the original interview that he believes his experience of being trusted changes with the nature of his wife’s trust (i.e., trusted to be [character], do [complete a task], or decide [bring original thought and solutions]). Depending on the type of trust, such as trust to complete a task or make a decision, the experience can include feelings of anxiety or pressure, which may not be freeing or empowering. The burden of responsibility in relation to one’s wife, while still considered a privilege, may involve uncomfortable or negative feelings, an experience perhaps worth further inquiry.
rules, in what could be considered intentional or reflective override. In other words, trust may be intentionally given, whether or not completely consistent with a relational cost-benefit analysis. The present study begins to illuminate how the trust-related attitudinal and behavioral results of the functioning of this risk-regulation system may impact a trusty.

From the standpoint of the husbands in this study, the expressions of their experience of being trusted strongly suggest they believe they are intentionally or purposefully being given trust by their wives. One of the intrapersonal themes that emerged was validation through positive regard, which included being loved, respected, valued, affirmed, and/or supported. The men spoke as if their wives were choosing to regard them positively by way of trust, rather than trusting merely for their own risk regulation benefit while the men fortuitously reaped the benefits of positive regard. For example, when speaking of respect, Caleb stated, “I don’t know if my wife could trust me unless she had a fair amount of respect for me,” and Lewis stated, “Where there’s [trust] it’s that, you know, feeling of support and a positive vibe, you know, just general positive vibe.” While personal benefit on the part of the wives is not out of the question as a motive, perhaps driven by some sort of regulatory system rule, the men experienced trust as positive regard nonetheless. Given the intricate interplay that exists between trustor and trusty motives and experiences, this particular trusty experience illuminates the possibility that the good feelings that positive regard engenders in a trusty may lead to rewarding experiences for the trustor. This dynamic also suggests a simultaneous and synergistic focus on self and other; avoiding unnecessary dichotomization of experience. The decision to trust acts as a form of self-regulatory personal benefit for the trusty as well as a rewarding experience for the trustor, with coinciding, inextricable, and recursive self- and other-orientations.
In contrast, as a whole the literature portrays trust as a benefit for self with little consideration of what trust can mean for its recipient (e.g., Dunning et al., 2014; Gilovich, Kruger, & Savitsky, 1999; Malhotra, 2004; Riedl & Javor, 2012), which stands in stark contrast to the array of benefits the husbands in this study experienced. In early theoretical work on trust, McClintock (1972) recognized how collaboration and other-orientation seemed to maximize personal trust, and Deutsch (1973) recognized how virtue and faith could act as motivations to trust; yet both concluded that what appeared to be other-oriented was ultimately for personal satisfaction or personal benefits gained by being able to trust. More recently, Simpson (2007) incorporated personal, moral, and structural goals and motives on the part of the trustor in his dyadic model of trust; yet he did not seem to take seriously other-centered goals and motivations for trusting. Yamagishi et al.’s (2015) research with the Trust Game revealed that internal, moral standards may drive a decision to trust, including the desire to be a “trustful person” (p. 455); yet the decision was still assumed to be about the trustor’s sense of self rather than any consequence the trust may have for the trusty.

While the motives behind the trust the men in the present study believed they received from their wives is unknown in this study, what the men experienced as recipients of such trust point to the real possibility that the aforementioned theoreticians and researchers were actually on the right track. Unfortunately, they did not adequately attend to trusties, like the men in this study and what they believe they are experiencing. These husbands believe that being trusted is an act of love. The possibility exists that some if not all of what the men in this study experienced could be what a trustor intentionally desired to create for the trusty as an other-oriented act of care, concern, or love expressed through trust. Their belief in the purposeful nature of their wives’ trust gains credence by the discussion of privilege that follows.
An intrapersonal theme that emerged in this study was the husband’s experience of understanding that his wife’s trust is a privilege not to be taken for granted. A related subtheme was a sense of responsibility or inspiration to maintain the trust. Many of the husbands realized that the trust of their wives was not something they were entitled to; rather, it was a type of gift—a gift of great value with requisite risk on the part of their wives. As already mentioned, Cavallo et al. (2014) recognized how trust regulates risk within an individual, including how that trust may override connection concerns. This study adds the element of the experience of the recipients; in this case husbands that seem to recognize the risks their wives are taking to trust them, whether that risk is completely conscious on the part of the wives or not. Worth considering is the possibility that as husbands recognize the privilege of trust and seek to actively maintain it, these actions may be perceived by the wives as forms of acceptance, which when processed through the trust risk-regulation system, leads to more connecting on the part of the trustor. This connecting may be experienced as both intimacy and satisfaction, emergent themes in this study, perhaps attributed by a husband to his wife’s trust in him. The intimacy, satisfaction, and inspiration to maintain trust lead to a shared experience of intimacy between husband and wife that mitigates the need for self-protection on the part of the wife, leading to even more trust on her part (See Figure 5.2). While trust acts as a risk-regulation system intrapersonally, the trusty’s experience of being trusted reciprocally and interpersonally influences the functioning and perhaps even the development of the regulation system itself.
Trust as a risk-regulation system logically corresponds to Mikulincer’s (1998) work on trust and attachment, which connects with the present findings. Mikulincer found that securely attached individuals focused on intimacy increase and constructive communication with a partner, both ways of seeking relational connection. Conversely, he found that anxious-ambivalent and avoidant individuals focused on security-seeking and worry as well as control attainment and distancing, respectively. Both of these findings are consistent with the aforementioned trust risk-regulation system. Mikulincer also suggested that trust in relation to attachment style may act not only as a response to a partner but also a secure base from which one may risk vulnerability and further trust-related attitudes and actions, including increased capability of pursuing partner well-being rather than being a passive recipient of care and
comfort. In other words, trust could be the impetus for intimacy rather than just a by-product of such connection. This is consistent with Murray and Holmes’s (2009) suggestion that with strong trust one can afford to prioritize relationship promotion, whereas with weak trust self-protection is prioritized. The experiences of the husbands in this study convey a sense of well-being consistent with these assertions.

In the present study, peace and security emerged as a strong theme, including safety to be open and honest. If Mikulincer is correct that attachment security manifests as increased trust by a trustor, then, given the present findings, there is evidence that security in a trustor may beget security in a trusty. Secure attachment, which includes an intrapersonal sense of peace and safety, may manifest as trust-related actions and interactions, which, according to the husbands in this study, were experienced as providing peace and security. By implication, and certainly worth further study, is the possibility that a trusty’s experience of peace and security could contribute to decreased anxiety for an insecure trusty or even the development of an “earned secure” attachment style in adulthood as a trusty experiences the ongoing peace and security of being trusted (Main, Hesse, & Kaplan, 2005). Regardless of such explanations or implications, the experience of a husband as he is trusted by his wife is clearly peace and security, an experience that he may in turn share as trusty with her as trustor.

As indicated in both Chapters One and Two, differentiation of self is a concept that can be integrated with attachment dynamics. Differentiation is a healthy condition reflecting one’s sense of autonomy and interdependence in a relationship as well as between one’s personal thoughts and emotions (Nichols & Schwartz, 2004). One can be both separate and connected in a way that fosters personal and relational health (i.e., emotionally, cognitively, and physically). While differentiation can be measured within the individual, thus considered an intrapersonal
dynamic, it can be manifest in the interactions between partners. The experiences of trust that the husbands in this study described from their wives seemed consistent with relational dynamics resulting from differentiation of self. Bartle (1996) found that a lower level of emotional reactivity to events involving one’s parents, a possible sign of healthy differentiation of self, was associated with a higher level of trust in one’s partner, and vice versa. In this study, the experience of being trusted included both intrapersonal and interpersonal themes such as *peace and security, validation through positive regard in the form of support, intimacy including peace of mind, and freedom both inside and outside of the marriage*. The trust the husbands experienced seemed to provide them with a sense of deep closeness and connection (i.e., intimacy) as well as the freedom to personally grow and explore both inside and outside of the relationship. To allow this level of differentiation interpersonally would typically require a high level of differentiation within the trustor intrapersonally (Bartle, 1996; Bowen, 1966; Corey, 2013; Kerr, 1984; Murray & Holmes, 2011; Nichols & Schwartz, 2004), including tolerance of being connected yet healthily separated cognitively, emotionally, and physically from one’s partner, an act that in most cases would require the risk of trusting. The trust the men believed they were experiencing seemed consistent with both the connection and autonomy emotionally acceptable to a differentiated individual in that it fostered the experience of intimacy and freedom. Granted, this association between the husbands’ experiences and the wives’ differentiation is speculative, yet it is consistent with theory and research on differentiation and trust. Further study is required to substantiate this association.

Worth a brief mention at this point is how the present findings support the conclusions of a study done by Bartle (1996) as she looked at differentiation and trust. Whereas earlier studies, such as those done by Larzelere and Huston (1980) and Butler (1986), concluded that trust
begets trust in a dyadic relationship, Bartle discovered a lack of a significant association between partners’ trust levels. In other words, her analysis did not confirm the idea that trust in one partner simply begets trust in the other. The present study supports Bartle’s observations, given what was not heard from the co-researchers. Strikingly, only one co-researcher specifically mentioned how he believed that his trust in his wife grew because of her trust in him, adding that his ability to trust others in general grew as a result of being trusted. Even in this one case, the husband’s generalized trust grew, rather than just his specific trust for his wife. In many ways, this lack of trust reciprocity in the men’s expressions came as a surprise, particularly as anecdotal and empirical evidence may seem to suggest otherwise.

In a somewhat related study, Ben-Ner and Halldorsson (2010) looked at trusting and trustworthiness using the Trust Game, a game described in Chapter Two and often used in trust research. They found that the amount sent by Player 1 (i.e., the trustor) related only to unconditional kindness while the amount sent back by Player 2 (the trusty) was related to a sense of obligation to reward the trustor’s investment, rather than any reciprocity variables measured. Buchan et al. (2008) also found that the norm of obligation was a significant motivator behind trustworthiness. These findings are consistent with the intrapersonal subtheme of a sense of responsibility or inspiration to maintain the trust given by the husbands’ wives as well as the lack of data on trust begetting trust in a reciprocal manner. In sum, for the husbands in this study, their experience did involve more of a sense of obligation than a sense of reciprocity, consistent with the studies mentioned.

After reviewing the common historical results of research involving the Trust Game, Molhotra (2004) noticed how large trusting acts tend to make reciprocity more likely and more substantive, but he went on to state, “It is unclear why this is the case” (p. 62). The present study
sheds a great deal of light on what may be some of the reasons why, particularly related to how the husbands appear to respond to being trusted by behaving in reciprocally positive ways, even if not inspired by an increase in their own trust. As mentioned earlier, Campbell et al. (2010) suggest, based on their research, that a core component of trust is the stability of relationship evaluations across time. They found that men who were involved with more trusting partners reported more stable relationship quality across time, independent of their own levels of trust, a result that did not hold true for women. This is entirely consistent with the present study, and the case could be made that all of the emergent themes and subthemes capture the experiences of husbands that believe they are in stable, high quality relationships (see Figure 5.2). In large part, the husbands in this study did not talk about their own abilities or willingness to trust at all, but they did talk about themes of inspiration to maintain the trust, affirmation of doing what is right, and deep satisfaction as a result of being trusted. The men spoke of responses to trust with attitudes and behaviors that would likely contribute to relational stability and longevity, consistent with the sense of privilege, responsibility, affirmation, and satisfaction expressed by the husbands.

In Chapter Two, a study by Rempel et al. (1985) was discussed in which the faith of a trustor was strongly correlated with one’s love for a partner, and one’s faith in a partner was strongly correlated with seeing a partner as intrinsically motivated to invest in the relationship. In the researchers’ interpretations, they attributed causation with intrinsic motivation of the trusty leading to more faith in the trustor, which they believed would produce more love in the trustor. In the literature review for the present study, this interpretation was challenged, with the proposition that the love of the trustor could just as feasibly produce more faith, which when perceived by the trusty could produce more intrinsic motivation. The results of this study appear
to support such an alternate interpretation. The trust given to the husband, regardless of its motivation, produced an understanding that his wife’s trust was *not a privilege to be taken for granted*, and it produced *a sense of responsibility or inspiration to maintain the trust*. While one could make the case that the wife’s trust was an extrinsic motivator, it is quite possible that the behaviors produced by the husband’s sense of privilege and responsibility could *appear to* the wife as intrinsically motivated, particularly given that none of the men had explicitly expressed his appreciation for his wife’s trust to his wife prior to the study. In other words, her trust could produce an experience for him that would inspire the growth of intrinsic motivation to invest in the relationship. The investment would be extrinsically inspired, but intrinsically fostered and prioritized. The distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic is fine to be sure, but such is often the case within interdependent relationships.

The biology of trust may lend clarity and support to the extrinsic-intrinsic distinction as well as provide possible explanations for results of this study. Research has shown that nasally administered, or exogenous, oxytocin has been shown to increase trust (Kosfeld et al., 2005), whereas when people are trusted, their brains release endogenous oxytocin, which predicts trustworthiness (Zak et al., 2005). In this sense, that which begins on the outside (i.e., exogenous oxytocin) produces an internal disposition (i.e., trust) in the trustor, which in turn creates an extrinsic effect on the trusty, subsequently producing an intrinsic motivator (i.e., endogenous oxytocin). As discussed in the previous paragraph, that which technically constitutes extrinsic motivation for the trusty becomes, by way of biological co-regulation, actual intrinsic motivation on the part of the trusty. The perception of this intrinsic motivation creates a positive feedback loop of perceived trustworthiness producing increased trust by the trustor, perceived trust by the
trustworthy, increased trustworthiness and trust by the trusty, then back to perceived trustworthiness producing more trust by the trustor (see Figure 5.3).

![Positive feedback loop of trust, trustworthiness, and oxytocin](image)

*Figure 5.3: Positive feedback loop of trust, trustworthiness, and oxytocin*

The present study provides heuristic and phenomenological evidence of the experience of the trusty in this positive feedback loop. In addition to the information about oxytocin alone, oxytocin for both participants has been shown to enhance dopamine levels, increase synaptic serotonin, and inhibit amygdala excitatory information, making the interactions rewarding for those involved while experiencing a sense of calm and decreased fear (Riedl & Javor, 2012). The themes most consistent with this description that emerged in this study as the men expressed their experiences of being trusted are *deep satisfaction, validation through positive regard, peace and security, and intimacy*, with other themes arguably constituting rewarding experiences as well. A few years ago, Riedl and Javor (2012) put out a call to the research community to
conduct more investigations that focus on the trusty, as well as interactions between the trustor and trusty. This study has begun to answer that call.

One final comparison can be made between the extant literature focused on the intrapersonal aspects of trust and the findings of this study. Vinkers et al. (2010) found that trust can decrease the amount of intrusive behavior in a relationship, such as covertly reading e-mail or overtly and excessively meddling with a partner’s affairs. Intrusive behavior tends to inhibit intimacy by increasing uncertainty in a relationship (Knobloch, 2008; Knobloch & Solomon, 2002). In this study, when the men spoke of the intrapersonal and interpersonal themes of validation through positive regard, affirmation of doing what is right, peace and security, intimacy, experience of grace, and freedom, they often acknowledged what they did not have to deal with, given that they were trusted by their wives. Particularly in the area of peace of mind as it related to the experience of intimacy, men spoke of not being distracted from life, not dealing with suspicion, not dealing with doubts, and not having to justify every decision or action; all as a result of being trusted by their wives. As Caleb stated,

That I have a sense of peace, or I have a pride in our relationship that I don’t feel like I have to justify myself all the time. That’s what I would feel. Like when you were talking about it, it just felt like it would just always be in the back of my mind. What have I done today and how would it look like to her if she was always watching what I was doing and how would I explain something to her that maybe she wouldn’t understand? Could it be misconstrued? Like that would be a lot of mental energy.

Consistent with previous research, many of the men spoke of a lack of intrusive behaviors by their wives, which resulted in an experience of increased intimacy.
This section covered various interpretations of the findings of this study as they relate primarily to the intrapersonal aspects of trust addressed in the extant literature. While the emphasis was on intrapersonal dimensions, interpersonal dynamics of trust inevitably entered the discussion given the systemic and interdependent nature of trustor-trusty relationships. The following section will emphasize previous knowledge of interpersonal trust as related to the present findings, including intrapersonal information as is relevant to the discussion.

**Present Findings and Previous Knowledge of Interpersonal Trust**

In the literature review in Chapter Two, the interpersonal experience of trust was broken down into the following subsections: love and commitment; motivation management; general risk attitudes and reciprocity; risk regulation and self-esteem; and relationship developmental trajectory. As in the previous section, these aspects of interpersonal trust will be discussed in an integrated and synthesized manner.

In a landmark study on trust and the development of the Dyadic Trust Scale, Larzelere and Huston (1980) found that dyadic trust and love were strongly related. Expecting to find that Partner A’s trust would correlate strongly with Partner B’s love, they instead found that Partner A’s trust in Partner B was more strongly associated with Partner A’s love for Partner B. As has often been the case, they suggested that as trust grows so does love, an interpretation that established sequence and causation where only correlations existed. In the present study, the men felt deeply loved by the wives who trusted them. Discussed as an aspect of *validation through positive regard* in Chapter Four, for the men to be trusted was to *feel loved*. At times the men would begin to speak of trust and love interchangeably as if they would experience them similarly. As Anthony stated, “And so, um, maybe that’s one way she has demonstrated her love, is just through her trust.” Larzelere and Huston assumed trust must precede love, but in its
experience, the husbands most often seemed to assume that love preceded trust, or in other words, their wives’ love led to their expressions of trust. Regardless of which came first or whether they occurred simultaneously, the men experienced trust as love that was received as positive regard as well as peace, security, intimacy, grace, and freedom. To the men, trust was about the love of their wives that set them at ease and set them free. While not the interpretation Larzelere and Huston put forth, the findings of this study are consistent with the actual correlations between love and trust they found many years ago.

As discussed in the previous section on intrapersonal trust factors, the observation was made that various personal experiences of the husbands in this study were associated with what they described as a satisfying and intimate relationship. Studying the relationship among trust, dependence, and commitment, Wieselquist et al. (1999) concluded that trust enhanced commitment insofar as it produced enhanced dependence in the trustor, which in turn strengthened commitment. Strong commitment inhibited self-interested behavior and increased pro-relationship behavior. Such pro-relationship behavior engendered increased trust by the trusty (i.e., recipient of the trust), which increased dependence, commitment, pro-relationship behavior, and trust in the trusty; completing a full circle of interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics they called their Model of Mutual Cyclical Growth (see Figure 5.4). While they acknowledged that trust appears to be a function of circular causality among the individual, the partner, and the situation, they leaned toward a linear interpretation that sees trust as a consequence of observed pro-relationship gestures (i.e., gestures that were a result of increased commitment on the part of the trustor as her dependence grew in relation to her own trust).

Upon examination of Wieselquist et al.’s (1999) model, findings from the present study may be logically embedded in a fashion that enhances or clarifies the circular relationships
among individual, partner, and situation. In the Model of Mutual Cyclical Growth, each partner’s trust level hinges in large part on observations of a partner’s pro-relationship behavior. In the present study, co-researchers were asked to describe their experience of being trusted. For all husbands, a screening instrument was used to determine that they all had a strong belief that they were trusted by their wives. While their strength of belief was required for participation, they were not asked for specific evidence of this trust so as to not risk distracting them from explaining their experience of being trusted. As a result, it may be safely concluded that a husband explained his experience of being trusted based on whatever he uniquely observed as evidence of his wife’s trust. This is important to understand when interpreting the results in relation to the Model of Mutual Cyclical Growth.

Emergent themes in the present study that involve some level of observation by the husband of his wife include validation through positive regard as evidenced by love, respect, valuing, affirming, and supporting; affirmation of doing what is right; evidence that his wife is receiving his love; and experience of grace. Other themes and subthemes, such as deep satisfaction and thankfulness, peace and security, and freedom both inside and outside of the relationship, could also be related to observations in less direct ways. In other words, these experiences had to be based on observations that led the men to believe they were trusted. Relating this to Wieselquist et al’s (1999) model, these experiences may contribute to the increased dependence, commitment, and pro-relationship behavior that they identified on the part of the trusty in the cycle. These experiences perhaps contributed to one of the strongest intrapersonal themes and subthemes—an understanding that his wife’s trust is a privilege not to be taken for granted that comes along with a sense of responsibility or inspiration to maintain the trust. For the men, this sense of privilege, inspiration, and responsibility may contribute to
increased dependence, commitment, and subsequent pro-relationship behavior toward their wives. But as stated in the previous section, the majority of the men did not speak of having their own trust level increased in response to their wives’. In Wieselquist et al.’s model, a trusty’s trust level increases upon observing a trustor’s pro-relationship behavior that ties back to her level of trust. If the men experienced trust in this way, they did not state it as such. The findings in the present study may or may not support the Model of Mutual Cyclical Growth, but they do contribute to an enhanced understanding of the cyclical processes in place between a trustor and trusty, or at least that between a wife and husband. Further research is necessary.

**Figure 5.4:** Adaptation of Wieselquist et al.’s (1999) Model of Mutual Cyclical Growth. Note how trustor and trusty exchange roles throughout the cycle.
Much of the recent research on trust has pointed to the role of transformation of motivation, or the relinquishing of one’s immediate self-interest to act upon broader goals, values, and motives when facing a trust-relevant situation with a partner (Holmes & Rempel, 1989; Murray & Holmes, 2009; Shallcross & Simpson, 2012; Simpson, 2007; Wieselquist et al., 1999; Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994). Yovetich and Rusbult (1994) found evidence that the critical feature of transformation of motivation may be the ability to inhibit one’s impulse to react destructively, but they were unable to determine why one would choose to do so. And in a conceptually related study Shallcross and Simpson (2012) found that those with high trust were more accommodating and collaborative in trust-related strain-test situations, and those high in chronic trust appeared to take a longer-term, relationship-centered orientation toward the relationship, allowing more faith and sacrifice. The juxtaposition of what is known about transformation of motivation and the findings of the present study provides much to consider.

If transformation of motivation from self-interest to an other- or relationship-orientation is rooted in high trust to begin with and produces further trust as a result, the men in the present study expressed experiences of being trusted that may be consistent with being the recipients of such transformation of motivation. A strong theme was *deep satisfaction* *most often accompanied by thankfulness*. The common experience of thankfulness begs the question of what exactly they are thankful for. At first glance, the simple answer is that they are thankful for the trust their wives place in them, but the depth of the husbands’ disclosures reveals much more. They are thankful for the many personal and relational benefits trust provides, including *love, respect, affirmation, support, peace of mind, security, intimacy, grace, freedom, and a sense of doing what is right for their wives*; all of which emerged as themes or subthemes. The co-researchers knew they had something of great value in the trust of their wives and subsequent
personal and relational experiences it provided. Once they reflected deeply on being trusted, the
men seemed to become aware of the accommodation, collaboration, faith, and sacrifice their
wives practiced by way of trust; all aspects of transformation of motivation. While the wives’
motives for trusting their husbands in this study are unknown by design, the experience of trust
appeared to the husbands as interest in them rather than self-interest on the part of their wives,
leaving room for the inference that wives were transforming their motives to trust even when
they may have had many reasons not to.

A strong theme that emerged in this study is that of the experience of grace, often
coupled with the aforementioned thankfulness. As Bradley put it,

It’s like a manifestation of God’s grace. It’s unmerited favor. It’s like … I didn’t
deserve it. She didn’t have to do it that way, but she did. And so, like, I can mostly just
be thankful for it.

Jacob expressed it this way:

And to know that [my wife] trusts me is part of her expression of unconditional love that
just as whatever thing I do that hurts her or offends her doesn’t make her stop loving me.

It also doesn’t make her stop trusting me. And it allows me to understand grace more
fully.

Bradley and Jacob, as well as many of the husbands, knew that they were not fully worthy of the
trust they had received. As defined in Chapter Four, grace can mean approval, favor, pardon, or
privilege, and may involve kindness, courtesy, clemency, or assistance (Merriam-Webster
Dictionary, 2018). The case was made that grace allows for the continuance of a relationship,
even when it could legitimately be cut off. Grace is something given that is not deserved, which
certainly requires risk on the part of the giver. To the men in this study, grace and trust were
verbatim synonymous. The husbands realized that they were being given something that they
did not necessarily deserve and that it required risk on the part of their wives, as indicated by
such themes as trust as a privilege and trust as an experience of grace. When they thought of
their experience of trust as an undeserved risk on the part of their wives, grace is the word that
came to mind, further strengthening their thankfulness and sense of being loved.

This association between the experience of grace and the trust of their wives supports
research done by Molden and Finkel (2010) on self-regulatory priorities, trust, commitment, and
forgiveness. They found that those with a promotion self-regulatory priority, or a tendency to
prioritize attaining relational growth, tended to forgive based on a sense of trust rather than
commitment, which Molden and Finkel interpreted as a trusting risk those with a promotion
priority were willing to take to produce the opportunity for growth. Interestingly, those with a
security self-regulatory priority tended to forgive out of a sense of commitment rather than trust,
which felt much less risky. As mentioned, the men in this study experienced grace and freedom
when trusted, both of which could be related to having been forgiven. But even more interesting
is how the men had relationship growth-promoting experiences, such as satisfaction, positive
regard, security, and intimacy, as a result of being trusted, without highlighting their wives’
commitment level. Not only that, the men tended to acknowledge risk their wives took by
trusting, part of the privilege they did not want to take for granted. To clarify, Molden and
Finkel found that those with a relationship promotion priority forgave as an act of trust, which
involved risk. Those with a security priority (i.e., for self) forgave out of a sense of commitment,
which involved less risk. The experience of the husbands in this study appears to reflect
relationship promotion experiences related to the trust dynamics Molden and Finkel found.
Furthermore, just as trust did not beget trust as a theme in this study, neither did trust beget an
expression of experiencing the commitment of one’s wife, another example of the value of what did not emerge in this study that actually supports previous research. In other words, the men did not say, “I have the experience of recognizing the commitment level of my wife”; instead they did say that they felt thankful, inspired, loved, respected, valued, affirmed, supported, peaceful, secure, free, and on the receiving end of grace; arguably much more than would be experienced if they thought their wives were only acting out of a sense of security-seeking commitment.

Interpersonal risk as a facet of trust has already received a fair amount of attention in this discussion, yet in relation to the present findings, it deserves even more. Such risk, or the willingness to be vulnerable in the act of trust, appears to be common to many if not all definitions and conceptualizations of trust (e.g., Gottman, 2011; Johnson-George & Swap, 1982; Rousseau et al., 1998). And most if not all of the models for understanding trust incorporate risk and risk management in one way or another (e.g., Cavallo et al., 2009; Cavallo et al., 2014; Murray et al., 2006; Murray, et al., 2011; Murray et al., 2013; Simpson, 2007; Wieselquist et al., 1999). In a study using the Trust Game, Malhotra (2004) found that trustors focused primarily on their personal risk rather than on how much their risk would benefit the trusties, and trusties were relatively insensitive to the risks taken by trustors. In other words, neither party appeared to prioritize the other’s needs. The lack of direct relevance between the Trust Game and real-life relationships notwithstanding, the findings of the present study suggest another reality. The husbands’ experience of being trusted included a certain level of attentiveness to the experience of their wives, often including cognizance of their risk. A wife’s trust was an affirmation of doing what is right, with right most often meaning what was good for her or the relationship. The importance of doing what is right could be an acknowledgement of how a wife risks
allowing her life to be impacted by the vicissitudes of his, including his choices to do right or wrong. Upon understanding that their wives’ trust was a privilege not to be taken for granted, most husbands felt a sense of responsibility or inspiration to maintain the trust, which would appear to place a priority on the needs of their wives as a form of reciprocity. And in one of the most intriguing findings, many of the men experienced their wives’ trust as evidence that their wives were receiving their love. This experience, while their own, certainly suggests a prioritizing of the needs of their wives and a loving acknowledgment of their vulnerability.⁶

While the experiences of self and other in a trustor-trusty relationship may be challenging to tease apart, the research has identified important individual dispositional processes that contribute to the relational dynamics (Simpson, 2007). Self-esteem appears to be a personal disposition that can have profound effects on relational trust (Cavallo et al., 2014; Murray et al., 2000). To sum up the results of much of the research on self-esteem and risk, Murray et al. (2008) stated, “Unfortunately, people low in self-esteem—the very people most in need of social connection—are the least likely to take the kinds of interdependence risks that make for satisfying relationships” (pp. 453–454). Furthermore, those with low self-esteem tend to underestimate their partners’ positive regard, often contrary to their partners’ actual regard, leading to increased self-protection, decreased trust, and diminished relationship satisfaction (Murray et al., 2000). The opposite manifestations involving high self-esteem are true as well. In a similar vein, Miller and Rempel (2004) found that the tendency to attribute positive motives

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⁶ Within the realm of possibility is that all of what appears to be other-centered may actually be self-centered, such as a husband needing to believe he is doing the right thing, not for his wife’s benefit but for his own self-concept. As proposed earlier in this chapter, teasing apart other-focus and self-focus, such as extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation, may at times be difficult if not impossible given the interdependence in a dyadic relationship. With the evidence at hand and the present level of analysis, what may be considered other-centered or self-centered may primarily be a matter of interpretation; interpretation that risks involving personal biases.
to a partner was related to increases in trust that exceeded the assessment of a partner’s actual behavior, trustworthy or otherwise. These findings allow for the possibility that a trusty may have relationship experiences that have little to do with his actual regard for his partner or perhaps even despite his level of trustworthiness.

Of particular interest in relation to the self-esteem research and the present study is the issue of positive regard. *Validation through positive regard* emerged as a primary theme. This can be interpreted in a couple of different ways given the aforementioned research. If a trustor’s belief that she is positively regarded can be associated with increased trust, and being trusted can lead to an experience of validation through positive regard, then another positive feedback loop exists (see Figure 5.5). On the other hand, if low self-esteem inaccurately filters actual regard, then the feedback loop of positive regard could be interrupted by low self-esteem risk regulation on the part of the trustor or the trusty. Also relevant to this study and worth further study is the possibility that low self-esteem on the part of the husband may lead to a vastly different experience of being trusted if he cannot believe the veracity of his wife’s positive regard, a variable that was clearly not directly considered in relation to the experiences of the husbands in this study. And if this occurs, his own ability to trust her in return would be hindered, including his ability to validate her through positive regard. What exists is the potential for a positive feedback loop, or lack thereof, regulated by self-esteem, which would confirm the research of Murray et al. (2000).
Figure 5.5: Possible positive feedback loop of high self-esteem, trust, and positive regard (with possibility of low self-esteem as a hindrance)

Self-protection in a relationship, regardless of its impetus and particularly in low-risk situations, tends to lead to decreased intimacy and declines in satisfaction (Murray et al., 2013). Evans and Kreuger (2011) found that low personal risk was conducive to trust, and a trustor was most likely to consider the trusty’s perspective when risk was low. Yet those low in trust will often respond in low-risk situations by withdrawing trust, which leads to further dismissal of the perspective of the trusty. Paradoxically, a person in a position to legitimately trust cannot gain evidence of the trustworthiness so deeply desired (Murray et al., 2013). In relation to the present findings, the case could be made that the husbands in the study were given the opportunity to experience what they did because they were trusted, thus producing in them attitudes and behaviors that would ultimately lead to the perception of less risk by their wives, trustworthiness
notwithstanding. If for one reason or another a wife would refuse to trust, the implication is that the themes and subthemes identified in this study may not have been experienced by a husband, which to a wife may appear to be a high-risk situation. If these assertions are true in relation to the findings of this study, the paradox Murray et al. (2013) described would be confirmed and strengthened. To state it simply, a wife’s trust may engender in her husband the host of experiences identified in this study, helping to produce exactly the low-risk situation she may believe she needs to trust to begin with. Ironically, without a wife’s trust, a husband may not experience the themes or subthemes identified in this study, which to the wife may appear to justify her fear of trusting to begin with.

Perhaps one of the most important implications of this study is the highlighting of the experiences of being trusted within the deeply circular dynamics between trustor and trusty. Whereas previous research has spent a great deal of effort looking at trust, trustworthiness, experiences of the trustor, and some of the dynamics between the trustor and trusty, much of what has been discovered in this study has not been adequately understood or acknowledged as contributors to the trust-related intimacy in a relationship. The experience of being trusted in a relationship may contribute to relationship development and experiences just as much as it may be a result of these dynamics.

**Present Findings and the Conceptual Framework**

In Chapter One, an overarching conceptual framework was put forth in an effort to contextualize an understanding of a trusty’s experience of being trusted alongside extant theoretical and empirical frameworks (see Figure 5.6). The present findings can add to this conceptual framework, particularly by adding a layer of dispositional influences within both the trustor and trusty that includes the experience of being trusted.
As seen in the original conceptual framework, the trustor and trusty are engaged in an ongoing relationship involving perceptions of the past and anticipation of the future embedded within nesting-cup type layers of influence, including contributions from previous theoretical and empirical knowledge. The present study adds a layer of understanding that includes the possible experiences of being trusted; in this case, unique to husbands. Improvement upon the original conceptual framework includes a consideration of what is *within* an individual trustor/trusty rather than what is layered around him or her. Figure 5.7 extracts the trustor/trusty from the original framework and layers the individual to consider the intrapersonal influences on the interpersonal trust relationship, with the intention of reinserting him back into the overall framework for a more extensive understanding. The previous literature informs the innermost (i.e., the core) of the individual as well as the two outermost layers, and the present study primarily informs the second layer out from the center.

Without delving into too much detail about the first, third, and fourth layers, each includes influences on one’s experience of trusting or being a trusty in a dyadic, interdependent relationship (see Chapter One for explication of these various influences). The third layer involves the experience of being trusted that has received less attention in the theoretical and empirical literature. This study contributes to an understanding of what such an experience may be by asking husbands to disclose their experience of being trusted by their wives (see Figure 5.7). The discussion of the findings within this chapter carefully considers how the emergent themes and subthemes may relate to the previous knowledge of dyadic trust dynamics.

To state it simply, the core of the individual includes various dispositions influenced by the past and that influence the present and future relational interactions. They include implicit dispositions such as attachment working model, differentiation of self, self-esteem, expectations,
and so forth (e.g., Bartle, 1996; Mikulincer, 1998; Simpson, 2007). These dispositions, from the core of one’s being, exert a powerful and ongoing influence on one’s experience as a trustor and trusty. The outer layer involves characteristics that may define and determine how one explicitly interacts with others in a more perception-driven way. These include perceptions, risk-regulation system, transformation of motivation, commitment, dependence, pro-relationship behavior, trustworthiness, and so forth (e.g., Cavallo et al., 2014; Murray & Holmes, 2011; Simpson, 2007; Wieselquist et al., 1999). The updated model of the layered individual embeds both one’s experience of trusting as well as one’s experience of being trusted between these layers, suggesting that they are intrapersonal experiences that are influenced by both the innermost and outermost layers and exert their own powerful influences on both of those layers as well as one’s relationship. To most accurately conceptualize this new addition, one would need to zoom in on both trustor/trusties in the original conceptual framework, understanding that the layers of influence are continually exerting their influence within each individual and in every interaction between them, particularly trust-relevant interactions. And as the individuals and relationship develop through time, what exists within each layer shifts and changes as the individuals respond to situations and seek to grow together as well as maintain individual and relational coherence and morphostasis.

Looking at the update, one may notice that it is stated in the positive, as if one experiences trusting and being trusted. The fact is that any of the feedback loops presented earlier in this chapter (see Figures 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5) could impact these experiences positively or negatively, influencing and influenced by the innermost and outermost layers of dispositions and interaction styles. And the feedback loops, while graphically appearing unnecessarily linear in their intended circularity, may involve recursive interactions among all of
the parts in the loop. In sum, the new conceptualization of the individual within the model in some ways could replace what were originally presented as external influences upon the individuals and relationship. Yet systemically, and as discussed earlier, that which is extrinsic and intrinsic may not be easily discerned nor kept distinct. While the experience of the trusty and the new conceptualization of the individual may in some ways convey a more accurate picture, more work needs to be done to develop a robust conceptual framework that incorporates the best of previous theory and research as well as the contributions of the present study.

Figure 5.6: Conceptual framework from Chapter One
The Operational Definition of Trust and the Present Findings

The operational definition of trust established in Chapter One was: a situationally and relationally influenced personal disposition toward one’s partner that informs one’s view of the past as well as one’s present and future-oriented regulation of interpersonal risk, manifesting in trust-related actions, reactions, and interactions. Given the lack of unanimity about what trust is in the theoretical and empirical literature, this definition was informed by numerous definitions put forth by many different authors. The question at this point is whether the findings in the present study support this operational definition. To state it simply, there is nothing in the results that contradicts the definition put forth. While trust is certainly a phenomenon that is experienced between a trustor and trusty in a relationally interdependent and circular sense, trust
in its most fundamental form remains a personal disposition within the trustor that appears to have profound effects on the trusty intrapersonally and interpersonally.

Important to a proper definition of trust is that it should not be considered a consequence of trustworthiness in a linearly causal fashion any more than the experience of being trusted should be considered a mere consequence of trust in the same linear sense. Important to note in this study as a whole is the fact that the husbands were not asked about what their wives cause them to experience as an effect of their trust. Instead they were asked to speak about their experience of being trusted when they believe they in fact are trusted by their wives. This is no minor distinction. The former assumes cause and effect, thus assuming control of one person over aspects of the other in a way that disregards the virtues of differentiation of self, the impact of attachment working model, the influence of self-esteem, and so forth. The latter allows for personal history, experiences, beliefs, expectations, and the like to contribute to trust dynamics between individuals in ways that have nothing to do with either individual’s level of trustworthiness, or level of trust for that matter. Just as a trustor’s experience of trust is not fully determined by a trusty’s level of trustworthiness, neither is a trusty’s experience fully determined by a trustor’s level of trust. An accurate definition of trust must recognize all determinants, proximal and distal, that may contribute to trust dynamics, all of which must be reflected in the theoretical and empirical literature so as to approach an understanding of trust responsibly. Any intentional or unintentional interpretation of linear cause and effect when it comes to trust and trustworthiness, all too common in the literature, is likely to obscure the complexity of trust. This study has made a strong case for the value of understanding the experiences of being trusted and the contributions those experiences may have in dyadic trust interactions, all without attributing causation or assuming experiences of being trusted are a direct result of a wife’s trust.
One final note about the definition of trust is warranted for the reader to understand the study at hand. At no point during the procedures of this study was the operational definition of trust disclosed to the co-researchers as a matter of course. On one hand, this could be considered a weakness or limitation of the study, but on the other hand it may be considered a strength. The decision was made not to share the definition so as to avoid unnecessary discussion or debate about the accuracy of the definition, not to mention how the complexity of the operational definition would likely risk confusing the co-researcher, potentially impacting the discussion. The screening instrument used to determine eligibility for the study had a written purpose stated as “to determine the degree to which you believe you are trusted by your wife,” and the prospective participants proceeded to complete the screening instrument with no apparent need for clarification about what trust meant. Nine out of 10 co-researchers engaged in the in-depth interview without ever asking for a definition of trust. The one co-researcher who asked was given the operational definition, at which point he commented about its complexity, agreed with its accuracy, and moved on with the discussion. This assumption by the co-researchers that what they experience as trust was, in fact, what the researcher was asking about is fascinating in and of itself and may be grounds for further study. And the fact that clear themes and subthemes emerged without a clearly communicated common definition points to not only commonality in experience by husbands, but commonality in a lay understanding of its definition.

The Place of Trustworthiness in the Context of These Findings

In gaining a deeper understanding of the experience of being trusted lies a significant risk—if any experience appears to be a benefit to the trusty, and if a trustor might, as a matter of care and concern, seek to facilitate such a benefit by choosing to trust, the issue of trustworthiness may receive less attention than it requires in such a decision. Perhaps at worst
one may be convinced to disregard trustworthiness, placing oneself in harm’s way by choosing to trust someone who is dangerously untrustworthy. In the case of a wife, she may entrust her well-being into the hands of an untrustworthy husband rather than judiciously choose to trust as an act of love, recognizing when such trust must be limited, is unwarranted, or may even be dangerous. A benefit of incorporating differentiation of self into an understanding of trust dynamics is that differentiation allows for an autonomous choice to trust with an understanding of its possible benefits for the recipient without the unnecessary risks of relational fusion (i.e., lack of differentiation) that could result in entrusting one’s very life to the other without healthy discernment or boundaries. The fact is, trustworthiness is critically important in relationships. And it is no less important when the experience of being trusted is better understood. Stated another way, both a trustworthy and untrustworthy person may experience benefits of being trusted, but this does not justify untrustworthiness, nor does it make trust relationally imperative. But untrustworthiness also does not negate the value of understanding the experience of being trusted, even when it is not fully warranted. Implications related to this cautionary note will be discussed below.

Implications for Social Change and Recommendations for Action

The results of one heuristic study of husbands’ experience of being trusted by their wives certainly cannot, in and of itself, indicate the need for social change. But it can point in the direction one may now choose to look. This section includes implications for social change as well as recommendations for action particularly relevant to the profession of counseling and marriage and family therapy.

Perhaps the most obvious yet most critical implication is for counselors and clients to be more cognizant of the experience of a trusty, or the experience of being trusted. Counselors
regularly assist clients in discerning when to trust, including looking at the implications of the trustworthiness of one’s partner. Also, it is not uncommon for trustworthiness to be encouraged in a clinical setting, particularly as it relates to fidelity and healthy dependence. But if the clinical attention given to the trusty is as lacking as it is in the literature, the experience of being trusted may be neglected at the risk of missing important relationship dynamics. Two simple ways to consider the trusty would be to (1) assess the trusty experience by asking questions, such as, “When you believe you are being trusted, what is that like for you?” and (2) ask circular questions to illuminate the trusty experience, such as, “When you trust your husband, what do you think being trusted is like for him?” As indicated in this study, simply asking about one’s experience can produce a treasure trove of helpful information.

In addition to acknowledging the experience of the trusty, a counselor would benefit from understanding the experiences of trust, trustworthiness, and being trusted separately, yet also strive to comprehend the interplay of all three. In this sense, as important as each part is, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts as the trustor and trusty interact around trust-relevant situations and layered contexts of influence, both externally and internally. In addition to its focus on the trusty, this study indicates how trust, trustworthiness, and being trusted exist in a circular, nonlinear relationship. While this is important for counselors to understand, the scholarship surrounding the issue of interpersonal trust must maintain this robust conceptualization of the dynamics of trust without reverting to breaking it into its constituent parts, resulting in a simple yet less astute view of trust. In this vein, one mistake already evident in the literature is to attribute causation where it does not exist. Counselors, supervisors, teachers, researchers, and clients alike must distance themselves from the false notion that trust is simply a unidirectional effect or consequence of trustworthiness. The findings of this study
show how the experience of being trusted may produce behaviors by a trusty that further contribute to trust, calling into question a simplified notion of the origin of trust or trustworthiness in a relationship.

Attachment working model and differentiation of self have received a great deal of attention in this study due to their empirical and theoretical linkage to trust dynamics. An additional way that counselors can apply the findings of this study is to integrate newfound knowledge of a trusty’s experience into the assessment of intimacy dynamics. If a trusty experiences satisfaction, validation, peace, security, intimacy, grace, and freedom, a counselor may recognize other indicators of healthy attachment and differentiation. While this study did not address this specifically, a counselor may also deduce that a lack of such experiences as a trusty could indicate unhealthy attachment and differentiation dynamics. Stated simply, knowledge of trusty experiences may enhance efforts to maximize client relational health.

Being cognizant of trusty experiences in assessment, conceptualization of treatment, and overall understanding is certainly in itself beneficial. Yet to stop with cognizance or even an interest in further study may neglect one of the greatest implications of this study—an opportunity to choose to produce the benefits, of which one is now aware, for a trusty. While this may seem most pertinent for a client to apply intentionally, counselors and educators alike would do well to design interventions that nurture such experiences for a trusty. Themes such as satisfaction, freedom, and intimacy emerged in this study. Therapeutic interventions are clearly designed to facilitate such experiences for a trustor, but perhaps it is time to do the same for a trusty; potentially nurturing positive feedback loops of relational health.

Recognizing the various themes and subthemes that emerged in this study may also be applied in an isomorphic fashion from clients, to counselors, to supervisors. Simply defined,
isomorphism describes when things take on the same or similar form, which when applied to counseling or therapy looks at “the similarity of structure and process at the client/family level, therapist/trainee level, and supervisory level in both directions” (Weir, 2009, p. 61). Particularly within the field of marriage and family therapy, understanding isomorphic processes can be beneficial when developing a systemic understanding of a client’s presenting problem and treatment. Trust and the experience of receiving it may manifest similarly in various relationships concurrently. For example, if a wife trusts her husband and he experiences benefits, a counselor might in turn find it easier to trust a client or experience some benefits of being trusted by them, which would invariably impact the therapeutic alliance. Furthermore, these trust dynamics may also be experienced in the supervisor-supervisee relationship, lending itself to a positive experience for all, from client to supervisor. The trust in the client relationship may be isomorphic to that in the various relationships described here in ways that are unacknowledged but could be employed in treatment conceptualization if acknowledged. A lack of trust, the inverse of what is described here, may more obviously manifest isomorphically across relationships with a supervisor and supervisee struggling with trust when a client is struggling himself with such trust, whether giving or receiving. Recognition of isomorphic trusty experiences may enhance treatment effectiveness.

Stated simply, knowing more about the trusty experience can illuminate opportunities for personal and relational growth, enhanced professional assistance, and more robust systemic understanding of client experiences. The present study has provided a springboard for further study in the area of dyadic trust.
Recommendations for Further Study

The present study was heuristic and qualitative in design to serve a unique and necessary purpose in the study of dyadic trust. So little is known about the trusty, or recipient of trust, in a relationship that the logical place to start was to allow a group of trusties the opportunity to express the depths of their experience of being trusted. The results were rich, thick, and fascinating and stand alone as a contribution to knowledge of trust dynamics. The results also reveal new and exciting avenues of study.

Given that this study focused on husbands, the next logical step would be to look at the same experiences for wives. Campbell et al. (2010) have suggested based on their research that women’s levels of trust may have more impact than that of men since women usually influence the affective tone of relationships more than men. While it is clear from this study that the affective tone of the relationship was influenced by the wives’ trust insofar as it impacted the affective experiences of the husbands, whether it has more of an impact than that of men’s is still unknown. Beyond understanding trusty experiences within marriage, other relationship forms, such as dating partners or cohabitating couples, warrant study as well. Studying the experiences of women as trusties could reveal whether they have similar experiences to the men, such as grace, security, and validation. One question that stands out is: Whereas husbands in the present study did not express experiencing more trust when trusted, would wives have the same experience, or would they trust their husbands more when trusted? Further qualitative study appears warranted for both men and women. Yet as a foundation of knowledge grows relative to the experience of being trusted, quantitative studies could be designed to test hypotheses, investigate the commonality of experience, and seek to generalize results to the broader population.
The results of the present study raise additional questions that warrant further study. Examples of such questions are as follows:

- Can other-centered and self-serving attitudes and actions coexist in a healthy, relationship-oriented way, particularly as related to trust?
- What is the relationship between trust and grace, and what is the relationship between love and trust; particularly since such experiences were often spoken of interchangeably by the co-researchers in this study?
- What is the relationship between differentiation of self of the trustor and the experience of peace, security, and freedom for the trusty? Furthermore, if healthy differentiation and secure attachment are related within an individual trustor, could being trusted by a differentiated and secure individual potentially contribute to earned secure attachment for a trusty over time?
- Do trusties experience different types of trust, and what difference would that make in terms of their experience of each type or their experience of their wives’ trust in general?
- Since self-esteem is such a strong contributor to the decision to trust, could a husband’s self-esteem, or other intrapersonal factors, moderate or mediate his experience of being trusted?
- What trust-related attitudes and behaviors of the husband might be related to his own experience of being trusted by his wife? In other words, what roles does the husband play in his marriage that may result in being trusted and subsequently experiencing such trust?
- Does the trust actually have to exist, or is it the perception or belief of the husband that he is trusted that matters most?
What role does trustworthiness play in the experience of being trusted by one’s wife?

These are just a few of the many questions that may emerge from the present study as it appears to have opened new and exciting directions for trust research.

Finally, when it comes to the overall conceptualization of trust, two significant points were made in Chapter One when discussing key terms and justification of the study. The first point is that a commonly accepted operational definition of trust is difficult to find, thus a definition was developed for this study as informed by the best literature to date. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the present study supports the definition of trust utilized for this study, or at least does nothing to contradict it. Further study is necessary to establish a definition of trust that can be used across future research studies so as to avoid obscuration or misapplication of results based solely on the lack of definitional unanimity. The present study allows for refinement of such a definition.

The second point addresses a risk of not knowing the experience of trusties. The case has been made, as supported by this study, that trust is not a direct and linear consequence of trustworthiness. The experience of being trusted may lead to attitudes and behaviors that can impact the circular, trust-related dynamics that exist between a trustor and trusty, including those that may have nothing to do with trustworthiness. This study provides evidence that trust may contribute to the growth of trustworthiness, a dynamic entertained but certainly not emphasized in the literature. A common notion today, both empirically and anecdotally, is that trust must be earned. This notion may be overstated at best and damaging to a relationship at worst. Understanding the experience of a trusty, provided by this study and further studies, is imperative to supporting proper notions about trust and combatting improper notions for the sake of nurturing healthy interpersonal relationships.
Reflections on the Researcher’s Experience

As a husband and marriage and family therapist myself, a full range of trust experiences have been both common and significant in my life. I have felt the joy of being trusted by my wife, including many of the experiences articulated so beautifully by the co-researchers. And I have witnessed the power of trust for others in marital intimacy and reconciliation. Conversely, I have felt the sting of broken trust, both personally and professionally, when trustworthiness is compromised or trust is withheld. As a therapist I recall witnessing a husband who systematically reordered his life and priorities to turn toward his wife and earn her trust, at her request, only to see her turn away and withdraw her trust even more as a form of revenge for the pain she had experienced. I have heard desperate pleas as well as spiteful dictates for trustworthiness. I can recall pain-filled cries as well as angry demands to receive trust. As a husband I recall in vivid detail moments when trust was lost, and perhaps even more vividly, moments when it was granted once more. All of these experiences left indelible memories, sparking a deep desire to better understand the place of trust in both healthy and unhealthy relationships. The fact is, such experiences of trust penetrate deeply into one’s psyche and arguably one’s soul, making them difficult to bracket. Yet in this study I engaged in efforts to do so in a professional and ethical manner.

A strength of heuristic inquiry is that it allows my own inner knowledge of trust to be carefully considered through a process of reflexivity, or systematic reflection on how I may personally influence the research process (Darawsheh, 2014; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Moustakas, 1990). Throughout the study, I had to continually ask, “What do I know?” and “How do I know it?” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 274). Put another way, I carefully and critically engaged in a process in which “the researcher critically interrogates the self in relation
to the research” (Suter, 2009, p. 85). Consistent with the recommendations of Darawsheh (2014), I sought to bracket my preconceptions and control my biases.

Specific efforts to engage in reflexivity during this study included the following: journaling of my thoughts and feelings before, during, and after the interviews; responsible and extensive review of the trust literature, allowing it to provide justification and foundation for the present study; intentional suppression or subjugation of my own thoughts and opinions about trust during the interviews with co-researchers so as to avoid leading questions or comments; methodical coding and analysis of interview transcripts, allowing themes to emerge rather than be imposed upon the data; constant efforts to be open and humble as themes emerged, allowing the voices of the co-researchers to dominate and guide the discovery; and discipline during the analysis and discussion stage to once again not only avoid pursuing my own desired conclusions but also allow the present findings to be smoothly and logically integrated with extant knowledge of dyadic trust. Throughout the process I consulted with my faculty research supervisor as well. To engage in responsible reflexivity as well as deep and authentic dialogue with another human being requires a fine balance indeed. Every effort was made to do so, and I have full confidence that the findings of this study reflect, to the best of my ability, the true experiences of 10 husbands willing to discuss what it is like to be trusted by their wives.

Creative Synthesis

The entire process of the study has involved deep and rich engagement with the co-researchers working to this point progressively through initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, and explication (Moustakas, 1990). The final of the six phases of heuristic inquiry is a creative synthesis. This synthesis moves “beyond any confined or constricted attention to the data itself” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32), representing an inspired
expression of the essence of what it means for a husband to be trusted by his wife. What follows in this section is meant to be imbued with meaning as I seek to creatively capture the culmination of this collaborative, personal, and scholarly journey. “Resting in Trust” is a poem intended to be expressed as spoken word.

“Resting in Trust”

*Trust.*

Peace
Security
Freedom
Love …
… Rest.

When I am trusted, I rest.

Rest knowing that I am respected, valued, supported, and affirmed.

Rest believing that I am safe and secure.

Rest relaxing in the warmth of deep intimacy.

Rest … overflowing with deep satisfaction and thankfulness!

Rest.

When I am trusted, I rest.

Rest as I experience the freedom to go … to stay … to be me … to become me.

Rest as I experience the freedom to love … to give … to be who and what I desire to be …

… am designed to be …

… need to be …

… with you …

… for you …

… for others …

Rest.

When I am trusted, I rest.
Taken for granted?

No more!

Worthy,

Am I?

Grace!

I am,

Responsible ... inspired ... trustworthy.

Rest.

When I am trusted, I rest.

Yours and mine

Together

Our Trust.

We Rest.

When I am trusted, there is rest.

Final Summary

This section contains a brief summary of Chapters One through Five of this dissertation. Chapter One demonstrated the significance of studying the experience of the trusty as opposed to other more commonly addressed trusty dynamics. The research question was presented, key terms were defined, the nature of the study was briefly introduced, and a conceptual framework for understanding dyadic trust was explained. Chapter Two contained an extensive literature review critically analyzing and synthesizing what is known about intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics in dyadic relationships, providing a foundation for the present study. Chapter Three described in detail the heuristic research design utilized in the study, including context for the study, data collection and analysis procedures, measures taken to protect participants, and issues related to validity and trustworthiness. Chapter Four provided a detailed explication of the study
results, including demographics, themes, and subthemes that emerged from deep engagement with the 10 husbands that served as co-researchers. These themes were succinct expressions of the husbands’ experience of being trusted by their wives. Also included were discussions of contextual issues related to the interpretation of study results as well as evidence of quality showing how the study followed procedures to ensure accuracy of data.

In bringing this study to a close, this chapter provided a brief overview of the study in its entirety, including a summary of the findings, followed by in-depth discussion of the results. Interpretations of the findings were presented along with implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further study. This chapter has culminated with reflections on the researcher’s experience with the research process as well as a creative synthesis of the findings as a whole.

**Conclusion**

This study has made significant headway in answering the research question: *In a committed, marital relationship, what is the experience of a husband when he believes he is trusted by his wife?* He is satisfied, thankful, privileged, and inspired. He is validated through love, respect, valuation, affirmation, and support. He experiences intimacy, grace, and freedom. Overall, he feels loved and experiences the joy of being trusted. For these husbands, to be trusted was good … very good. And we all, myself included, were glad to have the opportunity to reflect on the precious gift of trust.
REFERENCES


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Appendix A

Interview Guide

When answering the following questions, feel free to draw from the letter you wrote to your wife or answer in any other way that you see fit.

In areas of your relationship in which you believe you are trusted …

- How would you describe your experience of being trusted by your wife? (If the process is slow to get started, the co-researcher may be asked to close his eyes and visualize a time when he felt trusted.)

- What feelings, thoughts, perceptions, bodily sensations, situations, memories, and so forth are related in some way to this experience?

- What stands out for you as you consider what it is like to be trusted by your wife?

- What else happens to you when you believe you are trusted by your wife that may be harder to put into words?

- Please explain any other aspects or meanings of this experience that you have not yet shared.

- Have you shared all of the significant aspects of your experience of being trusted by your wife? If not, what else would you like to share?

- If talking about your experience is not sufficient, how else can you represent or express what it is like to be trusted by your wife (e.g., journaling, meaningful objects, music, art, etc.)?

- What else would you like to share from your letter you wrote prior to our conversation?

- There is no end point up until conclusion of the analysis period. If there is anything else you would like to add, feel free to let me know.

Thank you for your willingness to share about your experiences.
Appendix B

Liberty University Institutional Review Board

Study Approval Document

February 2, 2018
Paul Johns
IRB Approval 3107.020218: Husbands' Experience of Being Trusted by Their Wives: A Heuristic Study

Dear Paul Johns,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.
Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School
Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
CONSENT FORM

Husbands’ Experience of Being Trusted by Their Wives: A Heuristic Study
Paul A. Johns
Liberty University
Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies/School of Behavioral Science

You are invited to participate in a research study on husbands’ experience of being trusted by their wives. For inclusion, you must be in a heterosexual marriage and have been married for at least five years. You were selected as a possible participant because of your interest in and reply to an advertisement about the study. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Paul A. Johns, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies/School of Behavioral Science at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to seek an answer to the following question: In a committed, marital relationship, what is the experience of a husband when he believes he is trusted by his wife?

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete an initial Screening Instrument designed to determine your full eligibility for this study (10–15 minutes). Various factors will contribute to your eligibility, including length of your marriage (at least five years), area in which you live (the researcher is seeking variety in terms of urban, suburban, and rural participants), and extent to which you believe you are trusted by your wife. Ongoing participants of this study will be selected after this step.

2. Prior to the interview, you will be asked to write a letter to your wife using the interview questions as a guide to express your experience of being trusted by her. You will not give the letter to your wife; instead, you will use it to spark ideas during the in-person interview with the researcher and will then give the letter to the researcher as information about your experience of being trusted by your wife (~1 hour).

3. Participate in an in-person, in-depth interview about your experience of being trusted by your wife (~1.5 hours+). This interview will be digitally recorded and typed out.

4. Review the content of your interview answers with the researcher for accuracy after it is typed out (30 minutes).

5. Review conclusions that the researcher may make about your personal experience of being trusted by your wife (30–60 minutes).
6. Review general conclusions the researcher makes about the experience of husbands being trusted by their wife (30–60 minutes).

**Risks:** The risks involved in this study are quite minimal. Discussing your experience of being trusted by your wife may bring about some thoughts and emotions that you have not experienced, which may prove to be uncomfortable at times. If such discomfort occurs, you will be provided with resources to pursue if you wish to receive help with such matters.

**Benefits:** No specific direct benefits to you as the participant are expected, but possible benefits of discussing one’s experience of being trusted could include an increased awareness of and/or appreciation for such trust, increased efforts to be trustworthy, and/or increased communication with one’s wife about the topic of trust. No such benefits are necessarily expected or guaranteed.

Benefits to society include an increased understanding of a husband’s experience of being trusted by his wife that could contribute to personal and relationship development, strength, and/or healing.

**Compensation:** Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not purposefully include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym (a fake name). Interviews will be conducted in a location where you are comfortable and where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored in a locked briefcase for transport and a locked cabinet in the researcher’s office.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a flash drive that will be locked in a filing cabinet in the researcher’s office. Once interviews are typed out and completed, the digital recording will be erased.
- Recordings will be transcribed by a hired transcriptionist who will sign a confidentiality agreement requiring her to maintain the highest level of confidentiality.
- Even with the use of fake names, a reader of published results of this study may figure out who a participant is by recognizing, for example, a quote or aspect of one’s experience. All measures will be taken to avoid this, but this possibility must be acknowledged to participate in this study. To help you understand who may read the report of this research, the researcher will make you aware of possible audiences. These audiences may include the following: dissertation committee (three Liberty University professors who are providing guidance in this research), professional community by way of journal publications, attendees of professional conferences by way of presentations, students of Messiah College under my teaching, those accessing my dissertation by way of online dissertation publication platforms, lay readers by way of popular publications, and possibly the co-researchers and their families themselves (including but not limited to your wife).
Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the e-mail address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Paul A. Johns. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at [email address] and/or [phone number]. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty advisor, Dr. Lisa Sosin, at [email address].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or e-mail at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(Note: Do not agree to participate unless IRB approval information with current dates has been added to this document.)

☐ The researcher has my permission to digitally audio record me as part of my participation in this study.

____________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Participant Date
____________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Investigator Date
Appendix D

Co-Researcher Screening Instrument

Name:

Age:

Years Married:

Ethnicity:

Address:

**Purpose of screening instrument:** Determine the degree to which you believe you are trusted by your wife.

Please mark the following areas in which you believe you are trusted to a high degree by your wife. If you are unsure or not confident if she trusts you in that area, do not mark it.

Keep in mind that even if an item involves other people or influences, mark it only if your wife trusts you in relation to those things. Also, how your wife may demonstrate this trust is not as important as whether you believe she trusts you to a high degree (as defined by you). Last, try not to overthink when it comes to the categories below or try to guess what would be a part of it from the researcher’s perspective. What matters most is what you consider a part of that area of your life/marriage.

I believe I am trusted to a high degree by my wife in relation to …

- [ ] my work
- [ ] our home
- [ ] our family unit
- [ ] our religious/spiritual life together
- [ ] my time management outside of work
- [ ] our finances
- [ ] our marital interactions
- [ ] our extended family
- [ ] my friends
- [ ] my health
- [ ] our time apart
- [ ] my interest in my wife’s well-being
- [ ] our sexual relationship
- [ ] my commitment to our marriage
- [ ] my dependability
- [ ] my truthfulness
- [ ] the content of my thought life
- [ ] my control over my emotions
- [ ] my ability and willingness to make her feel safe and secure
- [ ] my decision making (in general)

_______________________________________  ___________________
Signature                     Date
Appendix E

Confidentiality Agreement for Use with Transcription Services

Research Study Title: Husbands’ Experience of Being Trusted by Their Wives: A Heuristic Study

1. I, _____________________________, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality of all research data received from the researcher related to this research study.

2. I will hold in strictest confidence the identity of any individual that may be revealed during the transcription of interviews or in any associated documents.

3. I will not make copies of any recordings or other research data, unless specifically requested to do so by the researcher.

4. I will not provide the research data to any third parties.

5. I will store all study-related data, including audio recordings, in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.

6. All data provided or created for purposes of this agreement, including any backup records, will be returned to the researcher or permanently deleted. When I have received confirmation that the transcription work I performed has been satisfactorily completed, any of the research data that remains with me will be returned to the researcher or destroyed, pursuant to the instructions of the researcher.

7. I understand that Liberty University has the right to take legal action against any breach of confidentiality that occurs in my handling of the research data.

Transcriber’s name (printed) __________________________________________________

Transcriber’s signature __________________________________________________

Date ____________________________
Appendix F

Example of Member Check E-mail Sent by Researcher

What you see here (see attached) is a lengthy list of emerging themes and subthemes based on what I identified in the interviews as responses to my research question: *In a committed, marital relationship, what is the experience of a husband when he believes he is trusted by his wife?* You have all done an amazing job of providing answers and giving me a lot to think about.

What I would like you to do is review what you see here and give me feedback about the accuracy of what is emerging. Feel free to insert comments in this document, type up your responses on a separate document, e-mail me your thoughts, or even talk with me over the phone. Please try not to be overwhelmed by how much you see here. You are free to give as little or as much feedback as you like. Given your experiences of being trusted by your wife, what makes sense to you and what resonates with your experiences? Or if you have any thoughts or feedback at all about what is here, feel free to give it. Keep in mind that I have not indicated how often each subpoint/theme below was mentioned, so you may or may not personally identify with what you see here. Also, you may have mentioned something that does not show up here at all if it was uncommon or unclear.

Your feedback is highly valued and will be taken very seriously. That being said, my task is to look at what all participants (called co-researchers in my study) say and come up with the most parsimonious answer to my research question as indicated by themes, subthemes, and supporting quotes. These themes may ultimately be reworded, simplified, condensed, integrated, and so forth. We’ll see where it goes.

Thank you for the time and effort you are putting into this. It is such a rich experience! Since I would like to keep this process moving, please send me your feedback by ______________ if at all possible. Once these themes and subthemes are basically finalized, I’ll ask for one more round of feedback. Please know that you are contributing to what I believe to be important research about marital trust.

Paul Johns
Appendix G

Excerpts from Member Check E-mails from Co-Researchers

*E-mail excerpt from “Leo” providing feedback to emerging themes and subthemes:*

I have one comment. In section Roman numeral III, I need to define “grace.” The word grace was perfect for my purpose, but I will do my best to explain what I meant. When I said that she seemed to be extending more grace to me, I meant she was showing me genuine goodwill and loving-kindness freely, not begrudgingly or reluctantly.

*E-mail excerpt from “Caleb” providing feedback to emerging themes and subthemes:*

While reviewing the themes, I have highlighted the comments that stood out as my experience in being trusted by my wife. I connect with the idea that feeling trusted as a blessing, and I am very thankful for my relationship and the trust I feel from my wife. While there were a lot of good themes here, I would say my most significant would be:

1) Freeing (to be myself, open/honest, engage in other relationships, make important decisions, be an example to kids and mentor others)
2) Feel loved (important, respected, support and confidence)
3) Peace/Security (free to be open/honest, free to be myself)
Appendix H

Excerpts from Personal Journal (Reflexivity)

{Date}

Trust is clearly tied to the influence of trustworthiness, but not entirely. So many factors influence trust, such as attachment, past relationships, self-esteem, state of mind, mood, generalized trust, etc. But since dyadic trust is played out “between” two people, it stands to reason that it would be tempting to attribute one’s trust response to the other’s trustworthiness at the time. The problem is that trustworthiness is absolutely essential as well. So each person has his or her personal responsibility that has a profound impact on the other. But the extent of causation is difficult to ascertain.

Freedom keeps coming up again and again. Not trusting feelings like enslavement or a trap. When someone is untrustworthy and we want to trust them, it can feel like an enslavement to their untrustworthiness. But is it also true that one can be enslaved to one’s lack of trust? I believe so.

{Date}

After this week’s study, I’m still stuck on the extent of interplay between trust and trustworthiness. No one can demand trust, but can anyone demand trustworthiness? It still seems like a personal choice to do either. But should anyone claim perfect trust or perfect trustworthiness? I remember a time years ago when a man told his wife that she certainly should not trust him because he is imperfect and may fail her. Is this a legitimate approach? If trust is a gift and trustworthiness is a gift, both rooted in love, then each person is doing what he or she can control (unconscious forces notwithstanding). To demand is to seek to control for one’s personal benefit. To declare a lack of trust or a lack of trustworthiness also seems hurtful if one intends to love the other. Claiming a lack of one or the other also seems to be done for personal gain (to keep one free to do what he or she wants). Freedom versus slavery.

{Date}

Okay so how does honesty fit into all of this? Sentiment override can influence our decision to trust and decision as to how to remember past transgressions. So is it “honest” to recall things incorrectly?
Appendix I

Example of Interview Transcript—“Anthony”

Interview – Participant 5
April 4, 2018
7:10–7:48 p.m.

PAUL JOHNS: Okay.

PARTICIPANT 5: Check one, two.

PJ: All right. It looks like it’s working at least. Okay, Anthony, in this interview, you’re going to notice one thing right off the top is that it is, in essence, one big question, and all of the other questions are just different ways of trying to get at the one big question.

P5: Okay.

PJ: Right at the beginning. That one big question being, how would you describe your experience of being trusted by your wife? So, what we’ll do is just—we’ll just take it from there and we’ll just go back and forth. And really this is about having a conversation about that.

P5: Okay.

PJ: You’ll do most of the talking.

P5: All right.

PJ: I’ll do most of the asking. But it’s just us trying to drill into that basic question. And I don’t need to march right down through all these questions. I may skip over some.

P5: Gotcha’.

PJ: I may try to get the ones that are going to probe a little bit more, but we’ll just start there. How would you describe your experience of being trusted by your wife?

P5: All right. In many ways I would say it’s freeing to be trusted. I think we live in such a skeptical world, and I, by nature, am pretty skeptical, and that can sometimes push you into looking at your relationship kind of with motives, right—

PJ: Um-hum.

P5: —you know, when you’re overly skeptical. So, for me it’s been freeing to be in this relationship, because my own family of origin really exhibited more distrust and, actually, even more than that, unhealthy relationships.

PJ: Hum.
P5: So, I think for me, being in a relationship that is really defined by trust and faithfulness, um, I like using the word *freeing*.

PJ: Okay.

P5: You know, free to be yourself, um, not feeling like you have to try to figure out where the other person’s coming from, you know.

PJ: Okay. Yeah.

P5: That’s one thing I’ve always said I have it in my spouse is that steady-Katy [a pseudonym]. You know, she’s always just steady. And I don’t have to figure out which Katy it is that I have to talk to today.

PJ: Um-hum. Um-hum.

P5: And I think it comes with that. Maybe that’s part of that quality of being a trusting person, you know, is not having to put on airs or to come on too strong.

PJ: Okay. Okay. So, freeing. Is there any other way for you to describe what is behind that word *freeing*? What is freeing about it? Say more.

P5: What is freeing about—

PJ: About being trusted.

P5: About being trusted.


P5: I think trust is like vulnerability. Okay, so, um, you experience a vulnerability from somebody, or you experience being trusted by somebody. It in turn frees you up to return the favor, and so I, for me, it’s about being more true to yourself; more honest. Yeah, so I guess *vulnerability* is another word I would use to describe that, Paul.

PJ: It allows you to be more vulnerable?

P5: It allows me to be more vulnerable. But I think, again, when you—it’s just like this circular thing: When you exhibit trust, then you earn trust. And I think that’s part of what happened in my relationship with Katy is she is so trusting, and so it’s a reciprocal relationship. And again, it’s like vulnerability. You know, the more she shows me who she is, the more you show who you are, and it—

PJ: Okay.

P5: So, it’s freeing and it’s—there’s a vulnerability but in a good way. And I know sometimes we struggle, especially as men, you know, we struggle with being vulnerable.
PJ: Yeah. It could sound scary.
P5: Yeah, and it’s not a word that men really like to use that often.
PJ: Right. Right.
P5: You know, it’s good for Brenè Brown, but maybe not for me. [laughter] So, um—
PJ: Right.
P5: So, yeah, I would say, you know, that’s a little more on the freeing piece here. Um—
PJ: So, just to clarify; so, if I’m following you, her trust is a vulnerable act on her part.
P5: Um-hum.
PJ: Right? And then when you experience that, or you witness that in her, it leads you then to, in turn, become more vulnerable yourself.
P5: Right.
PJ: And I think I even heard you say, right, that that includes then becoming more trusting of her?
P5: Correct. Yeah.
PJ: Is that right?
P5: Yeah.
PJ: And then it just—
P5: I can almost see myself diagramming this on a whiteboard, you know?
PJ: Yeah, yeah, right.
P5: And that’s, yeah, that’s how I would explain that.
PJ: Okay.
P5: And then I think I alluded to this earlier. I didn’t come from a family that was really healthy this way.
PJ: Right.
P5: In fact, in addition to being freeing, it’s a joy to be trusted, you know, because that was in some ways not a natural inclination for me, based on in the home I grew up in. And there was a combative relationship. There was marital unfaithfulness. There was abuse. There were addictions, so …
PJ: Hum.
P5: So, I think what makes it even more powerful to me to be in a trusting relationship is to know that Katy had every reason to be skeptical of me, because, you know, you tend to carry on.
So, I think for us it’s also been—trust has been a way that we have lived out our faith. To say, “See, you can break those chains,” you know.

PJ: hh.

P5: You can break those old—

PJ: Okay.

P5: —um, chains is the best way for me to say it. And so that’s been powerful to me, as well.


P5: To say, you know, here we are 28 years later. My mom and my biological father made it maybe a year. And then my mom and my stepdad, they’re still married, but they are on-again, off-again, for most of my young childhood. And it wasn’t really until my dad found Christ, when I was in middle school, that the family became a family. So, I did have something to model there, but it was a little late.

PJ: Gotcha’.

P5: You know, I still had all that baggage—

PJ: Um-hum.

P5: —you know, at that point.

PJ: It’s interesting you said, “break the chains,” and the chains that you seem to be describing were from your background.

P5: From mine.

PJ: And so her trust broke your chains?

P5: Yeah. Yeah. But the skeptical side of me, you know, I would think if I was in Katy’s shoes no one—because she came the totally opposite kind of family; pastor, you know, faithful.

PJ: Okay.

P5: Um, conservative. And my parents were hippies. I had a very permissive family. I grew—I think I even mentioned it in my letter. I was forced to grow up pretty quickly, you know. Katy came from a more innocent background. So, I could see, after meeting me and entering—and kind of meeting my family and understanding more and more the history there, I could see maybe putting up some—

PJ: She could have had reason to—

P5: Yeah, to be concerned.

PJ: —to not trust.
P5: Yeah, to not, to, like, oh, it’s going to be more natural for John to run away in this situation or to—

PJ: She may have even been justified in choosing not to trust.

P5: That’s right. And that’s, yeah, that’s kind of what I’m getting at, you know.

PJ: Okay.

P5: Because I think I would. Again, I’m more skeptical so I think I would, oh man, look at his background. He’s going to lash out, or he’s gonna’ run away, or he’s gonna’ be untrue—

PJ: Okay.

P5: —or whatever.

PJ: But somehow her background allowed her to have high trust in you.

P5: Um-hum.

PJ: To look past those things or—

P5: Yeah. And I think part of it was—

PJ: I don’t want to put words in your mouth.

P5: —was our mutual faith journey. Yeah, and we met at that wonderful stage in life at a Christian college, much like students do here, right? And we were both, I think, sophomores in college. So, yeah, so, you know, there was a little bit of naiveté in all that but, again, as you get to get past the infatuation stage and get to know each other’s backgrounds and realize where you need to reconcile, we knew we had our work cut out for us. But she did that all with an attitude of trust.

PJ: Okay.

P5: Yep.

PJ: Given your background, is there more—is there any more that you could say about how you have grown? I’m trying to think how to say this. How you have grown, given all those experiences in your family of origin.

P5: Um-hum.

PJ: Again, as a result of, or is somehow—because of being able to experience her trust. Do you understand what I’m asking you about that? Maybe the better question is simply, has that allowed you to grow in unique ways, because she trusted you, that is somehow related to that family history that you’ve talked about?

P5: Um-hum.
PJ: And if so, how?
P5: Yeah, good question. I can think of some of the themes. You know, when I—and I’ll give you a really specific example here.
PJ: Um-hum.
P5: You know, as a kid who grew up in a permissive family and with folks who maybe had wild friends, I knew early on, for example, what marijuana smelled like. Katy, to this day, has not— doesn’t know what that smells like.
PJ: Okay.
P5: But, you know, on a maybe more personal level, you know, I brought some things into the relationship that were unhealthy in regard to sexual expectations, because I encountered pornography at such a young age. You know, I was playing hide-and-seek at a home up in Cleveland, Ohio, and came upon a stash of a family friend.
PJ: Oh, boy.
P5: It was bad stuff. I didn’t know what it was, but I knew I liked it. You know, and so that—I’m talking preschool age.
PJ: Hum, wow.
P5: So, you know, seeing images like that from so young kind of taints your expectations regarding sex and relationships, right?
PJ: Um-hum.
P5: And so that would have been one of those issues that she trusted me very early on with, you know, and it helped me open up to say—
PJ: She knew about that.
P5: Yeah, I shared that with her.
PJ: Okay. And—
P5: As we, honestly, as we—we were already together for a while, you know, so that would have been something that, as we did premarital counseling and we got into that topic, that like, yeah, you know, um—and we didn’t have Internet back then, so I almost shudder to think what it would have been like for me then, because I probably would have been on a quest to find stuff, you know. But I just remember those images and that just tainting my attitude on sex and women and relationships.
P5: And so—but that was an area that very early on we were able to talk about and for her not to condemn me for that, you know, but to take a longer-term approach about working through those issues.
PJ: Okay.
P5: Yeah.
PJ: Okay. All right. She risked.
P5: Yeah.
PJ: She took a risk.
P5: Yeah. And, you know, I—it’s interesting because you know we’ve been in church together for a long time now, and, you know, folks will share testimonies of their marriages and, you know, oh, we were doing well until—and then usually a topic like that will come up. And that—it seems it breaks trust somewhere along the way and it makes for a tense relationship for the rest of their marriage. And Katy has never let that happen, you know?
PJ: Yeah.
P5: I feel bad. I feel bad. I feel like some people are kind of trapped that way. They can’t get past some of those issues.
PJ: Hum. That’s interesting, because you started with the word freedom, and now you use the word trapped to talk about people who don’t have that trust.
P5: Who don’t have that freedom, yeah.
PJ: And so they’re trapped in what?
P5: Well, I guess it would be the opposite. They’re trapped in a relationship defined by distrust.
PJ: Okay.
P5: Or defined by skepticism rather than—you know, part of what I love about—and this is another part of the freedom piece, is giving each other the benefit of the doubt.
PJ: Hum.
P5: You know, knowing that we’re imperfect human beings and that we bring family-of-origin baggage into our relationship and we have to sort through it.
PJ: Right.
P5: But never believing in one another that we’re out to demonize each other, you know.
PJ: Okay.
P5: But it’s just knowing that—of other relationships where it just seems like there’s this tension and misinterpretation all the time. And to me that—it would feel like, man, I already got enough enemies, kind of; out in the world. I don’t need to go home to that skepticism.

PJ: Wow, that’s a pretty interesting image, too, this idea of this harsh world, but you go home and you have something very, very different.

P5: Kind of a haven, right?

PJ: A haven.

P5: Yeah. Yeah, we do a lot of marital, premarital mentoring. And, um, part of it probably is, again, the family I grew up in was so combative that it wasn’t fun to go home, and therefore I don’t think my parents did spend much time at home. We didn’t spend much time together as a family. It wasn’t fun. And I would say our family has been defined by—the trust has opened the door to being refreshing, being fun. You know, we’ve got a lot of really good memories that way.

PJ: Okay.

P5: And it’s not without its challenges, you know. It’s not—there’s no such thing as a perfect, you know, relationship or perfect marriage, but the very—

PJ: Um-hum. But it doesn’t—what I hear you saying is it doesn’t need to be perfect.

P5: Right.

PJ: With the kind of trust you’re talking about, it doesn’t have to be.

P5: Yeah, that’s right. That’s right.

PJ: Okay.

P5: Yeah, you can—and that’s what’s funny, too, is in being trusted in a way I think probably, at least the way I’m motivated is it almost makes you work harder to earn that trust that you already have.

PJ: Hum.

P5: You know, it’s a—

PJ: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Unpack that one for me.

P5: Because I’m a performance-orientation person, you know? That’s something I’ve had to overcome, you know.

PJ: Okay.
P5: Work hard. Get Dad’s approval, you know. And so, as someone who’s wired that way, it’s kind of this whole, yeah, faith and grace and all this, but man, I want to show my appreciation back, so I’m going to earn that trust that she already has for me.

PJ: Yeah, I mean, on the surface it does sound backwards. It’s like—

P5: Yeah, it does. I get it.

PJ: You spend time earning what you already have. Or—

P5: Yeah, but that’s kind of grace for you, though, too.

PJ: Is it about—is part of what you’re saying trying to—is it about keeping what you already have or is it even that?

P5: I don’t know.

PJ: I mean, it’s just, it’s inspiring.

P5: Yeah, and you don’t want to mess it up, right? And so—

PJ: It’s something you want to maintain.

P5: Yeah, you want to maintain that. Don’t want to lose that.

PJ: Okay.

P5: You don’t want to take it for granted, you know.

PJ: So again, to be clear, so are you saying that by having that and by having the bent that you have towards this achievement that—what am I trying to say? It just inspires you to continue to be even more trustworthy.

P5: Yeah.

PJ: Even more than you may have been otherwise?

P5: Yeah, and—

PJ: Knowing that you have it.

P5: Yeah, and I don’t feel, again, I don’t feel that I have to earn it, or I have to prove myself.

PJ: Right.

P5: But it makes me want to.

PJ: Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

P5: There’s an inspirational component to it.

PJ: Yeah, yeah.

P5: For me to—that when I was thinking about putting it in words—

PJ: Sure.
P5: —because I had a hard time answering these questions. How do I feel about being trusted? Well, I don’t know. I’m trusted, you know. I don’t know how I feel about it. It’s a hard one to answer.

PJ: Yeah, I know. They’re not—

P5: Yeah.

PJ: It’s not something you think [inaudible].

P5: How do you think of it as a, like, I’ve been in this experience of being trusted. It was a lot of fun to unpack it.

PJ: Hum.

P5: Yeah?

PJ: Yeah, good.

P5: Yeah.

PJ: Now that you said that, I’m going to—

P5: Okay.

PJ: —ask a question that is not on here, but I’ve found myself asking it of everybody.

P5: Okay.

PJ: It’s been helpful so I’m—I’ll ask it of you, too. And that is, if you allow yourself for a moment to imagine that something happens and you don’t have the trust of your wife.

P5: Um-hum.

PJ: Just entertain that thought for a moment, that it was actually reality.

P5: Um-hum.

PJ: And if you let yourself experience that for a moment, the thought of not being trusted, does that at all then—the contrast that creates between actually being trusted as you are—does that help to illuminate anything else about the experience of having it?

P5: That is helpful. Well, it makes me feel kind of stressed, to think of—

PJ: Yeah, yeah.

P5: [unintelligible] What a shame that would be, you know, not to have that.

PJ: Yeah.

P5: Um, it would take some rebuilding, I guess, right? You know, to get to that level again. So, yeah, I—
PJ: So, I’m not necessarily saying that I want you to imagine it because then you could imagine what it would be like to try to get it back.

P5: Okay.

PJ: Instead, what I’m saying is let yourself experience what it feels like. I know you were saying the feeling piece doesn’t necessarily resonate with you.

P5: Yeah, that’s hard for me.

PJ: But what thoughts would be going through your mind if you didn’t have her trust? What would you be feeling? What would you be experiencing? And so, if you let yourself sort of imagine that, then bring yourself right back to where you are.

P5: Um-hum.

PJ: And you go [snaps fingers], “No, but wait, I had it.” And so, does setting up that contrast illuminate anything else at all about your actual experience? Do you understand what I’m saying there?

P5: I think gratitude. Yeah, I mean, just gratitude.

PJ: Okay.

P5: Yeah. It’s not coming easy for me, Paul, that part of it, I guess. I don’t know.

PJ: No, that word’s helpful.

P5: Yeah.

PJ: That word’s helpful, because you haven’t said that yet.

P5: Yeah.

PJ: Gratitude. You’re grateful for it.

P5: Yeah. A lot of gratitude.

PJ: Um-hum.

P5: I think it’s easy to take for granted, too, you know, because Katy’s been Katy since I married her, you know, so.

PJ: Yeah.

P5: Yeah, so I’ve taken it for granted, and maybe until I receive questions like these, I really didn’t reflect on it too much. I took it for granted.

PJ: Okay. That’s funny because, again, I absolutely don’t want to ever put words in your mouth, but it’s, correct me if I’m wrong, it’s almost like there’s a—there’s an upside to taking it for granted, and a downside.
P5: Yeah.
PJ: Potentially for taking it for granted. The upside being you’ve always had it.
P5: Yeah, so I can.
PJ: So you can.
P5: Right.
PJ: And there’s something kind of nice about being able to take it for granted.
P5: Uh-huh.
PJ: Am I wrong in saying that?
P5: No, you’re correct.
PJ: Yeah, and when you consider not having it—
P5: Yeah.
PJ: —now all of a sudden it’s more of a somber version of—
P5: Yeah, like, boy, silly me, you know. I’ve been taking this for granted.
PJ: Yeah.
P5: But I think, too, because we’re involved in marriage ministry, you know, we’ve been through Re|engage. We’ve been through it together and then with other couples. And then we do a lot of premarital mentoring, first five years mentoring, I do think that’s forced us to come together and celebrate some of this as well, you know, so when we’re giving advice that we can do it from a genuine place, you know?
PJ: Right.
P5: Yeah, I don’t want to make it seem like I have not thought about what I have in my marriage, you know, because we do in our teaching and everything, but …
PJ: Sure.
P5: It’s sometimes easier to teach, you know, and have your materials and watch videos together and share than it is to just personally reflect.
PJ: Um-hum.
P5: Like these questions have forced me to.
PJ: Well, hey, John, there’s a reason why I’m studying this, and that’s because I’ve found that this angle, this idea of being the recipient is simply not—it’s not thought about—
P5: Um-hum.
PJ: —as much. And part of my journey is to tap into, can it be articulated? Is it worth thinking about? What is it like to think about?

P5: Yeah.

PJ: Is there any value in thinking about it? So, you know, that’s a big part of what I’m trying to—

P5: Yeah, it’s powerful.

PJ: —to figure out here.

P5: Yeah.

PJ: Well, let me take a peek at these here again.

P5: I will say another thing for me—

PJ: Yeah.

P5: —compared to Katy is my family. I’m very typical; kind of from an Appalachian family. We didn’t talk about how we felt about much at all. So, you’ve all this stuff but it’s never like, hey, Johnny, how do you feel about this? So, even as a 50-some-year-old, I still need things pulled out of me sometimes, when it comes to feelings.

PJ: Okay.

P5: Yeah, plus I’m—if you look at my personality profile, I’m more of a thinker than a feeler.

PJ: Okay.

P5: But I think the family shaped a lot of that, too. You know, “Get back on that pony and ride,” you know. “I don’t want to hear how you feel after getting bucked off. Just get back onto the pony and ride.”

PJ: Makes sense.

P5: Yeah. So, caused me to maybe stumble over some of these when I first read them.

PJ: Yeah, I could understand how the feeling word then wouldn’t resonate with you.

P5: Yeah.

PJ: But again, that’s part of why I didn’t—

P5: Yeah, that’s really good; good to do.

PJ: That’s part of why I didn’t—my main question, if you noticed, isn’t—it doesn’t say feeling.

P5: Yeah.

PJ: It’s—because I realize it’s much broader than that.

P5: Yeah. Experience was the word you used.
P5: I was like, oh, this is an experience, huh?
PJ: It is an experience.
P5: Yeah.
PJ: It’s a part of your life.
P5: I’d say, too—
PJ: Yeah, keep going.
P5: —it’s given us a chance to grow not just in our marriage, but as individuals. And one way that Katy has exhibited trust is that we—we have some separate hobbies. Things that I like to do that she’s like, “Go do it,” you know, so I’ve been on outdoor adventure trips with friends a lot over the years.
PJ: Um-hum, yeah.
P5: You know, sometimes Katy will hear from someone else, “Well, why do you let him do that,” you know, “type of thing?” And likewise she spends a lot of time doing scrapbooking and going on these retreats. But the trust that—and I have to travel for my job sometimes, you know. And the trust that we have in like, “Go. See you when you get back,” type of thing has helped me grow as an individual.
PJ: Ah.
P5: But also as a couple. So, you know, I think I’ve grown professionally. I’ve grown in some of the things that I’ve felt, you know, felt like I’ve been on some really incredible adventures. Katy hasn’t been there for all those, but that’s okay. We trust each other, too, you know.
PJ: Yeah.
P5: And I think it’s sometimes made me better that way, too.
PJ: See, that’s great. That’s fascinating that you identify that the trust has that dual purpose, or dual result.
P5: Yeah.
PJ: It simultaneously strengthens your relationship and strengthens you as an individual, which, again, is another thing that kind of sounds contradictory.
P5: Yeah, I know.
PJ: But it’s not.
P5: We try to, we try to talk about that with young couples. There are some that are so, and I don’t mean this to sound jaded, but so codependent on each other that if one wasn’t there, the other would fall, you know?

PJ: Right. Right.

P5: So, you still can’t lose yourself in all this either. And Katy’s enabled that, you know—

PJ: Um-hum.

P5: —professionally, adventure, hobbies—has given room. And part of it’s out of that attitude of trust.

PJ: So the strength of the relationship actually means, again, if I’m hearing you right, that you actually gain more of yourself because of that.

P5: Oh, yeah.

PJ: So it strikes me as maybe a little bit different than saying you are free to be yourself. There’s something about that that doesn’t quite seem like what you’re saying. I don’t know.

P5: Yeah. It probably—

PJ: Maybe that doesn’t strike me as totally what I’m hearing you say because I can picture a young couple like you’re saying sort of go to the opposite extreme and go, well, we realize that we need to be individuals.

P5: Yeah, okay.

PJ: So, that’s fine. You just go be you and I’m going to go be me.

P5: Yeah.

PJ: And you be free to be you. See how that—that doesn’t—that’s not what you’re describing.

P5: That’s not what I’m getting at, no. No, it’s not a—

PJ: But yet you do experience the ability to truly grow as an individual.

P5: Yeah, to grow as an individual, to not lose yourself even as you grow together.

PJ: Right.

P5: You know, it’s not a codependency. It’s a—

PJ: Inextricably linked together somehow, but it’s—

P5: Yeah. I think I remember—I can’t remember whose book it was, but I think I remember these images of couples that are given to you out of letters. They have the A-frame, you know, and the M.

PJ: Parrott. The Parrots.
P5: You know, and that was a good image for me to think, yeah, man—
P5: Yeah, the A-frame. Yep, there you go. So.
PJ: Yep, good stuff. Now, being a guy who isn’t about feelings, this question may not at all resonate with you; but who knows?
P5: It might.
PJ: If talking about your experience is not sufficient, how else can you represent or express what it’s like to be trusted by your wife?
P5: Yeah. I did, you know. I was thinking about—I am really into music, so I think one of the things you mentioned there was a song.
PJ: Yeah, that’s part of it; art, journaling, objects.
P5: Yeah.
PJ: Music, anything.
P5: Yeah, and I, again, growing up in Appalachia, a lot of bluegrass and country music in my background and everything, but I thought of—I actually penned some of the words to a song that I love, from Collin Raye. And it was an old one that I probably even did at a wedding or two when I was doing music back in the day. And it said, “For every mountain I have climbed, every raging river crossed,” I mean this speaks to my adventurous heart. “You were the treasure I longed to find. Without your love, I would be lost.” You know, so I’m doing all this and it’s not because I’m out just to conquer the world, but, you know, even in those times apart, when I’m doing those things, I reflect so much on my relationship with Katy. “So let the world stop turning, let the sun stop burning, let them tell me love’s not worth going through. If it all falls apart, I will know deep in my heart the only dream that mattered had come true: In this life, I was loved by you.” And then I added, “In this life, I was loved and trusted by you.”
PJ: Wow, that’s—
P5: So that song came to my mind really from reflecting on this, from Collin Raye.
PJ: Yeah, that is, that’s beautiful; very meaningful.
P5: Yeah. So, I may give this to her in the end; we’ll see.
PJ: Think about it.
P5: Yeah. Yeah.
PJ: Seriously. That’s great, because, yeah. So music really touches you and expresses some of the ways that you experience her trust.
P5: Yeah, we—
PJ: And her love. You equated love and trust.
P5: That’s right. Yeah, love and trust.
PJ: You equated those.
P5: Yeah.
PJ: In a sense.
P5: Correct.
PJ: I’m not sure we’ve talked—
P5: We haven’t, you’re right.
PJ: —about that.
P5: No, but I did. And I think even earlier in my letter I kind of put those things together and kind of again goes to that whole love and respect thing, that you feel really respected when you’re trusted, right? As men, we love to be respected.
PJ: Um-hum.
P5: And so, um, maybe that’s one way she has demonstrated her love, is just through her trust.
P5: Let me see if there’s anything I included here that we haven’t touched on yet. [perusing document] I think I talked a little bit about believing the best in one another. I think when you have someone who believes the best in you, it helps you not just believe the best in them but start living more that way, as well.
PJ: Hum.
P5: You know, again, as someone who is more skeptical, who had some strange relationships growing up even with my own family, you know, I always wonder where people are coming from, you know. It’s, again, freeing to give people the benefit of the doubt, and to start there, rather than making them earn it—
PJ: Um-hum.
P5: —you know, as is often the case in a good Appalachian family. So, yeah, I think I had in here, you know, because she believes the best in me, it does inspire you to want to believe the best in others. And that has, I think, benefits beyond even your marriage, you know, being especially as someone who’s an administrator and aspiring leader, I’ve got a lot of people that care about what I think about their performance and about them.

PJ: Um-hum.

P5: And if you can approach people in that mindset and with those eyes, you just get a lot further as a leader than making them earn your trust.

PJ: Yeah. But, wow, I mean, that’s a big deal, too. So, you’re telling me that the trust of the love of your life and the trust of your wife is the most important person to you. That’s part of the freedom and inspiration.

P5: Um-hum.

PJ: If you can then take that and spread it to other people.

P5: Um-hum.

PJ: That belief in people. Believing the best. Starts in your marriage and then you go out and you do the same for a lot of other people is what you’re saying. It multiplies.

P5: Yeah. Okay [unintelligible] this letter. It’s amazing how being trusted by you gives such stability and grace in other relationships. And I have to believe that living in a home built on distrust, skepticism, and doubt would make for a grouchy and tense existence. You know, if I kind of stayed stuck in some of what I was brought up in—

PJ: Um-hum.

P5: —it probably would have made for more tense relationships. And as it is, I feel blessed to work at a place like this, to be surrounded by the team that I get to work with day after day. But no one—grace is so important in every relationship. And if the one relationship that matters the most here on this earth is defined by trust and respect, it makes you want to live that way in other arenas as well.

PJ: Yeah. See now you threw in the word grace a couple times.

P5: Yeah.

PJ: In this conversation.

P5: Um-hum.
PJ: So, are you saying that you are the recipient of grace? I’m not sure if I understood how you used the word *grace*.

P5: Um.

PJ: [unintelligible]

P5: It kind of goes back to what I was—oh, man, it’s so much like our relationships with Christ, you know, that it’s grace. That you’re so appreciative of that grace that you want to reciprocate, you know, and so grace comes with a lot of trust. No strings attached, you know. It’s not, “I love you because you’re doing a good job today.” It’s, “I love you.” It’s not, “I trust you,” it’s, you know.

PJ: Yeah. Right.

P5: Grace, I think, boy, it may be a deeper form of trust. Maybe it’s ultimate trust is grace.

PJ: Oh, wow.

P5: I’m getting philosophical now, but—

PJ: Go for it. I love it. Go for it. It seems clear that somehow they’re related to one another because, again, you just, your mind went there. Your words went there.

P5: Yeah. Yeah.

PJ: You penned the word *grace*.

P5: [unintelligible] I penned them. Yeah.

PJ: Yep. [unintelligible] it came out.

P5: Yeah. I think a part of me likes to use to change up my writing a little bit, too, and I was looking for words, and *grace* popped out at me as another word to use. I used *grace* and *stability*, *respect*.

PJ: Well, again, earlier you were talking about not having to be perfect.

P5: Yeah.

PJ: So, that would be—

P5: Yeah. A lot of grace in that, right?

PJ: That would seem to be, yeah, what you’re saying as well.

P5: And trust has been a fascinating topic for me. Even as a leader, one of my favorite business books—and it’s kind of a—it’s probably not widely respected among academics, but it’s Stephen Covey, the son. So, it would be Stephen M. R. Covey.

PJ: Okay.
P5: The son wrote a book called *The Speed of Trust*. And it’s really about trust. There’s self-trust in there. There’s interpersonal trust. But then it’s taking that word *trust* to an organization, you know. So, for example, the work we do. You know, we’ve got to earn our trust for [redacted]. You know, we’ve got a lot to prove. And if—

PJ: Right.

P5: Trust can be a tax, you know, a liability, or it can be an asset, and once—and this kind of speaks to, you know, when you were asking me the question earlier about imagining kind of when you break trust, when you don’t have it, you have to spend a lot to get it back.

PJ: Um-hum.

P5: Whereas, when it’s an asset—that’s why this book’s called *The Speed of Trust*, because when you don’t have trust, everything takes longer.

PJ: Oh.

P5: So, you know, when I equate that or relate that to my marriage, decisions you have to make together are going to take longer. Arguments you have about finances are going to take longer.

PJ: Are going to take longer.

P5: Because the skepticism. You’ve got to overcome so much.

PJ: Right.

P5: And so that’s, yeah, I’d recommend the book *The Speed of Trust*. After you’re done with all this stuff, man.

PJ: I’ll put it on my reading list.

P5: Read *The Speed of Trust*. It’s become my favorite. And I’ve taken—I’ve even pulled some devotions from it, you know, just because it’s such a powerful reminder how important trust is in all of our relationships.

PJ: Yeah, right. That’s an interesting inclusion.

P5: Um-hum.

PJ: Well, I don’t need to belabor the point.

P5: All right, man.

PJ: You’ve shared a ton, so I really appreciate it. So, let me go ahead and hit stop here.

[End of recording]