



Introduction

Understanding organizational trust – foundations, constellations, and issues of operationalisation

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Abstract *This paper gives an overview of major issues in trust research, identifying common foundations and multiple constellations of organizational trust. In doing so, the paper also addresses important implications of theory development and empirical research. First, it provides a historical sketch of different approaches to understanding the phenomenon of trust, drawing upon various social science disciplines. Second, it discusses different levels of analysing trust in organizational settings. Third, it deals with important issues of operationalisation and measurement of organizational trust. Finally, it briefly summarises the contents of the five papers that follow this introductory paper in the special issue of JMP on “The micro-foundations of organizational trust”.*

Introduction

Over the past 15 years or so, “trust” has attracted enormous interest within the social sciences. Misztal (1996, p. 3) suspects that “the recent increase in the visibility of the issue of trust can be attributed to the emergence of a widespread consciousness that existing bases for social co-operation, solidarity and consensus have been eroded and that there is a need to search for new alternatives”. Similarly, Seligman (1997, p. 160) argues that “the rising concern with trust is a response to the fact that in the current situation we are more dependent on trust (and less on familiarity) to supplement those interstitial points where system confidence is not sufficient; this is occurring at the same time that these points become more numerous with the ever-increasing differentiation of roles”. Agents only become aware of trust when it is problematic. In this light, the recent interest in trust is by no means surprising, nor hypocritical.

The present special issue of this journal bears witness to many intriguing questions that have been opened, rather than settled, by the earlier special issues on trust-related themes, notably *Academy of Management Journal* Vol. 38 No. 1 (1995), *Cambridge Journal of Economics* Vol. 21 No. 2 (1997), *Academy of Management Review* Vol. 23 No. 3 (1998), *Organization Studies* Vol. 22 No. 2 (2001), *Organization Science* Vol. 14 No. 1 (2003), *International Journal of Human Resource Management* Vol. 14 No. 1 (2003), *International Studies of Management and Organization* Vol. 33 No. 2 (2003) and *Personnel Review* Vol. 32 No. 5 (2003). Collections of authoritative papers equally demonstrate the many facets of trust in managerial and organizational contexts, as Gambetta’s (1988) seminal volume was followed, for example, by Kramer and Tyler



(1996), Lane and Bachmann (1998), Cook (2001) and Nooteboom and Six (2003). We mention these special issues and edited collections, rather than individual articles and monographs, because they highlight the fact that, at present, trust researchers constitute a very active and distinct academic community that is set to continue studying the role of trust with a strong presence at conferences such as the Academy of Management, the European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS) or the European Academy of Management (EURAM).

These references taken together carry the simple message that “trust” is something that we feel we need to discuss, perhaps in order to understand it better, but probably also with a view to increasing the chances of maintaining and repairing it wherever it is essential, or at least desirable, in relationships within and between organisations. With this article and, indeed, the whole special issue, we aim to contribute insights into a number of aspects that we believe are particularly important to organizational and managerial psychology.

Within the organizational context, the questions and problems are multi-faceted. They concern differences in the specific meaning of “trust” when it exists between co-workers, leaders and followers, employers and employees, between different organisations or towards an institution. Moreover, it is important to see that operationalisations of the abstract construct of trust need to be sensitive to the specific characteristics of trustors and trustees concerned. The results of many empirical studies on trust-based relationships may be quite idiosyncratic and only allow limited comparisons between different constellations. Measurements, for example, may not be transferable between different levels of analysis. These are common issues of methodology in managerial psychology, but we feel that they are particularly relevant to trust. We will discuss them in the main part of this article with reference to the contributions to this special issue and we will address the problem of multiple constellations and resulting challenges of empirically operationalising the concept of “trust”. This will be followed by a brief overview of the articles as such. First, however, we would like to offer a review of foundational work on trust in order to introduce the main discourses and to identify some common ground for the multidisciplinary research collected here.

Common foundations

The word “trust” dates back to 13th century Middle English and has its etymological roots in older expressions denoting faithfulness and loyalty, but the phenomenon of trust is probably as old as the earliest forms of human association. To give just one example, even Confucius (551-479 BC) had already considered trust to be a precondition and basis for all worthwhile social relations (Hann, 1968). Many classical writers in philosophy and the social sciences have pointed out how vital trust is in preventing social vulnerability from paralysing social life. Political scientists and philosophers trace basic ideas on trust back to Hobbes, Locke and Hume (Dunn, 1988; Hollis, 1998). Sociologists also refer to the founding fathers of their discipline, e.g. Durkheim or Simmel, and psychologists find their seminal ideas in classical writings of Freud and others.

Significant ideas, beyond the classics, emerged from the 1960s onwards in what we could describe as a wide and fruitful arena of interdisciplinary exchange between psychology, sociology and other social sciences as well as the still nascent discipline

of management and organisation studies. Goffman (1963), in his micro-sociological studies on everyday social interaction, describes the essential, if habitual, role of trust in maintaining social processes. Erikson (1965) argues that learning to trust is critical in childhood development, emphasising a deep psychological embeddedness of trust. Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodological work on "basic trust" similarly emphasizes the vital need to expect the persistence of the moral social order.

In a more quantitatively oriented vein, Rotter (1967) devises an "Interpersonal Trust Scale" (ITS) which is designed to measure individual predispositions as well as the aggregate level of trust within a population, defined as a generalized expectation towards other actors, media and institutions. The ITS comprises 25-Likert-type items (Likert, 1932), such as "Parents usually can be relied upon to keep their promises" and "Most elected public officials are really sincere in their campaign promises". Less concerned with measurement, Barber's (1983) work places emphasis on societal trust, especially with regard to political representatives and institutions. He discusses the concept of fiduciary obligation and distinguishes it from technically competent performance. Barber's worries about the erosion of trust in society remain topical (Cook, 2001).

Henslin's (1968) cab-driver study gives rich empirical insights into how trust bears out in everyday life. It confirms the deep-seated assumptions underlying trust in practice, but at the same time it shows that trust is discretionary. This latter point connects with the work of Deutsch (1973) who builds his research on the assumption that trust can be observed from individual behaviour and, thus, experimentally measured. He emphasizes action and situation variables over attitude and personality. Trust, accordingly, is revealed in prisoner's dilemma-type experiments when agents choose to co-operate instead of competing (Kee and Knox, 1970; Wrightsman, 1966). This game theoretical approach has also been adopted, for example, by Axelrod (1984) and Dasgupta (1988) and has influenced Coleman's (1990) rational-choice approach.

Luhmann (1979) discusses trust functionally as a mechanism for the reduction of social complexity. He links the concept to our experiencing of a complex reality that would overwhelm us, if we were unable to rely on continuity and imperfectly rational expectations. Trust as weak inductive knowledge and the "blending of knowledge and ignorance" (Luhmann, 1979, p. 26) are notions that Luhmann borrows from Simmel, (1950; see Möllering, 2001). He notes that "the inner foundations of trust which we are seeking cannot lie in cognitive capacity" but rather in "a type of system-internal 'suspension'" (Luhmann, 1979, p. 79). A key idea introduced by Luhmann is his distinction between personal trust and system trust, and especially trust in "generalized media of communication" (truth, love, power, money). The question of trust in (the face of) institutions continues to be discussed (Bachmann, 2001; Giddens, 1990; Lane and Bachmann, 1996; Shapiro, 1987; Sztompka, 1999). A milestone in this respect is Zucker (1986) who contributes a typology of trust according to the sources from which trust may be produced. She argues that "process-based trust" and "characteristic-based trust" (both person-specific) have historically been supplemented by "institutional-based trust" which she exemplifies with reference to fundamental changes in the American socio-economic system in the 19th and early 20th century. Giddens' (1990) long essay on modernity points to the centrality of trust for understanding contemporary society overall. Interestingly, he argues that in late

modernity trust needs to be actively cultivated at the interpersonal level, due to the relative instability of societal bases for trust (Giddens, 1994).

In management and organization studies, specifically, Zand's (1972) article has been influential early on. In particular, Zand describes in some detail an idea already suggested by Blau (1964) and Luhmann (1979), namely that trust is a gradual, self-reinforcing phenomenon. Zand (1972, p. 233) presents a "spiral reinforcement model of the dynamics of trust". In order to show how trust leads to more trust and distrust to more distrust, Zand uses disclosure of information, acceptance of influence and exercise of control as constructs which have a feedback relationship with trust. Accordingly, high initial trust will lead the actor A to disclose information, accept influence and reduce control, while the other actor B perceives as positive signs of trustworthiness that increase B's level of trust and induce similarly open behaviour. This reinforces A's initial trust and thus leads to further trusting action, reinforcing B's trust and so forth.

An important stream of the organizational literature on trust is concerned with the theory of economic organization and governance. Bradach and Eccles (1989, p. 97) point out that "much research has pointed out the existence of stable long-term relationships between independent exchange partners". Trust is introduced as a social mechanism – besides price and authority – in order to make the transaction cost approach (Williamson, 1975, 1985) more complete and realistic (Chiles and McMackin, 1996; Cummings and Bromiley, 1996; Ring and Van de Ven, 1992). In a similar vein, Choi *et al.* (1999) analyses contractual uncertainty in the context of emerging economies and propose a typology of exchange and transaction governance that consists of legal contract, trust and hostage. In the area of corporate governance, Blair (2003) also points to the promise of research on informal institutions that support trusting relationships and help to establish cooperative social norms that are outside the law. Trust and identity emanating from ethnicity and kinship also play a major role in co-ordinating and governing various types of business networks as illustrated by the Chinese business network in Southeast Asia (Choi *et al.*, 1995a, b; Landa, 1994). One important implication of this stream of research is that various types of societal trust can be seen as the basis for alternative forms of economic organization.

Another strong stream of trust research stems from a renewed interest in the socio-psychological aspects of business relationships and managerial practice (e.g. Kramer and Tyler, 1996). In this view, theoretical developments are largely empirically led in the sense that organizational realities have changed and are in need of explanation. Three aspects appear particularly pertinent for competitiveness: flexibility, co-operation and learning. In simple terms, these require organizational openness both structurally and with regard to individual behaviour. Thus, researchers and practitioners turn to the concept of trust as a mechanism enabling managers to achieve organizational openness and, ultimately, competitiveness while reducing social uncertainty and vulnerability.

Employees are expected, for example, to accept changing roles, to identify opportunities across functional boundaries and to challenge practices in order to innovate and learn continuously. This is highly demanding and cannot be endured for long without the confidence that the others involved are competent, understanding and benevolent, in other words trustworthy. Since Fox (1974), numerous organizational researchers have examining the constitution and development of trust within

organizations, notably for example the much-cited contributions by Mayer *et al.* (1995), McAllister (1995), Creed and Miles (1996) and Lewicki and Bunker (1996).

Furthermore, there is a vast amount of research on trust in inter-organizational relationships, especially when these are referred to as partnerships or alliances. Sako's (1992) study is a pioneering example of the operationalisation of trust for inter-organizational relationships. Again, competitiveness is at stake as firms are "co-operating to compete" (Faulkner, 1995). There are, however, conceptual difficulties concerning the notions of individuals trusting an organisation (rather than another individual) and organisations trusting each other. The unresolved question here is to what extent trust can be generalized and institutionalized beyond the momentary state of mind of the individual (Currall and Judge, 1995). Also, it is recognized that inter-organizational trust is especially dependent on and mediated by the institutional framework in which the relationship is embedded (Bachmann, 2001; Lane and Bachmann, 1996; Zucker, 1986). This concerns legal frameworks, notably contract and property laws, as well as the socio-cultural background (Child and Möllering, 2003). It has been noted that the trust is crucial but also most problematic in international co-operation: the partners come together with different goals and personalities, as members of different organizations and different institutional backgrounds and may have very limited knowledge about each other initially (Child, 1998).

Until the end of the 1990s, trust research was heavily conceptual – as is typical for a "new" research topic – but more recently, trust researchers have devoted most of their efforts to empirical investigations. Specifically, quantitative studies aimed at hypothesis testing and modelling currently dominate the scene. While we suspect a certain one-sidedness here – and would like to see new conceptual development and more qualitative work – this may simply be a time in trust research, when we perform collective "reality checks" on concepts that have been discussed for a long time, assessing also their potential of informing social practice in organisations. Adopting Hirsch and Levin's (1999) colourful dialectic, this may be a time for the "validity police", but we still need "umbrella advocates" for the broader development of trust research.

Multiple constellations

Unsurprisingly, there is a broad range of trust definitions proposed in the literature, but we would concur with Rousseau *et al.* (1998, p. 395) that fairly broad consent could be obtained for their definition of trust as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another". Moreover, at a highly abstract level the conditions under which the problem of trust arises are basically agreed on. It takes a trustor and a trustee who – in the widest sense – are able to interact within a social system. The trustor is vulnerable to the actions of the trustee and cannot fully control the latter's behaviour. The trustee has the principal freedom to act in a way that benefits or harms the trustor (Dasgupta, 1988). Whether or not, and to what extent, the trustee can harm the trustor depends on the trustor's own action. By acting on trust, the trustor necessarily increases his vulnerability towards the other's potentially harmful actions (Baier, 1986).

The challenge that we see for current trust research is to bring this abstract problem to life by specifying in an empirical setting all the key elements identified above: Who are the trustors and the trustees? How do they interact and in what respects do they face vulnerability and risk towards each other? What kind of social system

(with certain rules, roles and routines) are they embedded in? How do they form expectations about each other's intentions and behaviours? What exactly leads them to accept or increase their vulnerability? How can they enact trust? It should make a difference, for example, if we ask these questions about a trust relationship between co-workers in a nuclear power station, between a management consultant and his client, or between a bank and its regulatory authority. While interpersonal trust is a recognised phenomenon, it is a more contentious issue whether a person can trust an organisation or organisations each other (Blois, 1999; Nooteboom, 2002). Organisations may be seen as "actors", but it is considered a bad practice to treat organisations like persons, i.e. to "anthropomorphize the organization" (Zaheer *et al.*, 1998, p. 142).

In this special issue, each paper discusses a different constellation of trustors and trustees (Table I). Sally Atkinson analyses the role of inter-personal trust in relationships that senior managers in a range of sectors (including non-profit) have with colleagues above, below and at peer levels in their organization. Nicole Gillespie and Leon Mann look at a trust constellation whereby the trustee is a team leader and the trustors are team members. Sally Atkinson's 360° perspective of leaders (senior managers) is therefore complemented by Nicole Gillespie and Leon Mann's decidedly bottom-up view from those being led. Natalie Ferres, Julia Connell and Anthony Travaglione study non-management employees, too, but are interested specifically in the interpersonal trust that these employees have towards their co-workers (or peers), rather than towards their leaders, and how this affects work behaviour. Hyun-Jung Lee's study also concerns shop floor workers, but she sees employee-to-employer trust not primarily as an interpersonal construct, but as a person-to-organization phenomenon. Finally, Sabine Koeszegi's theoretical contribution addresses inter-organizational negotiations and, therefore, trust at the level of inter-organizational relationships, although these are clearly not separable from inter-personal influences on and from negotiating managers. Nevertheless, her discussion shows that risk and trust can be attributed to organizations and not just to persons.

Thus, a wide variety of trust constellations are represented in this special issue, which we believe helps to understand the complex empirical reality of trust. A great step forward, not achieved here yet, would be to study explicitly the cross-level effect of trust in one constellation on trust in another constellation, e.g. how trust among employees (Ferres *et al.*'s study) affects those employees' trust in their organization (Lee's approach). At the same time, it is a stimulating exercise to look for empirical insights that may be transferred from one constellation to the other, for example using the "principle of gradualness" suggested by Luhmann (1979, p. 41). Much common ground can also be found when it comes to general "indicators of trustworthiness" (Zucker, 1986, p. 60) that have been identified in the literature. While the terminology is

Author(s)	Trust constellation
Sally Atkinson	Interpersonal trust in senior management relationships
Nicole Gillespie and Leon Mann	Interpersonal trust of team members towards leaders
Natalie Ferres <i>et al.</i>	Interpersonal trust among co-workers (peers)
Hyun-Jung Lee	Person-in-organisation trust of workers in a high-tech joint venture
Sabine Koeszegi	Inter-organizational trust in joint venture negotiations

Table I.
Trust constellations in
this special issue

somewhat inconsistent (Mayer *et al.*, 1995), the indicators suggested are “not so different after all” (Bigley and Pearce, 1998; Rousseau *et al.*, 1998). In particular, competence, benevolence, integrity and predictability represent recurrent and generic themes for indicators of trustworthiness. Many authors use several indicators in their operationalisation of trustworthiness, but there is no overall agreement on whether all four should be part of a concept of trust, whether one is a precondition for the other, whether they are all equally important or need to be weighted, whether they reinforce each other or simply add up, and so on (for example, the “Dialogue” in *Academy of Management Review*, 1996, Vol. 21 No. 2, pp. 331-45). All in all, though, the literature suggests an image of the trustworthy actor as someone who is able and willing and consistent in not exploiting the trustor’s vulnerability.

Idiosyncratic operationalisations

The above considerations about the multiple constellations of trust that we may find in empirical settings lead to the conclusion that trust is a notoriously elusive construct when it comes to operationalisation. Researchers are faced with the dilemma: if they want to increase the validity of their own operationalisation of trust in empirical settings, the operationalisation may become too idiosyncratic to enable generalisations or transfers to other contexts. Nevertheless, to avoid reinventing the wheel, it is useful to understand how other researchers have operationalised trust, before devising tailored instruments for one’s own empirical setting.

Generally, empirical approaches to operationalising trust can be grouped into three main categories (Table II). The first empirical approach uses laboratory experiments usually involving some kind of variation of the trust game or prisoner’s dilemma (for example the studies reported by Deutsch (1973)). Trust is measured as the percentage of interactions in which the subjects of the experiment choose to cooperate rather than defect. Notwithstanding interesting findings on how different modifications of the game can bring about a higher or lower percentage of cooperation, the approach has been criticised on the grounds of both external validity, given the artificiality of the laboratory situation, and internal validity, given that cooperative choices need not reflect a state of trust or even a cooperative disposition (Kee and Knox, 1970).

The standardised survey approach is common in psychological work on personality traits (Rotter, 1967; Wrightsman, 1966) and in political science research on social capital (Glaeser *et al.*, 2000; Paxton, 1999). Empirical measurements in this area aim to assess by means of a questionnaire, the actor’s general predisposition towards the trustworthiness of others. For example, the General Social Survey in the United States contains the following standard item: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” Already mentioned earlier, Rotter’s (1967) ITS operates in a similar way but uses more items.

Empirical approach	Concept of trust	Indicative scales/authors
Laboratory experiment	Cooperation of trustor/trustee	Percentage of cooperative choices (Deutsch, 1973)
Standardised survey	General predisposition of trustor	ITS (Rotter, 1967)
Target-related survey	Trustor’s perception of trustee	Organizational trust inventory, (Cummings and Bromiley, 1996)

Table II.
Empirical approaches to operationalising trust

Respondents indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a set of relevant statements (Likert, 1932). All items together give an additive scale. While the predisposition of the trustor is generally recognised as a significant influence on trust, the standardised survey approach as such may lack external validity as the attitude revealed in a survey situation may not predict actual manifestations of trust in specific everyday situations. Internal validity can be questioned, because the respondent's attitude may be a reflection of a range of individual factors such as personality traits, past experience, perceived qualities in others, or all of them.

The third empirical approach to measuring trust(worthiness) requires respondents to report how they perceive a specific other actor (target). The instruments applied are predominantly compound Likert-scales, too (Johnson-George and Swap, 1982; Mohr and Spekman, 1994; Sako, 1992; and the sources in Table III). The main methodological difference to the standardised survey approach lies in the target-related phrasing of the statements. For instance, Rotter's item "Parents usually can be relied upon to keep their promises" would have to be rephrased by assuming a specific actor B as the target to read: "B usually can be relied upon to keep his promises". The external and internal validity of this empirical approach is somewhat problematic, too. It needs to be understood that what is measured is a snapshot of A's subjective perception of B's trustworthiness at a single point in time and in the context of their specific relationship.

Table III shows some indicative items that have been used in target-related surveys on trust(worthiness). The specific actor constellation is usually reflected in the kinds of statements used. For example, Larzelere and Huston (1980) are interested in very close personal relationships, while McAllister (1995) measures perceptions between colleagues at work. Cummings and Bromiley (1996) design their organizational trust inventory to be used throughout organisations, whereas Zaheer *et al.* (1998) study inter-organizational relationships.

Target-related surveys generally have an individualistic bias, because the respondents are individuals influenced by subjective personal experiences in encounters with other individuals (not only abstract organisations). This also draws attention to the affective element of trust captured in Larzelere and Huston's as well as McAllister's scales (Lewis and Weigert, 1985). Somewhat ironically, the inclusion of affective items in a questionnaire may rationalise affect, i.e. turn the intended affective constructs into cognitive constructs. Raising the level of consciousness about affect by way of the questionnaire format – or indeed any other research intervention – could misrepresent the respondent's affective perception of the target, for example due to social desirability effects (Crowne and Marlowe, 1964).

In this special issue, the contributing authors have found very different ways of addressing the issue of operationalisation. Sally Atkinson has chosen an approach akin to grounded theory. Instead of defining trust narrowly in advance, she gets her respondents to talk about their own understanding of trust and finds that the meaning of trust differs depending on the persons you ask, at what point in time they are asked and which relationship type they refer to (personal vs utility relationships). This leads to very interesting findings even though it means that Sally Atkinson's "measurements" of trust would lack the statistical validity required for the kind of regression analyses performed by other authors present in this special issue, notably Nicole Gillespie and Leon Mann and Natalie Ferres *et al.* In particular, Nicole Gillespie and Leon Mann use a target-related survey approach with a 21-item "global trust" scale

Larzelere and Huston (1980): dyadic trust scale

My partner is primarily interested in his (her) own welfare^a

There are times when my partner cannot be trusted^a

My partner is perfectly honest and truthful with me

I feel that I can trust my partner completely

My partner is truly sincere in his (her) promises

I feel that my partner does not show me enough consideration^a

My partner treats me fairly and justly

I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me

McAllister (1995): affect-based and cognition-based trust

We have a sharing relationship. We can both freely share our ideas, feelings, and hopes

I can talk freely to this individual about difficulties I am having at work and know that (s)he will want to listen

We would both feel a sense of loss if one of us was transferred and we could no longer work together

If I shared my problems with this person, I know (s)he would respond constructively and caringly

I would have to say that we have both made considerable emotional investments in our working relationship

This person approaches his/her job with professionalism and dedication

Given this person's track record, I see no reason to doubt his/her competence and preparation for the job

I can rely on this person not to make my job more difficult by careless work

Most people, even those who are not close friends of this individual, trust and respect him/her as a coworker

Other work associates of mine who must interact with this individual consider him/her to be trustworthy

If people knew more about this individual and his/her background, they would be more concerned and monitor his/her performance more closely^a

Cummings and Bromiley (1996): organizational trust inventory – short form

We think the people in ____ tell the truth in negotiations

We think that ____ meets its negotiated obligations to our department

In our opinion, ____ is reliable

We think that the people in ____ succeed by stepping on other people^a

We feel that ____ tries to get the upper hand^a

We think that ____ takes advantage of our problems^a

We feel that ____ negotiates with us honestly

We feel that ____ will keep its word

We think ____ does not mislead us

We feel that ____ tries to get out of its commitments^a

We feel that ____ negotiates joint expectations fairly

We feel that ____ takes advantage of people who are vulnerable^a

Zaheer et al. (1998): interorganizational trust and interpersonal trust

Supplier X has always been evenhanded in its negotiations with us

Supplier X may use opportunities that arise to profit at our expense^a

Based on past experience, we cannot with complete confidence rely on Supplier X to keep promises made to us^a

We are hesitant to transact with Supplier X when the specifications are vague^a

Supplier X is trustworthy

My contact person has always been evenhanded with me

I know how my contact person is going to act. S/he can always be counted on to act as I expect

My contact person is trustworthy

I have faith in my contact person to look out for my interests even when it is costly to do so

I would feel a sense of betrayal if my contact person's performance is below my expectations

Note: ^aItem reverse scaled

Table III.
Examples of
trustworthiness scale
items

comprising the three dimensions of cognitive trust, affective trust and behavioural trust of the respondent in a specific leader. They draw on earlier operationalisations (Butler, 1991; McAllister, 1995) and on their own pilot interviews to construct a scale suited to their own research. Interestingly, Nicole Gillespie and Leon Mann also include a blanket, one-item “overall trust” measure which – fortunately – correlates highly with the “global trust” dimensions.

Natalie Ferres *et al.*'s contribution to the special issue measures trust in co-workers by using a 12-item scale taken from a more comprehensive workplace trust questionnaire developed in their own earlier work. Their approach is classified as a standardised survey approach (according to Table II), because the 12-items refer to co-workers generally and not to particular individuals (targets). It can be assumed, though, that respondents will mainly have their own immediate colleagues in mind when answering the survey questions. Nevertheless, the trust measurement is less person-specific compared to Nicole Gillespie and Leon Mann's approach. An interesting addition to Natalie Ferres *et al.*'s operationalisation is that they include dispositional trust as a control variable, i.e. they adapt parts of a standardised personality survey to assess in how far their respondents are predisposed to trust others, which may mediate their trust in co-workers.

A specific operationalisation of trust can be found in Hyun-Jung Lee's contribution to this special issue. She focuses on competence-based trust only, operationalising it as an employee's belief that the employing company has the resources, technologies and competitive position to keep its promises to employees (e.g. with regard to security and prosperity). This kind of trust is measured by three items which are target-related in the sense that the target is a company, but not a person. Hyun-Jung Lee finds no direct connection between her trust measure and continuous improvement efforts as the dependent variable. This is a remarkable, counterintuitive finding which raises the question whether more comprehensive measures such as those of Nicole Gillespie and Leon Mann, Natalie Ferres *et al.* or the scales presented in Table III would have led to different results. One challenge in this respect concerns the transformation of scales targeted at persons to a scale where the trustee is an organisation.

Sabine Koeszegi's paper is not very much concerned with measurement or other aspects of operationalisation. Nevertheless, her discussion points out that trust is a multidimensional construct. A trusting attitude needs to be distinguished from trusting behaviour, and only the latter leads to actual consequences of the former. By implication, empirical studies should measure both attitudes and resulting actions through surveys and observations, as in the cases of laboratory or field studies.

As with the different trust constellations across the studies presented here, we do not think that differences in operationalisation of trust, reflecting different research questions, are highly problematic. Rather, it is instructive to see a variety of facets of trust measured. Clearly, though, these facets should contribute to one complete, but probably never completed, picture.

Overview of the special issue

Finally, we have the pleasure of introducing the reader briefly to the more specific contexts and arguments put forward by each of the five articles selected for this special issue. The contribution by Sally Atkinson is a fine example of a qualitative study on the role of trust in different types of relationships. It draws on interviews with 30 senior

managers who were stimulated to produce extensive narratives on their most important relationships in their work environment. Sally Atkinson shows that trust can have a strong influence on the structure and dynamics of senior managers' personal and instrumental relationships. However, she also finds well functioning relationships which are based on mechanisms other than trust. Her critical analysis is concerned with the question of where trust has its place in a business environment and provides useful insights by her exploratory study which she sees at a starting point for more in-depth analyses.

Nicole Gillespie and Leon Mann look at different leadership styles and investigate how these are related to building trust and achieving performance. The answer is drawn from a questionnaire-based study which involved 83 members of 33 R&D projects. The authors very convincingly show that leadership styles based on consultation, vision and shared values achieve the highest scores where trust and performance are to be fostered in intra-organizational relationships.

The paper by Natalie Ferres and her colleagues equally shows that organizations can benefit from trust among their members. Rather than management, the authors target the ordinary employee level of organizations in their study on co-worker trust. Their data draw on a survey in which 299 employees of a public health organization were involved. In their analysis, they come to the conclusion that trust between employees is highly predicative of perceived organizational support and affective commitment to the organization. Also, they very clearly show that the rate of employee turnover is strongly related to co-worker trust.

Hyun-Jung Lee's paper connects to the latter contribution in that she also focuses on the level of non-management employees. This study involved 490 shop floor workers of a high-tech multinational joint venture. Her results show that a certain type of trust, i.e. competence trust, and the level of shop floor workers' identification with their organization play a strong role with regard to organizational success in an environment where global competition is particularly strong. Specifically, her work makes clear that efforts of continuous improvement of product quality and production processes presuppose a high level of organizational identification and trust.

Sabine Koeszegi then takes the reader of this special issue back to more conceptual considerations. Like Hyun-Jung Lee, she refers to the example of multinational joint ventures and investigates trust building processes in relation to inter-organizational negotiation strategies. Sabine Koeszegi deals with the question of whether trust can be an appropriate strategy to cope with risk. The conclusion of her investigation suggests a balanced and highly useful view on the role of trust in the context of different negotiation strategies, varying from high risk accepting to risk avoiding approaches.

In various ways, all of the contributions to this special issue offer valuable insights into the phenomenon of trust in organizational relations. They are predominantly oriented to empirical research focusing on key questions at different levels of organizational hierarchy. However, they also show how their research fits into the theoretical frameworks of trust research which have been established over the past decades. Thus, they not only provide much needed empirical knowledge but also, equally, make important contributions to elaborate conceptual positions in the current debate on the role of trust within organizational contexts.

In contributing to trust research, this special issue also represents evidence for the lively international community of trust researchers: previous versions of all the articles included here (with the exception of Hyun-Jung Lee) were discussed, among other papers, at a thematic track on trust that we organized at the European Academy of Management (EURAM) conference in Milan, 3-5 April 2003. We are grateful to Yehuda Baruch for his suggestion that we take our idea of a special issue to this journal. In being understanding and trustful, Yochanan Altman as JMP editor, has made our job as guest editors easy and enjoyable. We invited those EURAM papers with a good fit to managerial psychology and with exciting new findings, to be submitted in revised form for this special issue. The submissions were then put through a double blind review and we are indebted to the 15 reviewers who have produced extremely thorough and timely assessments for us. Their invaluable expertise has led to sharper contributions. Our authors, whom we thank for all their hard and fruitful work, will surely agree.

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