

Can There Be Just One Trust?  
A Cross-Disciplinary Identification Of Trust  
Definitions And Measurement

by

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of trust research, identifying common foundations and multiple constellations of 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. Second, it explains why trust should be measured. Third, it deals with the operationalization and measurement of trust in different disciplines. Fourth, it answers the question is one trust definition or measurement appropriate? Finally, it briefly concludes with recommendations for future research.

## Introduction

An organization's ability to develop trusting relationships is an increasingly important source of competitive advantage (Barney & Hansen, 1994). This requires organizations, and the individuals they are comprised of, to be both trustworthy and trusting. Advantages accrue to firms that enjoy both an internal and an external climate of trust (Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone, 1998)

Although scholars have expressed a great deal of interest in trust, its study has remained problematic for several reasons. First, there are problems with the lack of one definition for trust itself. Essentially, there is not an agreed upon definition of trust (Hardin, 2000; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Möllering, Bachmann, & Lee, 2004; Perry & Mankin, 2004). Instead, there are many definitions of trust (see Table 1). Second, trust is often conceptualized in many different ways and subsequently measured differently as well.

The diversity within the concept of trust seems to be disconcerting for many scholars (e.g., Hosmer, 1995, Lewicki & Bunker, 1995; McAllister, 1995; Shapiro, 1987; Zucker, 1986). For instance, Hosmer laments "there appears to be widespread agreement on the importance of trust in human conduct, but unfortunately there also appears to be equally widespread lack of agreement on a suitable definition of the construct" (p. 380). McAllister agrees that although trust's importance has been acknowledged, the matter of how it develops and functions has received little systematic theoretical attention. Lewicki and Bunker add that, despite the level of interest and range of viewpoints in the area of trust, "there has been remarkably little effort to integrate these different perspectives or articulate the key role that trust plays in critical social

processes” (p. 135). Overall, this is what led Shapiro (1987) to state that the attention scholars have given has resulted in “a confusing potpourri of definitions applied to a host of units and levels of analysis” (p. 624).

The purpose of this study is to review the multi-disciplinary research on trust in order to: identify common foundations and multiple constellations of trust. In doing so, this 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. Second, it explains why trust should be measured. Third, it deals with the operationalization and measurement of trust in different disciplines. Fourth, it answers the question is one trust definition or measurement appropriate? Finally, it briefly concludes with recommendations for future research.

### **Conceptual Background**

According to Möllering et al., (2004), the word “trust” dates back to the 13th century and has its roots in expressions symbolizing faithfulness and loyalty, but the concept of trust is probably as old as the earliest forms of human association. Goffman’s (1963) studies on everyday social interaction, described trust as an essential or habitual role in maintaining social processes. Furthermore, Erikson (1965) argued that learning to trust is critical in childhood development, emphasizing a deep psychological embeddedness of trust.

Aside from its importance throughout history, trust has received relatively little research attention until recently (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). Specifically, trust has received a great deal of attention from scholars in several disciplines such as **psychology** (e.g., Andaleeb, 1992; Larzelere & Huston, 1980; Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985), **management** (e.g., Garbarino & Johnson 1999; Mayer et al., 1995; McAllister, 1995; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Perry & Mankin, 2004; Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, & Cesaria, 2003), **marketing** (e.g., Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman, & Yago-Guillin, 2003; Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Schurr & Ozanne, 1985), **organizational behavior** (e.g., Blomqvist & Stahle, 2000; Cummings & Bromiley, 1996; Möllering et al., 2004; Zaheer et al., 1998; Zucker, 1986), and **public relations** (e.g., Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; J. E. Grunig, L. A. Grunig, & Ehling, 1992; J. E. Grunig & Huang, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

Although this multi-disciplinary interest has added richness to the construct, such a diversity of scholarship makes it difficult to integrate the various perspectives on trust and find a consensus on its nature. Not only do different scholars address trust from different definitions, approaches, and methods, but also they have expressed inevitable differences of opinion over its nature. This is especially evident when the reasons for studying trust are reviewed.

### **Why Measure Trust?**

Most researchers conclude that trust is important in a range of organizational activities and processes such as team work, leadership, goal setting, performance appraisal, and, in general, cooperative behaviors (e.g., Axelrod, 1984; Gambetta, 1988; Mayer et al., 1995; McAllister, 1995). This is largely because trust has been shown to facilitate a number of positive outcomes for individuals and organizations.

Employee trust in his/her manager has been linked to individual outcomes such as higher job satisfaction, productivity, and higher commitment to the organization (Flaherty & Pappas, 2000). Trust is also linked to organizational outcomes such as higher sales and profits, lower employee turnover (Davis, Schoorman, Mayer, & Tan, 2000), and enabling cooperative behavior (Gambetta, 1988).

Trust is frequently acknowledged as a central construct in the framing and dynamics of managerial relationships (Creed & Miles, 1996) and developing and maintaining trust is seen as especially important to managerial and organizational effectiveness (Davis et al., 2000; McAllister, 1995). Trust in leaders is particularly important for effective functioning teams and organizations where tasks are complex and unstructured, and require high levels of interdependence, cooperation, and information sharing (Creed & Miles, 1996; Zand, 1972).

As Zaheer et al. (1998) argue, that organizational trust has its basis in individuals: it is individual members of organizations, rather than the organizations themselves, who trust. Organization members' trust for specific individuals or organizations will be influenced, in part, by their general propensity to trust (Mayer et al., 1995). Propensity to trust is often viewed as an interpersonal trait, and interpersonal research has found trust to be an integral component of relationships (Larzelere & Huston, 1980).

There is agreement that trust is important in a number of ways, but it is important to note that sometimes, scholars use the term “trust” when they mean other things, which has been problematic to fleshing out the definition (Rousseau et al., 1998).

### **Trust Defined and Measured**

Overall, it can be said that trust is essential in relationships. Due to the dynamic nature of “relationships,” it is no wonder that there is not a catch-all for defining and measuring trust. Instead, research comes from a variety of academic disciplines with a plethora of vantage points. Therefore, the aim of the following section is to bring uniformity to the concept of trust. In doing so, I will provide definitions and examples of measurement for trust in the disciplines of psychology, management, marketing, organizational behavior, and public relations.

It is first important to know the dictionary definition of trust. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, trust is “confidence in or reliance on some quality or attribute of a person or thing, or the truth of a statement.” For each of the studies below, if a definition is provided it is included in Table 1. Additionally, Table 1 highlighting the additional definitions for each of the disciplines. To aid in understanding of trust, a glossary is also provided in Table 2.

### **Psychology**

Researchers from disciplines such as psychology and sociology view trust as one of the most desired qualities in any close relationship, often mentioning it in conjunction with love and commitment. For example, Rempel et al., (1985) called trust a “cornerstone of the ideal relationship” (p. 95) and Larzelere and Huston (1980) referred to trust as an integral feature of human relations.

The studies conducted in psychology are mainly focused on the motivational dimension of the concept. This is related to the attribution that the exchange partner’s behavior (verbal or nonverbal) is guided or motivated by favorable and positive intentions towards the welfare and interests of his/her partner (Andaleeb, 1992). Therefore, this reflects the belief that one does not intend to lie, break promises, or take advantage of another’s vulnerability.

#### ***Rotter (1967)***

In psychology research, the most frequently used definition of trust comes from Rotter (1967). In his definition, trust was conceptualized as a belief, expectancy, or feeling that is

deeply rooted in personality and has its origins in an individual's early psychosocial development. Additionally, Rotter viewed trust as a disposition that would be most predictive in situations where individuals are relatively unfamiliar with one another. He defined trust as a generalized expectation towards other actors, media, and institutions.

Rotter (1967) devised an "Interpersonal Trust Scale" (ITS), which was designed to measure individual predispositions as well as the aggregate level of trust within a population. The ITS was comprised of 25-Likert-type items, such as "Parents usually can be relied upon to keep their promises" and "Most elected public officials are really sincere in their campaign promises" (p.664).

### ***Deutsch (1958)***

The trust concept paper by Deutsch (1958) is also frequently cited. For him, trust was an interpersonal concept that involved uncertainty to the extent that trust refers to expectations with regard to a non-detrimental or desired event. Deutsch built his research on the assumption that trust can be observed from individual behavior and, thus, experimentally measured. He emphasized action and situation variables over attitude and personality where trust, is revealed in prisoner's dilemma-type experiments when agents choose to co-operate instead of competing.

### ***Larzelere and Huston (1980)***

Larzelere and Huston (1980) built on these previous studies to create the Dyadic Trust Scale (DTS). This scale was built to understand interpersonal trust in close relationships. They defined trust as dyadic because they believed "trust exists to the extent that a person believes another person (or persons) to be benevolent and honest" (p. 596). To Larzelere and Huston benevolence is an important component of dyadic trust. Benevolence is described as whether a person is motivated by his or her own desires, or if he or she is motivated by gain in the relationship jointly with the partner. Although the authors began with over 40 items the final DTS was determined to be the following eight-item seven-point Likert-type measurement.

1. My partner is primarily interested in his (her) own welfare.
2. There are times when my partner cannot be trusted.
3. My partner is perfectly honest and truthful with me.
4. I feel that I can trust my partner completely.

5. My partner is truly sincere in his (her) promises.
6. I feel that my partner does not show me enough consideration.
7. My partner treats me fairly and justly.
8. I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me (p.599).

A Google search found this scale to be used at Child Trends “A 26-year-old nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization dedicated to improving the lives of children by conducting research and providing science-based information to improve the decisions, programs, and policies that affect children and their families” (<http://www.childtrends.org>). They use the scale as created by Larzelere and Huston (1980) under the heading “Healthy Marriages Compendium” ([http://www.childtrends.org/Files/21\\_TrustMeasures\\_web.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/Files/21_TrustMeasures_web.pdf)).

## **Management**

In management research, numerous authors suggest that trust is an important element of relationships in business environment (e.g., Garbarino & Johnson 1999; Morgan & Hunt 1994; Perry & Mankin, 2004). Although many of these studies are based on earlier research from psychology, the nature and bases of such relationships may be different in organizations (Mayer et al., 1995).

### ***Zand (1972)***

In management research, specifically, Zand’s (1972) article has been especially influential (Möllering et al., 2004). In particular, Zand described trust as a gradual, self-reinforcing phenomenon. In order to show how trust leads to more trust and distrust to more distrust, Zand used disclosure of information, acceptance of influence, and exercise of control as constructs which have a feedback relationship with trust. Through the use of experimental design, Zand found that it was “useful to conceptualize trust as behavior that conveys appropriate information, permits mutuality of influence, encourages self-control, and avoids abuse of the vulnerability of others” (p. 238).

### ***Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995)***

Another seminal study on trust in management is the Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) article on organizational trust, and it is credited as the most frequently cited article on trust in management (Rousseau et al., 1998). Essentially, Mayer et al. view trust as a continuum,

rather than the trustee being either trustworthy or not trustworthy. They also conceptualized it as a willingness to be vulnerable based on reasoned judgment.

Based on their review of prior literature, they proposed trust to be comprised of three important facets: ability, benevolence, and integrity. Ability is a group of skills, competencies, or characteristics that enable the trustee to have influence within a specific domain. This is similar to competence or perceived expertise. Benevolence is the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good for the trustor, putting to one side his egoistic profit motives, and generally always acting in the interest of the trustor. This suggests the trustee has an attachment to the trustor such as in a mentor/protégé relationship. Integrity involves the trustor's *perception* that the trustee adheres to a set of principles acceptable to the trustor (*italics added*).

By conceptualizing trust as they did, the Mayer et al. study established a model of trust. Through this model they proposed that the levels of trust and perceived risk in the situation would lead to risk taking in the relationship.

### ***McAllister (1995)***

McAllister's (1995) work was also influential. Like Mayer et al. (1995), McAllister believed trust was an interpersonal concept. However, unlike Mayer's unidimensional definition, McAllister argued for two kinds or bases of trust: one grounded in cognitive judgments of another's competence or reliability (referred to as "cognition-based trust"), and another in affective bonds among individuals (referred to as "affect-based trust"). Cognition-based trust is based on the factual knowledge the trustor has of the trustee, while affect-based trust consists of the emotional relationships between people. He found that the formation of cognition-based trust was positively correlated with the formation of affect-based trust and preceded its development. Affect-based trust in turn had a significant impact on need-based monitoring and citizenship behavior, both of which were significantly related to the performance levels of the managers in his study.

McAllister's (1995) findings were based on his theoretical framework which incorporated the impact of trust formation and monitoring on performance in his study where he measured perceptions between colleagues at work. His new measure to assess affect- and cognition-based trust levels was developed and consisted of 11 Likert-type items, 6 assessing levels of cognition-based trust, and 5 assessing affect-based trust. The following statements (along with others

pertaining to behavior and performance) required respondents to indicate their agreement with various statements about a specific peer at work.

#### Affect-based trust

1. We have a sharing relationship. We can both freely share our ideas, feelings, and hopes.
2. I can talk freely to this individual about difficulties I am having at work and know that (s)he will want to listen.
3. We would both feel a sense of loss if one of us was transferred and we could no longer work together.
4. If I shared my problems with this person, I know (s)he would respond constructively and caringly.
5. I would have to say that we have both made considerable emotional investments in our working relationship.

#### Cognition-based trust

1. This person approaches his/her job with professionalism and dedication.
2. Given this person's track record, I see no reason to doubt his/her competence and preparation for the job.
3. I can rely on this person not to make my job more difficult by careless work.
4. Most people, even those who aren't close friends of this individual, trust and respect him/her as a coworker.
5. Other work associates of mine who must interact with this individual consider him/her to be trustworthy.
6. If people knew more about this individual and his/her background, they would be more concerned and monitor his/her performance more closely. [reverse coded] (p. 56).

#### ***Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, and Cesaria (2003)***

*Measuring Organizational Trust*, a recent research sponsored by the IABC Research Foundation and conducted by Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, and Cesaria (2003) discusses the importance of organizational trust and provides a tool to measure trust in organizations. Their scale, The Organizational Trust Index (OTI) was based on trust being composed of five dimensions: (1) competence (effectiveness of the organization as a whole), (2) openness and honesty (amount, accuracy, sincerity, and appropriateness of information), (3) concern for employees (sincere efforts to understand feelings), (4) reliability (consistent and dependable

actions), and (5) identification (shared goals, values, norms, and beliefs). The scales 29 items are based on a one to five (from very little to very great). Sample items include: “I can tell my immediate supervisor when things are going wrong; I am free to disagree with my immediate supervisor; and Top management is concerned about employees’ well being” (p. 12-13).

This study is available online for a fee through IABC for both members and non-members (see <http://store.yahoo.com/iabcstore/measortrus.html>). Along with providing the scale, they also provide an easy scoring system, a comparison of your organization to an average score for 53 organizations, along with tips on analyzing the data and providing feedback.

## **Marketing**

Marketing literature has repeatedly shown that trust is a crucial factor in the shift from discrete market transactions to continuous exchange relationships (Dwyer et al., 1987). In 1987, Dwyer et al. stated, “trust deserves priority attention” (p. 28). Trust has thus a central role in the development of relationship marketing, which refers to all activities intended to establishing, developing, and maintaining exchange relationships with clients (Morgan and Hunt 1994).

### ***Schurr and Ozanne (1985)***

Schurr and Ozanne (1985) are credited for bringing the concept of trust into management literature (Dwyer et al., 1987). They hypothesized that trust was important in exchange relationships (marketing) because it leads to constructive dialogue and cooperative problem-solving. Through the use of experimental design, this study’s strength was based on an enhanced understanding of how trust and bargaining influence buyer-seller interaction.

### ***Morgan and Hunt (1994)***

According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), commitment and trust are critical to any discussion of business relationships because they encourage exchange partners to work at preserving the relationship and achieve mutual gains. They intended communication as a determinant of trust when they combined past scales to create the Key Mediating Variable (KMV) model of relationship marketing. Among others, they adapted Larzelere and Huston’s (1980) Dyadic Trust Scale, Meyer and Allen’s (1984) Continuance Commitment Scale, and the organizational commitment scales of Meyer and Allen (1984) and Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979). Examples of their questions pertaining directly to trust include: “In our relationship, my

major supplier cannot be trusted at times; In our relationship, my major supplier can be counted on to do what is right; and In our relationship, my major supplier has high integrity” (p. 35).

***Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman, and Yago-Guillin (2003)***

Understanding a consumer-brand relationship also requires an analysis of the consumer’s trust in the brand. This idea is well illustrated by the realities of today’s current brand practices and how brand managers embrace this concept when defining their brands. Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman, and Yago-Guillin (2003) define brand trust as “the confident expectations of the brand’s reliability and intentions in situations entailing risk to the consumer” (p. 37). From this definition, and a review of marketing and brand literature and interviews, the authors establish the Brand Trust Scale (BTS). Because they believed that brand trust evolves from past experience and not only from the last buying and consumption episode, they measured overall satisfaction with the following statements.

Reliability items description

1. [X] is a brand name that meets my expectations
2. I feel confidence in [X] brand name
3. [X] is a brand name that never disappoints me
4. [X] brand name guarantees satisfaction

Intentions items description

1. [X] brand name would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns
  2. I could rely on [X] brand name to solve the problem
  3. [X] brand name would make any effort to satisfy me
  4. [X] brand name would compensate me in some way for the problem with the [product]
- (p. 41)

**Organizational**

In organizational relationships, the basis of trust must be extended beyond personal and individual relationships (Blomqvist & Stahle, 2000). It is important to note that many scholars believe that interpersonal and inter-organizational trusts are related but different constructs (e.g., Blomqvist & Stahle, 2000; Creed & Miles, 1996; Möllering et al., 2004; Zaheer et al., 1998). The link between personal and organizational trust has not been clear. It would seem logical to say that it is always the people and not organizations that trust each other. Exchanges between

firms are exchanges between individuals or small groups of individuals (Barney & Hansen, 1994; Zaheer et al., 1998). Therefore, there is both interpersonal and inter-organizational trust, but it is always people in the organizations that trust.

### ***Zucker (1986)***

Zucker's (1986) research has been considered a milestone in organizational research (Möllering et al., 2004). This is because through her review of historical research, she contributed a typology of trust according to the sources from which trust could be produced. She argued that "process-based trust" and "characteristic-based trust" (both person-specific) have historically been supplemented by "institutional-based trust." The process-based trust is tied to expected or past exchanges, e.g. reputation. Characteristic-based trust is tied to a person and based on ethnicity, culture, and background. Institutional-based trust is tied to formal societal structures depending on firm-specific or individual and intermediary attributes.

Zucker explained that much of the personal-based trust of the 1700s and early 1800s in the United States was displaced in the late 1800s because of industrial formation and due to social and geographic changes the population became much more heterogeneous. Hence, it became necessary for a greater reliance on institutional-based trust.

### ***Cummings and Bromiley (1996)***

Cummings and Bromiley (1996) looked at trust more broadly within the organization. They stated that a person trusts a group when that person believes that the group "(a) makes a good-faith effort to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit or implicit, (b) is honest in whatever negotiations preceded such commitments, and (c) does not take excessive advantage of another even when the opportunity is available" (p. 303). Overall, they defined organizational trust as the belief that an organization will carry through on its obligations.

Cummings and Bromiley (1996) designed their scale Organizational Trust Inventory (OTI) to be used throughout organizations. This original scale included 62 items; however their condensed version of the scale [Organizational Trust Inventory – Short Form (OTI–SF)] is more common. The OTI–SF is a 12-item Likert-type scale geared toward assessing three dimensions of trust, including the reliability, honesty, and good faith of the other party with respect to fulfilling their commitments.

1. We think the people in \_\_\_\_ tell the truth in negotiations
2. We think that \_\_\_\_ meets its negotiated obligations to our department

3. In our opinion, \_\_\_\_ is reliable
4. We think that the people in \_\_\_\_ succeed by stepping on other people [reverse coded]
5. We feel that \_\_\_\_ tries to get the upper hand [reverse coded]
6. We think that \_\_\_\_ takes advantage of our problems [reverse coded]
7. We feel that \_\_\_\_ negotiates with us honestly
8. We feel that \_\_\_\_ will keep its word
9. We think \_\_\_\_ does not mislead us
10. We feel that \_\_\_\_ tries to get out of its commitments [reverse coded]
11. We feel that \_\_\_\_ negotiates joint expectations fairly
12. We feel that \_\_\_\_ takes advantage of people who are vulnerable [reverse coded]

***Zaheer, McEvily, and Perrone (1998)***

Unlike Cummings and Bromiley's (1996) broad organizational study, Zaheer, McEvily, and Perrone (1998) studied interorganizational relationships. They defined the term interorganizational trust as "the extent of trust placed in the partner organization by the members of a focal organization" (p. 143). Interorganizational trust (also known as external trust) can enhance organizational relationships in a variety of contexts, including firm/client, marketing channels, joint ventures, and internal cooperative alliances (Huff & Kelley, 2003).

Zaheer et al. developed a scale using a combination of previous scales supplemented with new items. Their scale included items such as: "Supplier X has always been evenhanded in its negotiations with us; My contact person is trustworthy; and I would feel a sense of betrayal if my contact person's performance is below my expectations" (p. 157). They found that interpersonal and interorganizational trust operate quite differently implying that the effects of trust in the interorganizational context are distinct at the individual and organizational levels of analysis.

**Public Relations**

In 2003, a coalition of organizations representing 50,000 professional communicators from the Public Relations Coalition challenged Corporate America to, among other things, make trust a fundamental precept of corporate governance. The following is the Institute for Public Relations Measurement Commission's proposed guidelines for measuring trust.

Overall, they state that trust is a multi-dimensional, multi-level, culturally-rooted, communication based, and dynamic concept. It includes the dimensions of competence,

integrity, dependability/reliability, openness/honesty, vulnerability, concern, identification, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality. It is also important to note that they found trust to include an exchange relationship (where one party provides benefits to the other because it expects to receive something of comparable value) and a communal relationship (where parties provide benefits to each other because they are concerned for the other's welfare – even when nothing is received in return).

Although a full measurement scale for the multi-dimensionality of trust is provided, the following items specifically measure the trust dimensions of integrity, competence, and dependability.

1. This organization treats people like me fairly and justly. (Integrity)
2. Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me. (Integrity).
3. Sound principles seem to guide this organization's behavior. (Integrity)
4. This organization does not mislead people like me. (Integrity)
5. This organization can be relied on to keep its promises. (Dependability)
6. I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions. (Dependability)
7. I am very willing to let this organization make decisions for people like me. (Dependability)
8. I think it is important to watch this organization closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me. (Dependability) [reverse coded]
9. I feel very confident about this organization's skills. (Competence)
10. This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do. (Competence)
11. This organization is known to be successful at the things it tries to do. (Competence)

This scale was based on the Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations (J. E. Grunig & Hon, 1999). In the relationship study, the concept of trust emerged as “One party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party. There are three dimensions to trust: *integrity*: the belief that an organization is fair and just ... *dependability*: the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do ... and, *competence*: the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do” (p. 3). Along with this, many previous studies identified trust as a critical public relations component (e.g., Broom et al., 1997; J. E.

Grunig, L. A. Grunig, & Ehling, 1992; J. E. Grunig & Huang, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

### **Is One Trust Appropriate?**

After identifying many definitions and measurements of trust, it is important to ask: If one researcher defines trust in a widely different way from another researcher, how can the theoretical formulations and the empirical results of the researchers build on each other?

The divergence of narrow trust definitions provides motivation for improving the theoretical basis of the study of trust. If there are really several types of trust, what are they, and how do they fit together? The primary challenge, then, is to synthesize and define carefully the various types of trust and to demonstrate how they differ from, and relate to, each other. Note that a common meaning of trust does not imply that all research should operationalize trust the same, leading to conflicting measurement. As noted previously, some researchers found that interorganizational and interpersonal trust are different concepts because the focal object is different (e.g., Creed & Miles, 1996; Zaheer et al., 1998). Based on this, there may be one trust that is applied differently interorganizationally and interpersonally, and, therefore, requiring separate measurements.

Additionally, from an empirical standpoint it does not appear that a widely accepted and used measurement instrument for trust has emerged. Rather, it seems to be the case that different researchers use different measurement instruments to meet their specific purpose, so many measurement instruments are used.

### **Conclusion**

The question “Do you trust them?” must be qualified: “trust them to do what, and how do you define trust?” Multiple constellations of trust exist. These above-mentioned considerations about the multiple concepts of trust lead to the conclusion that trust is a notoriously elusive construct when it comes to operationalization. According to Rousseau et al. (1998), researchers are faced with a dilemma: if they want to increase the validity of their own operationalization of trust in empirical settings, the operationalization may become too idiosyncratic to enable generalizations or transfers to other contexts. Nevertheless, to avoid

reinventing the wheel, it is useful to understand how other researchers have operationalized trust, before devising tailored instruments for one's own empirical setting.

This research can serve as the first step in aiding scholars and practitioners in identifying existing studies on trust; however, much more needs to be done. Therefore, future research should begin with a systematic review of the research on trust comparing doth definitions and methodologies. Until this is completed, there is no way to know how consolidated or fragmented the literature is, the extent to which research is using or building on existing social instruments versus devising entirely new and different scales, and the overall quality of the measures being used.

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**Table 1 -  
Definitions of Trust**

<b>Psychology &amp; Sociology</b>	
Deutsch (1958)	“An individual may be said to have trust in the occurrence of an event if he expects its occurrence and his expectation leads to behavior which he perceives to have greater negative motivational consequences if the expectation is not confirmed than positive motivational consequences if it is confirmed” (p. 265).
Rotter (1967 & 1980)	“A generalized expectancy held by an individual that the word, promise, oral or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon” (p.651).
Griffin (1967)	“The reliance upon the behavior of a person in order to achieve a desired but uncertain objective in a risky situation” (p. 105).
Deutsch (1973)	“The confidence that one will find what is desired from another, rather than what is feared” (p. 161).
Larzelere & Huston (1980)	“Trust exists to the extent that a person believes another person (or persons) to be benevolent and honest” (p. 596).
Cook & Wall (1980)	“The extent to which one is willing to ascribe good intentions to and have confidence in the words and actions of other people” (p. 39).
Pruitt & Carnevale (1993)	“The expectation that the other party will cooperate in the future” (p. 133).
<b>Management</b>	
Zand (1972)	“Actions that (a) increase one’s vulnerability, (b) to another whose behavior is not under one’s control, (c) in a situation in which the penalty (disutility) one suffers if the other abuses that vulnerability is greater than the benefit (utility) one gains if the other does not abuse that vulnerability” (p.230).
Gulbert & McDonough (1986)	“Trust pertains to whether or not one individual is able to value what another is up to and demonstrate respect for him or her particularly when the individual’s need and those of the person taking the action momentarily compete” (p.175).
Gambetta (1988)	“The probability that a person with whom we are in contact will perform an action that is beneficial or at least not detrimental is high enough for us to consider engaging in some form of cooperation with him” (p. 217).
Mishra & Morrissey (1990)	“One party’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is (a) competent, (b) open, (c) concerned, and (d) reliable”(p. 265).
Carnevale & Weschler (1992)	“The expectation of ethical, fair, and non-threatening behavior, and concerns for the rights of others” (p. 473).
Sabel (1993)	“The mutual confidence that no party to an exchange will exploit the other’s vulnerability” (p. 1133).
Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman (1995)	“The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other party will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (p. 712).
McAllister (1995)	“The extent to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another” (p.25).

Fukuyama (1995)	“The expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behavior, based on commonly shared norms on the part of other members of that community” (p. 26).
Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer (1998)	“Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviors of another” (p. 395).
Doney, Cannon, & Mullen (1998)	“A willingness to rely on another party and to take action in circumstances where such action makes one vulnerable to the other party” (p. 604).
Bhattacharya, Devinney, & Pillutla (1998)	“Trust is an expectancy of positive (or nonnegative) outcomes that one can receive based on the expected action of another party in an interaction characterized by uncertainty” (p. 462).
Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, & Cesaria (2003)	“The organization’s willingness, based upon its culture and communication behaviors in relationships and transactions, to be appropriately vulnerable based on the belief that another individual, group, or organization is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable, and identified with common goals, norms, and values” (p. 4).
<b>Marketing</b>	
Anderson & Narus (1990)	“The firm’s belief that another company will perform actions that will result in positive outcomes for the firm as well as not take unexpected actions that result in negative outcomes” (p. 45).
Moorman, Deshpande, & Zaltman (1993)	“A willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence” (p. 23).
Morgan & Hunt (1994)	“When one party has confidence in an exchange partner’s reliability and integrity” (p. 23).
Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman, & Yague-Guillen (2003)	“Feeling of security held by the consumer in his/her interaction with the brand, that it is based on the perceptions that the brand is reliable and responsible for the interests and welfare of the consumer” (p. 31).
<b>Organizational Behavior</b>	
Zucker (1986)	“A set of expectations shared by all those involved in an exchange” (p.54).
Blomqvist & Stahle (2000)	“An actor’s expectation of the other party’s competence, goodwill and behavior” (p. 4).
Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone (1998)	“The expectation that an actor (1) can be relied on to fulfill obligations, (2) will behave in a predictable manner, and (3) will act and negotiate fairly when the possibility for opportunism is present” (p. 143).
Sitkin & Roth (1993)	“A belief in a person’s competence to perform a specific task under specific circumstances” (p. 373).
<b>Public Relations</b>	
Broom, Casey & Ritchey (1997)	“Predictability that one party will behave in a specific and desired way” (p. 98).
Heath, Seshadri & Lee (1998)	“Perceived competence, objectivity, fairness, consistency, goodwill, confidence, and the prediction that others will act supportively rather than exploitatively” (p. 40).
Ledingham & Bruning (1998)	“A feeling that those in the relationship can rely on each other” (p.58).
Grunig & Hon (1999)	“One party’s level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party”(p. 3).

\* Note – Some definitions have been applied in multiple disciplines; the table is created based on initial application of the definition.

**Table 2**  
**Trust Glossary**

*The following is a list of terms that emerged from the literature review on trust. The researcher acknowledges that these terms can have many definitions, however, the following definitions are specific to the concept of trust.*

<b>Ability</b>	A group of skills, competencies, or characteristics that enable the trustee to have influence within a specific domain (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995).
<b>Accessibility</b>	Being mentally open and receptive to the giving and accepting of ideas (Butler, 1991).
<b>Affect-based</b>	Trust that consists of the emotional relationships between people (McAllister, 1995).
<b>Beliefs</b>	Trust is believed to be grounded in a belief in the integrity and reliability of the other person (Rotter, 1967).
<b>Benevolence</b>	The extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good for the trustor, putting to one side his egoistic profit motives, and generally always acting in the interest of the trustor (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995).
<b>Cognition-based</b>	Trust that is based on the factual knowledge the trustor has of the trustee (McAllister, 1995).
<b>Competence</b>	The belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do (J. E. Grunig & Hon, 1999).
<b>Consistency</b>	People desire consistency – reliability, predictability, and good judgment (Butler, 1991).
<b>Confidence</b>	Trust has been equated to confidence in another party's ability and intentions (Deutsch, 1960).
<b>Credibility</b>	Suggests that credible threats of punishment and credible promises are important factors (Doney & Cannon, 1997).
<b>Dependability</b>	The belief that an organization/person will do what it says it will do (J. E. Grunig & Hon, 1999).
<b>Dispositional</b>	A person has dispositional trust if s/he has a consistent tendency to trust across a broad spectrum of situations and persons (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998).
<b>Discreetness</b>	Keeping confidences (Gabarro, 1978).
<b>Distrust</b>	A belief that a person's values or motives will lead them to approach all situations in an unacceptable manner (Sitkin & Roth 1993).
<b>Dyadic trust</b>	Refers specifically to the benevolence and honesty of one toward the individual making the judgment (Larzelere & Huston, 1980).
<b>Expectancy</b>	Expectation that specific others will reciprocate trusting behavior. Both an expectation of the partner's trustworthiness, and the behavioral intention to act on that expectation, must be present for trust to exist. (Kramer & Tyler, 1995).
<b>Honesty</b>	Extent one can believe his/her partner when s/he tells me about his/her future intentions (Larzelere & Huston, 1980).
<b>Implicit trust</b>	There is quite high a probability that this person will perform actions that will result in positive, or at least non-negative, outcomes for his/her exchange or relational partner (Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman & Yago-Guillin, 2003).
<b>Integrity</b>	Involves the trustor's <i>perception</i> that the trustee adheres to a set of principles acceptable to the trustor (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995).
<b>Interorganizational</b>	The extent of trust placed in the partner organization by the members of a focal organization (Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone, 1998).

<b>Interpersonal</b>	One party's willingness to depend on the other party with a feeling of relative security even though negative consequences are possible (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998).
<b>Loyalty</b>	Having motives for protecting and making the target person look good (Butler, 1991).
<b>Openness</b>	Amount, accuracy, sincerity, and appropriateness of information (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, & Cesaria, 2003).
<b>Predictability</b>	Acting and making decisions consistently, in such a way as to prevent others' anxiety caused by the unexpected (Butler, 1991).
<b>Reliability</b>	Consistent and dependable actions (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, & Cesaria, 2003).
<b>Situational</b>	The conscious regulation of one's dependence on another that will vary with the task, the situation, and the referent person (Zand, 1972).
<b>Trustee</b>	One to which trust is given (Raimondo, 2000).
<b>Trustor</b>	One which gives trust (Raimondo, 2000).
<b>Trustworthiness</b>	Entails conditions that lets one party to trust another (Larzelere & Huston, 1980).
<b>Uncertainty</b>	The psychological state of doubt about what current events mean or what future events are likely to occur (Watson, 2004). Some scholars believe that trust requires uncertainty (Deutsch, 1958).