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Editors

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conventional in approach, Wolfram Cox and Hassard argued that an advantage of holographic thinking is that it relaxes the representational and linear assumptions implicit in traditional triangulation, for no longer is the object or phenomenon to be captured a discrete, fixed, and unmediated entity. However, they also warned that as the holographic image is only ever virtual and thus always beyond the viewer's reach, its apparent nearness may be illusory.

2. *Taking an ideographic overview and the problem of perspective.* A second option is for researchers to take an overview of patterns and typifications derived not from nomothetic, researcher-generated classifications, but perhaps from a multidimensional scaling analysis or, using qualitative techniques, from a content analysis of metaphors and other tropes used by research participants. However, such efforts to bring the viewer closer to a representation of the "real picture" may still be fraught with difficulty as questions can be raised regarding whether such "stepping back" allows the researcher to get closer to the data or, indeed, further away. This is a problem of perspective, for the wholeness that the researcher is trying to see may be, instead, an illusion of distance.

3. *Finding an angle: Choosing an appreciative stance and the problem of (en)closure.* As attempts to see the whole pose such difficulties, a third option is for the researcher not only to enter the picture but also to choose to adopt a partial view. This may allow for a new way of thinking about the stance of the researcher, for instead of considering triangulation as an approach to closure or capture, it can be seen as an opening or angling. For example, one possibility is to take an appreciative stance and to recognize the affirmative potential of research input into organizational analysis beyond the status quo. It can be argued, therefore, that as it is never possible to be neutral and dispassionate in attempts to enclose the whole, perhaps researchers should abandon attempts to do so, instead displaying increased sensitivity to the context as well as the contents of any framing process.

—Julie Wolfram Cox

See also Objectivity; Positivism; Postmodernism

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TRUST

Trust is often defined as a willingness to be vulnerable. People are willing to take this risk of being vulnerable when they have positive expectations that relying on someone will be beneficial and not harmful. For example, you might open a joint bank account with your business partners because you trust them to act responsibly and not steal from you. People base these positive expectations on a variety of factors related to the person being trusted, the person doing the trusting, the nature of the relationship between the two people, and the broader context. Trust is a critically important area in organizational life—with benefits in terms of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, cooperation, negotiations, customer retention, learning, and knowledge sharing.

Conceptual Overview

The willingness to be vulnerable to someone is closely tied to how trustworthy you perceive the other person to be, as well as other sources of trust judgments. These categories and findings are based on a variety of empirical research studies of trust.

Perceived Trustworthiness

A trustworthy person is someone who is worthy of your trust. For example, if you tell your boss a

secret, then you are trusting your boss not to reveal it. In this case, the perceived trustworthiness of your boss, at least in your eyes, is high. This notion of perceived trustworthiness has been divided into at least three dimensions: competence, benevolence, and integrity.

Competence refers to the extent to which the person being trusted knows what he or she is doing. That is, is this person prepared, capable, skilled, dedicated, professional, and knowledgeable? In the case of the boss trusted with a secret, a trustworthy boss—in terms of the competence dimension—is the kind of person who would avoid accidentally blurting out the secret during conversations with other employees. Competence, in this sense, is also known as ability or cognition-based trust.

Benevolence refers to the extent to which the person being trusted cares about and looks out for you and your interests. So in the example of telling your boss a secret, a trustworthy boss—in terms of the benevolence dimension—is the kind of person who cares about you too much to ever try to undermine you by intentionally gossiping about your secret with fellow employees. Benevolence is also known as goodwill trust, loyalty, avoiding taking excessive advantage, or affect-based trust.

Integrity refers to the extent to which the person being trusted is committed to an acceptable set of principles, such as honesty, fairness, playing by the rules, and so forth. In the case of your boss knowing your secret, a trustworthy boss—in terms of the integrity dimension—is the kind of person who would make it a point of personal honor never to reveal anything said in confidence, either by you or anyone else.

These three dimensions of perceived trustworthiness tend to be positively correlated and can sometimes be difficult to tease apart in practice, but they are conceptually distinct. For example, a boxing opponent may have high integrity (“I always play by the rules.”) but low benevolence (“I’m going to hurt you.”). Nevertheless, in many cases, people tend to think of trustworthiness as an overall umbrella concept covering all three dimensions.

Sources of Trust Judgments

On what basis do people decide if you are trustworthy or not? In fact, people use four types of factors to determine someone’s trustworthiness: factors related to the person being trusted, the person doing the trusting, the relationship, and the context.

Sources of Trust Judgments Related to the Person Being Trusted (Trustee)

Trustworthy behaviors are perhaps the main indicator people use for deciding if you are trustworthy. So if the question of trustworthiness asks what kind of person are you (competent? benevolent? principled?), then trustworthy behaviors answer the question of how *often* you perform certain behaviors. The more you perform these behaviors, the more you will be perceived as trustworthy. There are many examples of trustworthy behaviors:

- Accuracy—providing correct information
- Advice giving
- Availability—being accessible and easy to contact if someone wants to talk with you
- Consistency—being predictable and reliable over time and across situations
- Contrast with an untrustworthy example—references to an untrustworthy person who is in the same group as you, thereby making you look more trustworthy by comparison
- Discretion—keeping a secret
- Emotional support
- Expertise and limitations disclosure—candidly admitting what you do not know, so people will be more confident in what you say you do know
- Fairness—treating people equitably
- Favor or gift giving
- Openness—sharing your thoughts and feelings
- Promise keeping—sticking to your word
- Protection from others—making sure the other person is not harmed by third parties
- Receptivity—being a good listener and open-minded to what the other person is saying
- Sharing and delegating control—ranging from seeking input to delegating completely
- Truth telling

- Warm and engaging nonverbal behavior—warm, concerned facial expression; head nodding; expressive gestures; timely smiles; pleasing voice; fluent speech; relaxed, approachable posture

This list is not exhaustive but covers most of the trustworthy behaviors identified by researchers. Trustworthy behaviors are also referred to as trust builders, process-based trust, knowledge-based trust, or cooperation.

Sources of Trust Judgments Related to the Person Doing the Trusting (Trustor)

People are more likely to trust you when they themselves have a higher propensity to trust, when they rely on group stereotypes that favor your group, and when they have trusted you in the past. Some people are predisposed to be more trusting in general, whereas other people have a personality that makes them more suspicious, cynical, or unforgiving. So unless experience shows otherwise, you are likely to be trusted by someone with a high propensity to trust. (Trust propensity is also known as generalized trust or disposition to trust.)

Sometimes people use stereotypes in deciding whom to trust. These positive or negative stereotypes can be based on demographic factors (e.g., a belief that a certain ethnic group is good at mathematics), occupations (e.g., a belief that car dealers lie), or any other generalized belief about a group or category of people. Note that these stereotypes can be held by anyone, regardless of whether they are in the group being stereotyped. As with trust propensity, stereotypes typically become less of a factor in determining how trustworthy you seem if the other person gets to know you and can instead judge you as an individual.

People often judge how trustworthy you are based on whether or not they have trusted you (or people similar to you) in the past. In other words, trustors often look to their *own* behavior, not just yours, in deciding how trustworthy you are. Thus, getting people to trust you once, even over a small matter, can make them conclude that you must therefore be trustworthy. However,

if they can attribute their having trusted you to something else—e.g., if a supervisor was monitoring your behavior at the time—then a coworker who trusted you, for example, may decide that he or she did so not because you are a trustworthy person but because of the monitoring.

Sources of Trust Judgments Related to the Relationship

People are also more likely to trust you when their relationship with you is strong, when you have the same background, and when you share the same perspective about things.

People decide how trustworthy you are based on the nature of their relationship with you. In particular, if you have a strong relationship with someone, that person is likely to perceive you as trustworthy. Relationship strength is a function of how often you communicate with each other as well as how close you feel, where closeness can be either work-related or a more personal or emotional connection. Relationship strength is also known as tie strength.

Apart from the strength of a relationship, demographic similarity can also lead to greater trust. Particularly if people do not know each other well, they tend to trust someone who is similar to themselves, in terms of race, sex, national origin, and so forth. This affinity that people feel for others with the same background applies to all sorts of other categories, too, such as being from the same hometown, going to the same college, being a big fan of the same sports team, and so on. Here the issue is not so much relying on a stereotype but rather feeling a common connection. Thus, belonging to the same group—any group, but especially those that are important to you—will increase trust. Similarity-based trust is also known as depersonalized trust or homophily.

When people have an even deeper similarity (i.e., when they share the same views) then they are especially likely to trust each other. There are at least three main aspects of having a shared perspective with someone: having the same mindset (e.g., speaking the same language or jargon, and feeling like you are on

the same “wavelength”), having common goals or a shared vision (e.g., when two project members both want to maximize customer satisfaction), and having shared values or beliefs (e.g., a shared belief that it is important to spend money on nice clothes). Because shared perspective is more likely to be the source of trust judgments in older relationships, after people have had a chance to get to know each other, it is also known as identification-based trust or relational trust.

Note that how long people have known you is generally not related to how much they trust you, although this can affect which sources of trust judgments they use (e.g., demographic similarity in newer relationships, shared perspective in older relationships).

Sources of Trust Judgments Related to the Context

When people decide how much to trust you, they also base their judgment on factors related to the broader context, such as what third parties say about you, whether it is in your self-interest to be trustworthy in a given situation, and the extent to which you two are surrounded by an overall atmosphere where people are expected to trust one another.

People are more likely to trust you when third parties trust you, too. This can range from having one person “vouch” for you to having a widely known reputation for being trustworthy. In particular, good or bad reputations make people less tentative in their trust judgments about you. So if your new coworker is deciding whether or not to trust you, then—depending on what her close colleagues say about you—her favorable opinion of you would be amplified into trust (if you have a good reputation), but any doubts about you would be amplified into distrust (if you have a bad reputation). In addition to informal reputations, third parties can also affect trust judgments by awarding formal credentials—for example, a medical degree as signifying medical competence, or meeting the ISO 9000 standard, for a company’s quality management program. Like reputations, credentials are an important contextual basis for people’s trust judgments.

Another contextual source of trust judgments is the attribution of self-interest. That is, when people think

that it is in your own self-interest to be trustworthy (e.g., because your year-end bonus depends on it), then they will be more willing to be vulnerable to you. The converse is also true. So, for example, if two competitors are vying fiercely for the same customer account, they might be suspicious of each other’s motives, concluding that it is not in the other person’s self-interest to be trustworthy (at least in that situation), and so they will be less willing to be vulnerable to each other. Self-interest attribution is also known as calculative trust, deterrence-based trust, institution-based trust, or even as a substitute for trust.

When there is a trusting atmosphere in a particular organization or situation, people are more likely to trust each other. For example, if employees know that promotions and rewards at their company will be based on clear standards applied to everyone, then coworkers will be less suspicious of each other. That is, instead of looking for hidden agendas, they will take their cues from the broader context and trust each other. In other words, there is a “trickle-down” effect of trust, where people look to see how management and others treat one another in general before deciding if they themselves should trust you. New employees are typically socialized into following these norms or rules about how trustworthy and trusting they should be, thereby helping to maintain an organizational culture with shared expectations for what the “rules of the game” are when it comes to trust. A trusting atmosphere is also known as rule-based trust.

Critical Commentary and Future Directions

There remain a number of unresolved conceptual issues related to trust, including the role of distrust, social capital, variants of integrity, trust domains, and levels of analysis. While most research has assumed that trust and distrust are on opposite ends of the same continuum, a few scholars have argued that distrust is a separate concept from trust. So, for example, under this argument, the benevolence dimension of trustworthiness would actually be two concepts: one ranging from zero (indifference) to positive (benevolence), and the other ranging from zero (indifference) to

negative (harming others). If, on the other hand, trust is a single continuum, one possible explanation for why trust and distrust “feel” so different is that people are able to make more fine-grained, incremental distinctions along the positive (trust) end of the continuum, but the negative (distrust) end has a more catastrophic, all-or-nothing quality to it. Future research may resolve these questions.

Aspects of trust sometimes overlap—and are confused with—the concept of social capital, which is the ability to get nonsocial (e.g., economic) benefits from one’s relationships with others. Social capital has three dimensions—*structural*, *relational*, and *cognitive*—which overlap with trust as follows: The structural dimension is the network of ties linking various people, including the strength of these ties (recall that tie strength is a source of trust judgments related to the relationship), though this dimension also includes other structural characteristics unrelated to trust, such as the extent to which a person’s ties know one another; the relational dimension is typically trust (or trustworthiness) itself; and the cognitive dimension is the extent to which there is a shared perspective (recall that this is another source of trust judgments related to the relationship). Clarifying these areas of overlap may help avoid confusion over these concepts.

Another potential source of confusion is the difficulty in distinguishing among the concepts of integrity, shared values, and behavioral integrity. Some research has defined integrity as including adherence not just to widely accepted principles, such as honesty or fairness, but to any principles seen as acceptable in the eyes of the trustor. For example, in this view, mafia gang members who value loyalty to the gang above all else would see a fellow gang member as having high integrity if he stays loyal—even if he lies, cheats, and steals from outsiders. In this example, however, the “integrity” of the loyal gang member, as seen by his fellow members, seems indistinguishable from the shared values of the gang. So are shared values (an aspect of shared perspective, which is a source of trust judgments related to the relationship) and integrity (a dimension of trustworthiness) essentially the same thing? Even more confusing is the presence of a third concept, known as behavioral integrity, which is used

by many to refer to truth telling, promise keeping, and fairness (a subset of trustworthy behaviors). Future research may need to disentangle these various interrelated integrity concepts.

Aspects of trust can exist in an overall sense or be specific to a particular situation or domain. For example, the expression, “I’d trust him with my money but not with my children,” suggests that trust can be limited to a narrow domain. This is still trust, but it applies only in certain situations. Sometimes trustors make this distinction; sometimes they do not. It seems likely that there would be at least some trust spillover from one situation to another—e.g., violating someone’s trust in one domain will probably reduce it in another—but how or when this happens is still an open question.

While most of what we know about trust comes from studying individuals, it appears that most aspects of trust also apply to other levels of analysis as well. So, for example, trust can exist between two organizations, where this interorganizational trust has important effects above and beyond interpersonal trust. Trust can also be cross-level, where a person trusts a group, management, an organization, a government, a society, a culture, and so forth. Most of the trust-related concepts described here probably apply—at least in an aggregated way—to all of these levels. Future research is needed, though, to confirm if and when this is the case.

In addition to these unresolved conceptual issues, there are also unanswered questions about how trust works in practice, particularly in the areas of reciprocity, misplaced trust, trust repair, and negative outcomes of trust. Most research conceptualizes trust in a unidirectional way, where one person is evaluating another person. This conception is useful, but it is important to note that trust is often bidirectional, where both people are actually evaluating each other. One way this might occur is with a spiral of trustworthy behavior and trust. For example, if you are negotiating a business deal with a potential client, then your initial trustworthy behavior would make the potential client more willing to be vulnerable to you and therefore behave in a more trustworthy way toward you, a reaction which would in turn generate greater trust and then trustworthy behavior from you,

and so on. Of course, reciprocity of this nature can be a self-reinforcing mechanism not only for increasing trust, but also for increasing distrust and untrustworthy behavior. Thus, reciprocity may be at the core of how trust functions in a relationship, and future research could take a less static view of trust phenomena and focus more attention on the dynamics of how two or more parties behave toward and perceive one another.

The main reason that people do not always trust someone is because they are worried about the dangers of misplaced trust; e.g., they do not want to be betrayed by the other person's opportunistic or incompetent behavior. While we know a fair amount about the fear of misplaced trust, we know less about how often such fears are justified.

If trust is broken, though, can it be repaired? Preliminary research suggests that it can, depending on the type of violation. For competence violations (e.g., a "slipup"), an apology where you blame yourself is the most effective way to rebuild trust. For integrity violations (e.g., "cutting corners"), denial is more effective, especially if there is evidence of your innocence; however, if the allegations are true, then an apology where you blame the situational causes of your untrustworthy behavior is more effective. Silence, or ignoring an accusation, is the least effective strategy for repairing any type of trust violation. So far, there is little research on how to repair benevolence violations (e.g., a "betrayal").

Finally, in terms of how trust works in practice, research has only recently begun to uncover a possible dark side of trust, where trust leads to negative outcomes. For the most part, the effects of trust are positive, including improved communication, more organizational citizenship behaviors, more information sharing, less competitive behavior in negotiations, more customer retention, higher group performance, less conflict, and greater job satisfaction. However, under some conditions, too much trust can be harmful. For example, in teams where people have a lot of individual autonomy, if team members trust one another a great deal, they are less likely to monitor one another, and as a result, the team's performance tends to be lower. Thus, at least in self-managing teams,

performance may be enhanced by maintaining at least some monitoring of trusted team members, even if it feels a bit awkward to do so.

—Daniel Z. Levin

See also Integrity; Opportunistic Behavior; Risk Management; Social Capital

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TRUTH

The word truth stems from two Old English words: *truwa*, meaning faith, and *treowan*, meaning to believe. Scientific definitions of truth have sought to separate truth from concepts of belief and faith by combining it instead with concepts such as objectivity, causality, validity, and reliability, which have become the foundations of modern rational thought. By contrast, postmodern understandings of truth have returned to the foundational meanings of truth in that it is seen to be a product of believing and vowing to perform in ways that come to count as the norm in a particular time and space. Here truth is linked with discourses and power and talk of contingency rather than causal connections.

Conceptual Overview

Conceptualizing a field is inherently problematic, particularly when it deals with truth. Central to conceptualizing truth, however, is the idea that claims are made about its nature and in that way they establish what truth *is*. But of course, conceptualizing what truth *is*, is in itself a form of truth making. One brings certain characteristics into focus while screening out or silencing other thoughts and ideas. Thus, conceptualizations, rather than being neutral, as they are sometimes presented, are inherently theory-laden. In understanding how truth is conceptualized, it is of critical importance to examine closely how different researchers bind concepts together to establish what constitutes the truth of reality and the nature of particular phenomena. What follows provides an overview of three broad schools of thought that have shaped the theorization of truth in organization studies: *positivism*, *social constructivism*, and *postmodernism*.

Positivism asserts that truth should be determined by reason and factual analysis, which is equated with *objectivity* rather than faith, dogma, or religious

teachings, which are said to be *subjectively* derived. This means that for a statement to be sanctioned as truth, it needs to be grounded in observable facts in the material world. Positivists are thus proponents of realism, empiricism, and the scientific method. Indeed, a reliance on empirical science is often considered to be the hallmark of modern rationalism. Such thinking binds truth, science, and its methods to a correspondence with fact. Science is associated with *veracity*—freedom from deceit or falseness. Positivism has dominated as a theoretical basis of organization studies. It has spawned key theoretical approaches including contingency theory, which is concerned with analyzing organizational structures to identify those that best “fit” given performance criteria. Contingency theorists maintain that the behavior we observe in organizations is the result of patterned causal relationships between an organization’s structure and its various contingencies. Their aim is to establish the structure that is optimal as varying according to certain factors or contingencies such as organizational strategy, environment, technology, and so on. For contingency theorists, organizations are treated as an objective reality. Following a natural sciences model of investigation, contingency theorists have asserted that it is possible for science to achieve universal truths about social facts.

Social constructivism holds that truth is constructed by social processes. It is a school of thought introduced by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their seminal text, *The Construction of Social Reality*. The focus here is on uncovering the ways in which individuals and groups create their version of perceived reality. It is argued by social constructionists that truth is the result of human choices rather than laws resulting from divine will or nature. By this, they aim to unsettle the thought that ideas or events may be accepted as “natural,” “neutral,” and “true.” They point to how ideas and events are inventions of particular cultures and societies. They reason that cultural elites are not alone in defining what is real: Ordinary individuals also have ideas or produce bodies of knowledge that define reality.

Postmodern theory shares with social constructivism an intense distrust toward truth claims being