TRUST DEVELOPMENT IN VIRTUAL TEAMS: AN INVESTIGATION OF LEADER-MEMBER SALES TEAM DYADS

by

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Abstract

In recent decades trust has become a major field within management and organisational studies. Researchers have focused on a range or inter- and intra-organisational trust relationships, with the manager-employee dyad identified as a particularly important trust relationship. However, much of the extant research is unidirectional, concerned with employees' trust in managers rather than seeking both parties' perspectives. Furthermore, research has been largely focused within traditional co-located contexts, despite the continued growth of Virtual Teams (VTs).

Guided by a critical realist philosophy, this thesis focuses on the underlying generative mechanisms which influence leader-member trust in virtual sales teams. Utilising a case study strategy, research was conducted within three global technology companies. Data were collected through 33 in-depth interviews, conducted across twenty dyads and eleven teams.

Thematic analysis of the data revealed four key themes and informed the development of a new framework for VT leader-member trust: Firstly, from a behavioural perspective, trusted virtual leaders display many of the characteristics of transformational leaders, being highly 'member centric' in their leadership style and demonstrating trust through autonomy, respect and openness. Trusted members demonstrate both reliability and openness. Leaders strongly believe that virtual leadership is a unique form of leadership and that a greater effort is required, especially when it comes to remote members of hybrid teams.

Secondly, a range of dyadic mechanisms influence VT leader-member trust. High trust relationships are characterized by mutual benevolence, and openness, felt trust, connection, alignment of expectations and mutual reliability. Communication plays an important role and dyad members must go beyond the 'agenda-focused' nature of virtual communications in order to build connection and trust. Virtual leaders need to be able to utilise a variety of communication tools to drive clarity and to make themselves available to support members, creating a sense of perceived proximity, while members must also be proficient communicators to ensure that their performance and impact is visible. Face to face communication is extremely beneficial and can have a transformational impact on relationships.

Thirdly, extra-dyadic mechanisms such as organisational supports, team structures and third parties influence trust levels in variety of ways; and fourthly, personal mechanisms such as trusting disposition, experience and values can have both a positive and negative impact on leader-member trust.

In presenting a new framework for VT leader-member trust, informed by field research with both VT leaders and members, this research makes a significant contribution to the trust and VT literatures and provides guidance to organisational actors seeking to build trust in virtual dyads. Moreover, this research reveals that while trust building in virtual environments requires a more conscious effort, trust is not only possible in virtual leader-member dyads, it can be stronger than in co-located relationships.

Dedication

To my old man:

…"I never will forget him,
For he made me what I am.
Though he may be gone,
Memories linger on,
And I miss him, the old man…"

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List of abbreviations

F2F: Face to Face

L&D: Learning and Development

LMX: Leader-Member Exchange

VC: Video Conference

VT: Virtual Team

HR: Human Resources

OCB: Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THESIS

1.1 Introduction

The volume of research on trust has grown significantly in recent decades, particularly within organisational studies where it has moved from being a ‘bit player to centre stage’ (Kramer, 1999, p.594) and to being a major field in the domain of management (Bachmann and Zaheer, 2006). This increased interest has no doubt been influenced by empirical research which has identified a range of benefits of high trust within organisations, including: improved collaboration (Zak, 2017); extra effort (Mayer and Gavin, 2005), enhanced performance (Colquitt, Scott and LePine, 2007); improvements in sales, profits and employee turnover (Davis *et al.,* 2000); heightened motivation (Heavey *et al.,* 2011); improved communication (Roberts and O’Reilly, 1974) and increases in both affective commitment (Colquitt, Scott and LePine, 2007) and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Walumbwa *et al.,* 2011).

While the precise nature of trust was contested for many years (Dietz and Den Hartog, 2006), definitions now coalesce around a number of characteristics, including the willingness to be vulnerable to risk, in a situation of interdependence, on the basis of positive expectations (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Cummings and Bromiley, 1996; Rousseau *et al.,* 1998; Gillespie, 2003; Bromiley and Harris, 2006). Trust can be considered as an attitude or psychological state which is manifest in trusting behaviour and traditional trust models postulate that trust is primarily influenced by perceived trustworthiness of the trustee and one’s own propensity to trust.

Studies of intraorganisational trust have focused on trust between employees and: the organisation, other employees, senior leaders and (line) managers (Siebert *et al.*, 2015). It has been argued that the employee-manager relationship is the strongest, and most resilient intra-organisational trust relationship (Hope-Hailey, Searle and Dietz, 2012) and that trust is particularly important within this relationship (Ferris *et al.,* 2009; Jawahar, Stone and Kluemper, 2019).

While there has been considerable attention paid to the employee-manager relationship (Mushonga, 2018) most of this work has focused on employees' trust in their managers (Martin *et al.,* 2016), treating trust as unidirectional rather than reciprocal (Nienaber *et al.,* 2015; Jawahar, Stone and Kluemper, 2019). This is problematic as studies suggest that trust levels between dyad members are not always mutual (Korsgaard, Brower and Lester, 2015) and that the benefits of trust are only realized when the manager and employee trust each other (De Jong and Dirks, 2012). While employee perspectives are important, there is a lack of research on trust in employees (Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012) and further research is needed to understand the antecedents influencing managers' trust in employees (Jawahar, Stone and Kluemper, 2019) and to identify the wider range of antecedents which can influence trust development within this relationship.

Furthermore, much of the extant research on trust has been conducted in co-located work settings and researchers have called for further research into the process through which trust develops over time and in different contexts (Li, 2011; van der Werff and Buckley, 2017). While there have been many changes in the work context in recent years, one of the most significant developments is the growth in virtual working and in particular the use of virtual teams (VTs), defined in this study as '*a team whose members might be culturally, temporarily and/or geographically dispersed and who collaborate primarily via communication and information technologies in order to accomplish specific goals'.*

VTs have grown in popularity in recent years, to the extent that they are now ubiquitous (Maes and Weldy, 2018; RW3 Culture Wizard, 2018; Hacker *et al.,* 2019) and regarded as the new normal (Dennis, Overholt and Vickers, 2014). Most recently, Covid19 has led to an exponential growth in virtual working. However, despite the potential benefits associated with VTs, the literature suggests that these teams often fail to meet their potential (Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000; Greenberg, Greenberg and Antonucci, 2007; Savolainen, 2014).

Trust has been heralded as an essential ingredient of VT success (Handy, 1995; Lipnack and Stamps, 1997; Kanawattanachai and Yoo, 2002; Zaccaro and Bader, 2003; Daim *et al.,* 2012; Denis, Overholt and Vickers, 2014; Derven, 2016; Romeike, Nienaber and Schewe, 2016) and to VT leadership effectiveness (Pauleen, 2003; Hacker *et al.*, 2019) and is one of the most studied variables in the VT literature (Gilson *et al.,* 2015). However, organisations have cited relationship development and trust building in virtual relationships as a significant challenge (Witchalls, 2009; Kimble, 2011; RW3, 2012; Jawadi et al., 2013; Dennis, Overholt and Vickers, 2014; Costa, Fulmer and Anderson, 2018).

Research into trust in VTs has been largely focused at the team member level. There has been comparatively little focus on trust development in manager-employee relationships (also referred to as leader-member dyads in the VT literature), especially from a leader perspective (Brower *et al.,* 2009; Turesky, Smith and Turesky; 2020). Specific research into leader-member trust development in VTs is warranted as previous research has suggested that different antecedents influence this relationship when compared to peer relationships (Gillespie, 2003; Turesky, Smith and Turesky; 2020).

Furthermore, much of the research on trust in VTs has been conducted in simulated settings with college students (e.g. Iacono and Weisband, 1997; Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Piccoli and Ives, 2003; Wilson, Straus and McEvily, 2006; Robert, Dennis and Hung, 2009; Chen *et al.,* 2011) whilst relatively few studies have been conducted in field settings. This has prompted calls for research which is less reliant on student teams (Hacker *et al.,* 2019) such as research in organisational settings (Kanawattanachai and Yoo 2002; Martins *et al.,* 2004; Krebs, Hobman and Bordia, 2006) in order to advance the literature.

This study addresses many of the aforementioned issues. Firstly, it answers calls for research into trust building in dyads. Secondly, it strengthens understanding of trust formation in a non-traditional context, namely virtual teams. Finally, it takes a bi-directional approach, focusing on both the leader and member perspectives, a focus which has to date been neglected in the trust/virtual teams literature.

The aim of this study is to explain how trust is built and maintained between leaders and members of virtual sales teams (VSTs). Virtual sales teams are increasingly prevalent in organisations (Badrinarayanan, Madhavaram and Granot, 2011) and the sales manager-salesperson dyad can profoundly influence organisational performance (Lagace, 1991; Yammarino, 1997). Furthermore, trust has been identified as important to the effective functioning of this relationship (Flaherty and Pappas, 2000) and links have been found between sales members trust in their leaders and sales performance (Milind *et al.,* 2019).

There is considerable variation in terminology when it comes to manager-employee dyad, with some authors referring to supervisors and subordinates, others to leaders and followers, or leaders and members. For the purpose of this study I will refer to managers and employees in chapter two when reviewing the trust literature and then to leaders and members of virtual teams from chapter three onwards in alignment with the terminology used in the respective literatures. In both cases I am referring to trust between an individual employee and their direct line manager. Furthermore, while leadership has been defined in many ways, including as a person, results, position or process (Grint, 2005), this research focuses on a member's relationship with a specific named person (rather than a cadre of leaders) and the antecedents, or generative mechanisms in critical realist language, to trust development in the VT leader-member dyad.

A critical literature review revealed a range of potential generative mechanisms, which shaped the three primary research objectives, these are listed below and discussed in detail in section 4.11. In summary, behaviours (research objective 1) have been identified as the dominant influence on perceptions of trustworthiness and in signalling one's trust in another. However, a range of other mechanisms can influence leader-member trust (research objective 2), including those characteristics of the dyad members (personal), the nature of the relationship (relational), influences external to the relationship (extra-dyadic) and aspects of the relationship context (contextual). Finally, communication has been identified as central to trust development in virtual relationships. The effectiveness of two-way dyadic communication relies not just on both parties' behaviours, but also on the four categories of contextual mechanisms discussed in research objective 2. Given the span of mechanisms influencing communication effectiveness and the centrality of communication to leader-member trust, it is included separately as a third research objective.

Three research objectives were set and addressed:

- Research Objective 1: To determine the specific behaviours which impact upon leader-member trust in a virtual environment.
- Research Objective 2: To establish the personal, relational, extra-relational and contextual mechanisms which affect leader-member trust in a virtual environment.
- Research Objective 3: To explore the effect of communication on VT leader-member trust.

Primary research was conducted in three multinational organisations in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. This focus was taken due to the growth of virtual teams in the high-tech sector (Daim *et al.,* 2012) and because research has found that multinational organisations are almost twice as likely to use virtual teams compared to organisations with domestic operations (SHRM, 2012). A case study strategy was adopted, specifically a multiple-case embedded design (Yin, 2018) involving 33 in-depth interviews.

1.2. Outline of the Thesis

Chapter two presents a critical review of the trust literature. The chapter begins by defining trust and its multi-dimensional nature. The benefits and downsides of trust, as proposed by various authors, are examined before turning to a discussion regarding multiple trust relationships within and between organisations. The focus then turns to trust between managers and employees, along with the variety of generative mechanisms which influence trust development within this relationship. Following a focus on distrust, the chapter concludes with a discussion on a number of trust models proposed in the literature.

Chapter three reviews the literature on virtual teams (VTs), setting the context for the current study. It begins with a brief discussion on the changing nature of work before introducing and defining virtual teams. The proposed benefits of VTs are discussed before the focus turns to challenges and specifically the challenge of trust building. The chapter concludes by highlighting the centrality of trust to virtual team success and the need for research into leader-member trust development.

Chapter four critiques the trust literature, in particular tracing the development of dyadic trust over time and discussing a broad range of generative mechanisms. The chapter begins with a discussion on the lower levels of initial trust (such as deterrence-based trust, calculus-based trust and quick forming swift trust) and the various antecedents which influence these forms of trust. The focus of the chapter then turns to higher levels of trust (knowledge-based trust and identification-based trust) and the characteristics and behaviours which influence such trust. Following discussions on trust and control, and the role of communication in trust development, the chapter concludes by proposing a framework for VT leader-member trust and discussing the primary research objectives.

Chapter five discusses and justifies the chosen research methodology and methods. The chapter begins by providing a rationale for adopting a critical realist research philosophy, before moving to a discussion on retroduction, which involves "moving backwards', asking "what must be true in order to make the event possible" (Easton, 2010:123), the event in this case being trust. The research aim and objectives are discussed before justifying the choice of a case study strategy (multi-case embedded design) and outlining the adopted sampling approach. Data collection and analysis are then discussed before the chapter draws to a close with a consideration of research ethics and how the trustworthiness of the data was ensured.

Chapters six through eight present the findings of the study, with one chapter dedicated to each of the three research objectives. Chapter six discusses leader and member behaviours which signal both trustworthiness and trust in another (research objective one). Chapter seven presents the findings relating to three categories of generative mechanisms which influence VT leader-member trust (research objective two) and chapter eight discusses the role that communication plays in trust development within this dyad (research objective three). In each of the three chapters themes and sub-themes are discussed in the context of the research objectives.

The final chapter begins with the presentation of a new framework for virtual leader-member trust development. The findings are discussed in the context of the extant literature, and after a discussion on the limitations of the study, recommendations are made for organisations and individuals looking to build high trust VT leader-member dyads and for trust researchers looking to contribute to this increasingly important field.

CHAPTER 2: TRUST

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically reviews the trust literature. It begins by defining trust and its multi-dimensionality. The benefits and downsides of trust, as proposed by various authors, are examined before turning to a discussion on the various relationships within and between organisations. The focus then turns to trust between managers and employees, along with the variety of generative mechanisms which influence trust development within this relationship. Following a discussion on distrust, an oft neglected aspect of trust research (Isaeva, Hughes and Saunders, 2019), the chapter concludes by reviewing a number of trust models proposed in the literature.

2.2 Defining Trust

The growth of scholarly interest in trust in recent decades had led to a range of competing conceptualisations and a ‘confusing potpourri of definitions applied to a host of units and levels’ (Shapiro, 1987, p. 625) (see table 2.1). For many years researchers have commented on the elusive nature of a universally accepted definition of trust (Kramer, 1999) and the fact that the precise nature of trust was contested (Dietz and Den Hartog, 2006). The many meanings of trust in common parlance have complicated the scholarly discussion (Bromiley and Harris, 2006) and the conceptual uncertainty means that trust has often been confused with other constructs such as confidence, reliability and faith (Khodyakov, 2007a).

Trust is referred to in the literature as a concept (Lane, 1998; Costa and Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007), as well as a construct (Rotter, 1967; Jones and George, 1998; Lewicki, McAllister and Bies, 1998; Sheppard and Sherman, 1998; Saunders and Thornhill, 2004; Simpson, 2007; Li, 2012) and sometimes both (Siegrist, 2010). The use of both terms to refer to trust is perhaps unsurprising. In writing about the need for construct clarity Suddaby argues that abstract concepts must be translated into ‘crisply defined theoretical constructs’ (2010, p. 347). The same author also refers to constructs as ‘conceptual frames’ (Suddaby, 2010, p.353). For the purpose of this study trust will be referred to as a construct as it fits with MacCorquodale & Meehl’s (1948) view of constructs as conceptual abstractions of phenomena that cannot be directly observed.

The aforementioned lack of clarity may in part be due to the different perspectives and academic disciplines informing empirical studies and theorising on the subject of trust (Dietz and Den Hartog, 2006), each discipline approaching the literature with its own lens and filters (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996; Isaeva *et al.,* 2015). Furthermore, the complex multi-dimensional nature of trust (Jones and George, 1998; Banerjee *et al.,* 2006; Khodyakov, 2007a) has no doubt complicated matters.

However, despite previous difficulties in defining trust, an examination of the various definitions offered in the literature highlights many commonalities - see table 2.1 for a chronological list of trust definitions, which feature in the ensuing discussion. The most cited definition in the literature is the one proposed by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995, p.172) (cited over 2000 times in Google Scholar, May 18th 2020). This definition, built on the earlier work of Gambetta (1988a), defines trust as:

> “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party”

There are many commonalities between Mayer, Davis and Schoorman*'s* (1995) definition and a range of others. Firstly, their definition refers to the expectation that the other party will perform an action which is important to the trustor. The majority of the extant definitions of trust also refer to positive expectations, a belief that the trustee will keep their promises (verbal or otherwise) (Mellinger, 1956; Rotter, 1967; Cook and Wall, 1980; Cummings and Bromiley, 1996; Bromiley and Harris, 2006) or behave in a way which is beneficial to the trustor (Gambetta, 1988; Robinson, 1996; Rousseau *et al.,* 1998) or at least not detrimental (Gambetta, 1988; Cummings and Bromiley, 1996; Robinson, 1996; Bromiley and Harris, 2006; Gargiulo and Ertug, 2006; Van de Ven and Ring, 2006). Positive expectations are also related to perceived honesty, which is common to many definitions of trust (Cummings and Bromiley, 1996; Bromiley and Harris, 2006), or a belief that promises will be honoured. These factors are evidence of integrity (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman*,* 1995) which is discussed in detail in section 2.4**.** Trust is only required when one party relies on such positive outcomes or promise fulfilment (Currall and Inkpen, 2006; Hurley, 2006), i.e. where there is interdependence and the interests of one party cannot be achieved without reliance on the other party (Gillespie, 2003).

Many definitions of trust actually go further than positive expectations, referring to confidence in the actions of others (Mellinger, 1956; McAllister, 1995; Dirks, 2006; Hurley, 2006; Van de Ven & Ring, 2006). However, Gambetta (1988a) refers instead to the probability of a desirable outcome, suggesting the presence of risk, and Li (2012) adds that trust can be differentiated from confidence as the latter does not require a 'leap of faith' (Mollering, 2001). Luhmann (1988) argues that trust implies that there is something to be lost while Mayer*,* Davis and Schoorman (1995) argue that confidence is characterised by a situation in which one does not consider alternatives and can therefore be distinguished from trust. This is the view adopted in this study.

The willingness of one party to be vulnerable or to accept risk is common to many definitions of trust (Rousseau *et al.,* 1998; Whitener *et al.,* 1998), in fact it may be one of the few characteristics common to all trust situations (Johnson-George and Swap, 1982). Trust only occurs in a situation where risk is present and there is a possibility of betrayal (Wheeler, 2018) – it is an intrinsic characteristic of trust that guarantees do not exist (Bachmann, 2006). When a party is unable to behave opportunistically due to situational constraints then trust is not required (Gargiulo and Ertug, 2006). Therefore, risk creates the opportunity for trust (Rousseau *et al.,* 1998) - there is simply no trust without risk.

It is important to note that trust ('willingness' to be vulnerable) does not actually involve risk taking (Mayer*,* Davis and Schoorman*,* 1995). Trust is an attitude, held by one person towards another (Robinson, 1996), or a psychological state (Rousseau *et al.,* 1998). It is the behavioural manifestation of this trust that creates risk (Mayer*,* Davis and Schoorman, 1995). It is only through actually making oneself vulnerable, that risk occurs (Dietz *et al.,* 2010). The willingness to take a risk may be divided into two resulting behavioural types 'reliance' related behaviours (relying on another's skills, knowledge, judgements or actions, including delegating and giving autonomy) and 'disclosure' related behaviours (sharing work or personal information of a sensitive nature) (Gillespie, 2003). Demonstration of such trusting behaviours can in turn lead others to reciprocate (Luhmann, 1979) thus further strengthening the relationship.

Cooperation is often referred to as a possible outcome of trust (Gambetta, 1988a) and is central to the rational-choice view of trust, whereby cooperation signifies trust and competition signifies distrust (Axelrod, 1984). However, it is argued that trust is not a necessary condition of cooperation, as cooperation does not always put a party at risk (Kee and Knox, 1970; Mayer*,* Davis and Schoorman, 1995).

The inability to monitor or control the other party, referred to by Mayer*,* Davis and Schoorman (1995), is common to other definitions (Gambetta, 1990; Gargiulo and Ertug, 2006). The relationship between trust and control is a major talking point in the literature and two opposing views have emerged, with some researchers proposing trust and control as substitutes (Williamson, 1975, Cummings & Bromiley, 1996, Inkpen & Currall, 1997; Schoorman, Mayer and Davis, 2007) suggesting an antithetical relationship, and others arguing that trust and control are complementary (Sitkin and Roth, 1993; Leifer and Mills, 1996; Poppo and Zenger, 2002) and can be used together. This issue is discussed in detail in section 4.8.

Table 2.1. provides a chronological list of the aforementioned definitions of trust. These include some of the earliest definitions of trust (Mellinger, 1956; Rotter, 1967), along with the most cited definitions (Mayer*,* Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Rousseau, *et al.,* 1998) and those which inspired the most cited (for instance Mayer*,* Davis and Schoorman, 1995 built on Gambetta, 1988). The other definitions are included to demonstrate commonality of features (positive expectations, inability to monitor, reliance and risk), to highlight confidence, which is a more contentious feature (Mellinger, 1956; Cook and Wall, 1980; McAllister, 1995; Van de Ven and Ring, 2006) and elements of integrity such as honesty (Bromiley and Harris, 2006), ethical behaviour (Hosmer, 1995) predictability (Gabarro, 1978) and promise fulfilment. These issues are central to perceptions of trustworthiness and as such are discussed in detail in section 2.4.

DEFINITION	KEY CONCEPTS	AUTHOR(S)	CITATIONS IN GOOGLE SCHOLAR (at time of writing)
"....an individual's confidence in another person's intentions and motives and the sincerity of that person's word".	• Confidence • Positive expectations • Integrity	Mellinger (1956, p. 305)	8
"an expectancy held by an individual or a group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon".	• Positive expectations • Integrity	Rotter (1967, p.651)	244
"the extent to which one person can expect predictability in the other's behavior in terms of what is 'normally' expected of a person acting in good faith" .	• Positive expectations • Predictability	Gabarro (1978, p.294)	33
"the extent to which one is willing to ascribe good intentions to and have confidence in the words and actions of other people".	• Positive expectations • Confidence	Cook and Wall (1980,p.39)	166
"socially learned expectations that people have of each other, of the organizations and institutions in which they live, and of the natural and moral social orders that set the fundamental understandings for their lives".	• Positive expectations	Barber (1983, p. 164-165)	0
"the probability that he will perform an action that is beneficial or at least not detrimental to us is high enough for us to consider engaging in some form of cooperation with him".	• Positive expectations • Trust informed action	Gambetta (1988, p.217)	209
"trust (or, symmetrically, distrust) is a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent will perform a particular action, both before [we] can monitor such action (or independently of his capacity to ever to be able to monitor it) and in a context in which it affects [our] own action".	• Positive expectations • Inability to monitor or control	Gambetta (1990, p.217)	268

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DEFINITION	KEY CONCEPTS	AUTHOR(S)	CITATIONS IN GOOGLE SCHOLAR (at time of writing)
"the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party".	• Willingness to be vulnerable • Positive expectations • Inability to monitor or control	Mayer *et al.* (1995, p.712)	2010
"the extent to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another".	• Confidence • Trust informed action	McAllister (1995, p. 25)	359
"expectation by one person, group or firm of ethical behaviour – that is morally correct decisions and actions based upon ethical principles of analysis – on the part of the other person, group, or firm in a joint endeavour or economic exchange".	• Positive expectations • Integrity	Hosmer (1995, p. 399)	4
"the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community".	• Positive expectations	Fukuyama (1995, p. 26)	110
"one's expectations, assumptions, or beliefs about the likelihood that another's future actions will be beneficial, favorable, or at least not detrimental to one's interests".	• Positive expectations • Positive beliefs	Robinson (1996, p. 576)	198
"...an individual's belief or a common belief among a group of individuals that another individual or group (a) makes good-faith efforts 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".	• Positive expectations • Positive beliefs • Integrity	Cummings and Bromiley (1996, p.303)	60

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DEFINITION	KEY CONCEPTS	AUTHOR(S)	CITATIONS IN GOOGLE SCHOLAR (at time of writing)
"Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another".	• Psychological State • Willingness to be vulnerable • Positive expectations	Rousseau *et al.* (1998,p.395)	468
"an actor's expectation of the other actors' capability, goodwill and self –reference visible in mutually beneficial behaviour enabling cooperation under risk".	• Positive expectations	Blomqvist (2002,p.175)	2
"..the willingness of a party (the trustor) to be vulnerable to the actions of another party (the trustee) based on the expectation that the trustee intends and is able to perform in ways that will not harm the trustor in a particular situation, irrespective of the trustor's ability to control the trustee's behavior".	• Willingness to be vulnerable • Positive expectations • Inability to control	Gargiulo and Ertug (2006, p.165)	2
"a psychological state held by the follower involving confident positive expectations about the behavior and intentions of the leader, as they relate to the follower".	• Psychological State • Positive expectations	Dirks (2006,p.15)	4
"..confidence in the goodwill of others not to cause harm to you when you are vulnerable to them".	• Confidence • Positive expectations	Van de Ven and Ring (2006,p.145)	3
"one's non-calculative belief in another's honesty in negotiations, good-faith efforts to keep commitments, and forbearance from opportunism".	• Positive belief • Integrity	Bromiley and Harris (2006,p.125)	6
"the decision to rely on another party (i.e. person, group, or organization) under a condition of risk".	• Reliance • Risk	Currall and Inkpen (2006,p.236)	14
"confident reliance on someone when you are in a position of vulnerability".	• Reliance • Risk/ vulnerability	Hurley (2006,p.56)	13

Table 2. 1: Key Trust Definitions

Given its widespread adoption in the trust literature and the virtual teams/trust literature (Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner, 1998; Aubert and Kelsey, 2003; Brown, Poole and Rodgers, 2004; Jarvenpaa, Shaw and Staples, 2004; Robert, Dennis and Hung, 2009; Breuer *et al.,* 2020) and the fact that it captures the core tenets of mainstream trust definitions, Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) definition is adopted for the current study.

In defining trust it is important to differentiate between propensity to trust, trustworthiness, and trust (Breuer *et al.,* 2020). Some definitions refer to trust as a dispositional construct (Rotter, 1967) - an individual's general trusting nature or propensity to trust others. Therefore, propensity to trust is a characteristic of the trustor, which can impact upon their willingness to trust. However, Mayer*,* Davis and Schoorman (1995) definition refers to a (trustor's) belief in the trustworthiness of a specific referent (trustee), which differs to generalised trust in others. Trust is therefore the willingness to be vulnerable to a specified other and is based on perceptions of the other's trustworthiness - empirical research has found trustworthiness to be distinct from trust (Gillespie, 2003) - and influenced by one's propensity to trust. In other words, while trusting can be considered as something that the trustor does (manifest in risk taking), propensity to trust is a characteristic of the trustor and trustworthiness is a quality of the trustee (Dietz and Den Hartog, 2006).

Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) argue that ability, benevolence and integrity are the three dominant trustworthiness characteristics or bases, each of which vary along a continuum from low to high. These are discussed in detail in sections 2.4 and 4.6. While a high rating on all three bases of trust (ability, benevolence and integrity) would signify a generally trustworthy person, each factor may be more or less important depending on the specific context, 'a trustor trusts a specific trustee in some respects or under some circumstances' (Nooteboom, 2002, p.259). Therefore, the question "do you trust them?" must be qualified: "trust them to do what?" (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman*,* 1995, p. 729). For example, an individual may trust another's intent but may not trust their ability to perform a certain task. Gargiulo and Ertug (2006) cite the example of trusting a friend's intention to help with financial decisions but being unable to trust the same friend's advice if unconvinced about their financial expertise. While various studies have found a high correlation between trustworthiness factors and trust (Jarvenpaa*,* Knoll and Leidner, 1998; Mayer and Davis, 1999; Gill *et al.,* 2005; Serva, Fuller and Mayer, 2005) other mechanisms impact upon the decision to trust, referred to as the decision to choose a proactive exposure to the additional vulnerability above and beyond the expected trustworthiness (Li, 2008). While trust is fundamentally interpersonal it is shaped by latent and overt influences at multiple levels (Dietz *et al.,* 2010). These influences are introduced in section 2.7 and discussed in detail throughout chapter four. While trust has been studied in various contexts this research is concerned with organisational level trust and this is where the focus now turns.

2.3 Trust in Organisational Settings

Some of the earliest research on trust in organisations was conducted over sixty years ago (e.g. Mellinger, 1956; Deutsch, 1958) and since then trust has moved from being a 'bit player to centre stage in organisational theory and research' (Kramer, 1999, p.594) and a major field in the domain of management (Bachmann and Zaheer, 2006). The organisational and management literature on trust is now extensive and includes a number of dedicated journal editions (including: *Academy of Management Journal* (1995, Vol. 38, No. 1), *Academy of Management Review* (1998, Vol.23, No.3), *Boston University Law Review* (2001, Vol.81, No.2&3), *Organization Studies* (2001, Vol.22, No. 2), *International Journal of Human Resource Management* (2003, Volume 14, No. 1), *International Journal of Management and Organisation* (2003, Vol. 38, No. 2), *Organization Science* (2003, Vol. 14, No. 1), *Personnel Review* (2003, Vol.32, No. 5), *International Journal of Networking and Virtual Organizations* (2008, Vol.5, No.3/4), *Human Resource Management Journal* (2012, Vol. 22, No.4)), a dedicated journal (*Journal of Trust Research*), numerous edited volumes (including: Bachmann and Zaheer, 2006; Bachmann and Zaheer, 2013; Braithwaite and Levi, 1998; Gambetta, 1988; Kramer and Cook, 2004; Kramer and Tyler, 1996b; Lane and Bachmann, 1996; Lyon, Mollering and Saunders, 2012, 2015; Nooteboom and Six, 2003; Ostrom and Walker, 2002; Saunders *et al.,* 2010; Searle and Skinner, 2011) and a large number of monographs.

Within organisational settings trust researchers have focused on a range of areas, including: communication (Giffin, 1967), leadership (Hater and Bass, 1988; Jung and Avolio, 2000; Burke *et al.,* 2007; Walumbwa *et al.,* 2011; Kelloway *et al.,* 2012), management by objectives (Scott, 1980b), negotiation (Bazerman, 1994), game theory (Deutsch, 1972), labour management relations (Taylor, 1989), buyer-supplier relationships (Lane and Bachmann, 1996); sales (Rich, 1997; 1998; Flaherty and Pappas, 2000; Mulki *et al.*, 2006), marketing (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), entrepreneurship (Welter, 2007), new product development (Dayan *et al.*, 2009) and national cultures (Saunders *et al.,* 2010). These studies have highlighted the centrality of trust to a range of different disciplines and have increased the profile of trust in the business and management literature.

2.3.1 Benefits of Trust

It is increasingly recognised that trust in the workplace is a critical factor leading to enhanced organisational performance (Gould-Williams, 2003). Barney and Hansen (1994) argue that organisations with high levels of managerial trustworthiness should be at a competitive advantage in the marketplace. In general terms trust has been perceived as the ‘lubrication that makes it possible for organisations to work’ (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). More specifically empirical support has been found for, inter alia: extra effort (Mayer and Gavin, 2005); improvements in sales, profits and employee turnover (Davis *et al.,* 2000); enhanced motivation and performance (Colquitt, Scott and LePine, 2007; Heavey *et al.,* 2011; Zak, 2017); improved communication (Roberts and O’Reilly, 1974) and increases in both affective commitment (Colquitt *et al.,* 2007) and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (McAllister, 1995; Mayer and Gavin, 2005; Walumbwa *et al.,* 2011).

A meta-analysis of 106 independent trust studies (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002) found that while trust in leadership was related to each type of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) (altruism, civic virtue, conscientiousness, courtesy and sportsmanship) it was most strongly related to work attitudes, followed by citizenship behaviours and then job performance. A subsequent meta-analytical study by Colquitt *et al.* (2007) of 249 trust studies found that trust was linked to: improved job performance, citizenship behaviour, positive risk taking, counterproductive behaviours (negatively) and enhanced affective commitment.

Trust has been linked to both direct and indirect benefits. Sue-Chan *et al.,* (2012) found a link between trust in a manager-subordinate relationship and higher levels of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), as well as identifying trust as a mediator between employee performance and the supervisor's experience of LMX. The same authors also found trust to mediate the positive association between supervisor activation of promotion regulatory focus (PRF), (which encourages growth and realisation of personal aspirations), and LMX. This is perhaps unsurprising as PRF is linked to benevolence, a strong antecedent of trust (Mayer*,* Davis and Schoorman*,* 1995). LMX has in turn been linked to enhanced employee performance and is discussed in further detail in section 4.7.2.

Trust has been found to mediate the impact of transformational leadership on OCBs (Podsakoff *et al.,* 1990; Pillai *et al.,* 1999) and job performance (Jung and Avolio, 2000). It has also been found to affect how employees interpret the actions of a leader, and the explanations provided. For instance, Pillai *et al.* (1999) found that trust mediates the relationship between leader behaviour and employee satisfaction, while Holtz and Harold (2008) found that trust mediated the effect of leadership style on employees' perceptions of managers' explanations. Rousseau and Tijoriwala's (1999) research highlighted the influence of trust in management on employees' perceptions of the legitimacy of explanations, while Robinson (1996) found that initial trust in an employer moderated the relationship between a psychological contract violation and the subsequent trust in the employer – arguing that effect of cognitive consistency will lead to violations being viewed in a way which is consistent with the initial level of trust. This effect on interpretation is important as managers may have to make choices which could be detrimental to trust. Much of the aforementioned research has been quantitative in nature, with an emphasis on measuring benefits. Further qualitative research could be useful in providing a more in-depth understanding of these issues and the reasons why trust leads to certain outcomes.

While there are numerous studies focused on the benefits of trust, Skinner *et al.* (2014) express concerns that that trust is 'oversold' arguing that it can in fact become a 'poisoned chalice'. Gargulio and Ertug (2006, p.165) caution against the 'optimistic bias' within the trust literature, arguing that the lack of attention to the 'dark side of trust' has hampered the emergence of a more balanced view of trust and in particular the effects of excessive trust. This is a view shared by other authors who have also called for a greater focus on the potential drawbacks of trust (Zaheer *et al.,* 1998). Gargulio and Ertug (2006) argue that the benefits and detrimental effects of trust are closely linked and Skinner *et al.* (2014) state that trust's dark side is simply inherent in the nature of a trust relationship, and comes about when trust results in a trusting situation that is unwelcome and/or disadvantageous.

For example, while trust may allow for less monitoring this can lead to blind faith and increase the risk of malfeasance, thus increasing the trustor's vulnerability (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). In terms of performance, high levels of trust can lead to complacency and the acceptance of less satisfactory outcomes (Garguilo and Ertug, 2006) or they can stifle innovation (Nooteboom, 2006). Individuals may choose to ignore certain behaviours which do not align with their existing beliefs (cognitive dissonance) (Lewicki, McAllister and Bies, 1998) and as such may not address problematic behaviours. With high trust, over-embedded relationships might develop, along with unnecessary obligations between parties (Gargulio and Ertug, 2006). Flores and Solomon (1998: 208) observe the potential for trust to be utilized as a manipulative tool in business contexts if it is viewed as 'a lubricant to make an operation more efficient'. In summary, trust can potentially lead to greater levels of risk, poorer performance and unreasonable, uncomfortable expectations; these potential drawbacks should not be ignored.

However, despite the coverage of the drawbacks of trust, considerably more has been written about the benefits, with trust viewed as "…a valued commodity and revered as an incontestable good" (Kelley and Bisel, 2014, p. 435). Both the aforementioned benefits and potential disadvantages of trust highlight the centrality of trust to work relationships. While trust scholars have made much progress in recent decades further research is required in order to develop a better understanding of how trust develops in specific relationships and in various contexts, in order to accrue these benefits. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of trust development within manager-employee dyads in virtual work settings. Given the intra-organisational focus of this study this section has focused on the benefits of trust within organisations. For a review of benefits at the inter-organisational level see McEvily and Zaheer (2006). The next section discusses the various types of trust relationships within organisations.

2.3.2 Trust Relationships

There are three dominant categories of trust relationship discussed in the literature; intra-organisational trust, inter-organisational trust, and institutional- or system-based trust. It is important to differentiate between these forms of trust as there is often ambiguity about the object of trust (McEvily *et al.,* 2006).

Intra-organisational trust relationships include trust between employees, between employees and line managers, between employees and senior leaders and between individuals and the organisation as a whole (Siebert *et al.*, 2015), or the organisation as a depersonalised institution (Hope-Hailey *et al.,* 2012). As organisations are inherently multilevel systems, trust operates at the individual, team, and organisational levels of analysis (see Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012 for a review of trust literature at these levels). Hope-Hailey *et al.* (2012) argue that these trust relationships are related to the extent that certain relationships can compensate for declines in trust in other relationships.

Inter-organisational trust relationships are slightly more complicated and therefore any discussion requires clarity in relation to the trustor and trustee. Janowicz and Noorderhaven (2006) distinguish between four relationship types: trust between individuals in different organisations (essentially interpersonal trust); an individual's trust in another organisation (organisational- or firm-level trust - Inkpen and Currall, 1997); an organisation's trust in an individual (i.e. trust in a supplier's sales person - Doney and Cannon, 1997); and trust between organisations (often referred to as inter-organisational trust whereby trust is a shared attitude of organisational members – Zaheer *et al.,* 1998; Dyer and Chu, 2003). Curall and Inkpen (2006) propose a nine box grid which also includes trust between an individual and a group (both directions), trust between groups and a firm's trust in a group.

A third category of relationship incorporates 'system' (Luhmann, 1979; Giddens, 1990), or 'institutional-based' trust (Zucker, 1986). These refer to trust in abstract structures (rather than familiarity with a specific individual), which shape shared expectations through generalised rules of behaviour (McEvily *et al.,* 2006), for example membership of professions or associations or intermediary mechanisms such as banking and legal regulation (Mollering, 2006b). Such institutional frameworks have the 'potential to generate shared economic, technical, cultural and social knowledge and to produce collectively accepted norms of business behaviour' (Bachmann, 2001a: 344). As such, *institutional* or *systems* perspectives refer to trust in the system in which an individual is embedded (Dirks, 2006). However, as well as being a source of trust, influencing dyadic trust relationships by removing the need for first-hand knowledge of the other, a system or institution can also be an object of trust (Sydow, 1998), whereby an individual decides on the basis of the performance of system/institution representatives, rather than the workings of the system/institution as a whole, whether it is functioning and deserving of their trust (Mollering, 2006).

It is important to clearly differentiate system- or institutional-based trust from the aforementioned organisational- or firm-level trust. However, while some researchers, including Bachmann, Gillespie and Priem (2015) and McEvily *et al.* (2006), clearly do so, others use labels interchangeably. For instance, Gould-Williams (2003) alternates between the terms systems trust and organisational trust and Sydow (2006: 381) talks of trust in ‘systems such as organisations’. Hope-Hailey et al. (2012) discuss trust in the organisation as an institution while McKnight *et al*. (1998), in discussing institutional-based trust, refer to both external systems such as the legal system as well as internal organisational processes and procedures. For the purpose of this study, institution-based trust will be used to refer to trust in abstract structures, whether external or internal to the organisation, and organisational trust will be used to refer to trust in a specific referent organisation.

Numerous studies have highlighted differences in the aforementioned trust categories. Luhmann (1979) argues that systems trust is more stable than interpersonal trust, and not influenced by day-to-day workplace activities. McKnight *et al.* (2006) found that interpersonal trust differed from trust in collective entities such as organisations, while Gould-Williams (2003) found the correlation between both of these trust types to be sufficiently low to justify treating these measures as separate dimensions of trust.

However, while there may be some differences between the various categories, they can’t be considered completely separate. Trust in either an institution or organisation can be based on trust in its people (Fukuyama, 1995; Currall and Inkpen, 2006) or trust in a person may be influenced by trust in the organisation to which that person belongs (McKnight *et al.,* 1998; Nooteboom, 2006). Currall and Inkpen (2006), speaking about inter-organisational trust, suggest a bi-directional and reciprocal relationship between individual managers in each organisation (interpersonal), groups within each organisation (intergroup) and the organisations themselves (inter-organisational). These authors suggest that strengthening or damaging trust at one level may impact trust at another level. Furthermore, some researchers suggest that trust in the system in which an individual is embedded helps to reduce vulnerability and allow for trust (Luhmann, 1979; Zucker, 1986; Bachmann, 2001a; Dirks, 2006).

This relationship between trust levels is an important consideration for the current study which focuses on intra-organisational trust, specifically trust between line managers and employees. Little is known about the influence of other forms of trust on manager-employee trust in a virtual working environment, where relationships may be slower to develop and individuals may look for safety mechanisms. The focus of this study is on dyadic trust between leaders and members of VTs and the mechanisms which influence trust in this relationships. As such, institutional-based trust is not the dominant focus of the research, but is viewed as a mechanism external to the relationship which may influence dyadic trust, by shaping shared expectations regarding behaviour or reducing or removing the need for first-hand knowledge of the other. While not discounting the possibility of institutional structures external to the organisation, such as legislation, the main focus of this study will be on internal mechanisms such as organisational policies and procedures, which has been found to influence intra-organisational trust relationships (Searle and Dietz, 2012). The next section discusses the manager-employee dyad in detail and provides a justification for this study’s focus.

2.3.3 Leader Trust Referents

Trust researchers have focused on a number of referents or trustees, including leaders, teams and organisations (Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012). Studies focused on trust in leaders, further distinguish between proximal leaders (line managers and supervisors) and distal leaders (senior managers) (Searle and Dietz, 2012; CIPD, 2013). However, the referent is not always clear in research studies and this risks confusion (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012). Therefore, it is important for trust scholars to specify their trust referent (Siebert et al., 2015).

The focus of this study is on trust between line managers and employees, a relationship proffered to be the most important professional dyadic relationship (Martinez *et al.,* 2012) and one in which trust plays a particularly important role (Ferris, *et al.,* 2009; Jawahar, Stone and Kluemper, 2019). Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that trust between employees and direct line managers has been identified as the strongest, and most resilient, of the trust relationships within organisations (Hope-Hailey *et al.,* 2012).

A number of studies highlight the importance of employees' trust in managers. It has been found to be the strongest predictor of trust in employers (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; Hope-Hailey *et al.,* 2012) and to have a stronger effect on individual performance (Colquitt, Scott and LePine, 2007) than trust in organisational leadership, which tends to have more of an influence on organisational-level variables (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; Colquitt, Scott and LePine, 2007). Knoll and Gill (2011) found trust in supervisor to be related to both trust in subordinate and trust in peer and suggested that trust in supervisor might be a proxy for the trust climate in the organisation.

In his study of basketball teams, Dirks (2000) found that when it came to predicting team performance trust in the coach was more important than trust in team mates. Dirks and Ferrin (2002) found empirical evidence that job performance was much more strongly related to trust in a supervisor than trust in senior management. While trust in a proximal leader can help to maximise individual performance, as mentioned, it can also help to harness or focus those efforts towards a common goal or strategy (Dirks, 2006). Again this is important to the study of trust in virtual sales teams, as individual sales performance will impact upon the overall team target/ performance.

The focus on employee-management trust is growing in importance as organisations strive to succeed in increasingly competitive environments. Barney and Hansen (1994) argue that high levels of managerial trustworthiness should give firms a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Furthermore, it is argued that with the growth of team-based work, horizontal organisational structures and empowered employees, traditional approaches to management, including those related to monitoring and control, are less effective and high levels of trust are required (Jones and George, 1998).

Certain unique mechanisms impact upon trust in manager-employee relationships (Gillespie, 2003), however studies have largely treated trust as unidirectional, focusing on employees' trust in managers, rather than treating trust as mutual or reciprocal (Nienaber *et al.,* 2015; Jawahar *et al.,* 2019). Insights into managers' trust in employees is important as they rely on employees to achieve unit objectives (Sue-Chan *et al.,* 2012) and their trust in employees has been found to be correlated positively and significantly with job satisfaction (Knoll and Gill, 2011).

In the sales domain, one study which took a bi-directional approach to studying trust (Lagace, 1990) found that subordinates (sales people) with high reciprocal trust in their supervisor had higher levels of job satisfaction and lower role conflict, while a manager with high trust in a salesperson was more likely to be satisfied with their performance and to have greater levels of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). However, the dearth of research into manager-employee dyads which takes a bi-directional focus, is even more pronounced in the VT literature and within a sales VT context.

Extant trust models suggest that dyadic trust is heavily influenced by perceptions of trustworthiness (Mayer*,* Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Priem and Weibel, 2012) which are strongly influenced in turn by a range of trustee characteristics. These characteristics are now discussed in detail, followed by a critical analysis of various trust models.

2.4 Trustee Characteristics

A broad range of trustee characteristics have been cited in the literature. In an early study Gabarro (1978) identified integrity, motives, consistency, openness, discreteness, functional competence, interpersonal competence, and decision making judgement. Butler (1991), whilst also identifying integrity, consistency, openness, and competence (although not differentiating between functional and interpersonal), added availability, fairness, loyalty, promise fulfilment and overall trust. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) reviewed the work of 23 authors (including: Kee and Knox, 1970; Gabarro, 1978; Cook and Wall, 1980; Butler, 1991), and produced a parsimonious list of three characteristics; ability, benevolence and integrity, commonly referred to as the ABI model (or the CBI model – competency, benevolence, integrity). Shortly afterwards Mishra (1996), through interviews with managers, identified similar characteristics: competence, openness and reliability (similar to integrity) and concern (similar to benevolence). A selection of the trustee characteristics outlined in the literature is provided in table 2.2**.** Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) 'bases of trust' (ability, benevolence, integrity) are among the most cited in the literature and have been found to influence perceptions of trustworthiness in subsequent studies, including studies of virtual teams (Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998; Robert *et al.*, 2009). These are now discussed in detail, with reference to other characteristics identified in the literature.

Table 2.2 highlights the prevalence of ability in studies focused on trustee characteristics. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman define ability as 'that group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have an influence within some specific domain' (1995, p. 717). This definition includes competence, which is also commonly cited in the literature. While Gabarro (1978) subdivides competence into functional competence and interpersonal competence, Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) highlight the task and situation specific nature of the ability construct i.e. a trustee is trusted to do certain tasks but perhaps not others. For example, a potential trustee who is highly skilled analytically but has limited communication skills is unlikely to be trusted to deliver an important sales presentation (Isaeva, Hughes and Saunders, 2018).

Another characteristic highlighted in the literature is capability. Henttonen and Blomqvist (2005) suggest that capability includes technological capability, business capability and meta-capability to cooperate, thus also noting domain specificity. Dirks and Skarlicki

(2009) view capability as encompassing both ability and competence. For the purposes of the current study Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) ability (domain specific) characteristic will be seen to encompass both capability and competence, along with the other means (i.e. skills and knowledge) required to complete a specified task.

Benevolence is defined by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman as 'the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor, aside from an egocentric profit motive (1995, p.718). This, according to Dietz and den Hartog (2006) reflects 'benign motives and a personal degree of kindness towards the other party, and a genuine concern for their welfare' (p.560). This form of benevolence or affective trust specifically excludes the notion of calculative trust (Paul and McDaniel, 2004). As seen in table 2.2, many authors have highlighted benevolence (Strickland, 1958; Larzelere and Huston, 1980; Dietz and den Hartog, 2006), altruism (Frost *et al.,* 1978) or loyalty (Butler, 1981; Butler and Cantrell, 1984) as key characteristics of a trustworthy individual - although loyalty could be viewed as a value and thus part of integrity.

Whitener *et al.* (1998: 517) propose three benevolent actions of managers as; (1) showing consideration and sensitivity for employees' needs and interests, (2) acting in a way that protects employees' interests, and (3) refraining from exploiting others for the benefit of one's own interests. While Whitener *et al.'*s (1998) study focuses on managerial trustworthy behaviours other studies have highlighted the importance of benevolence at the team member level (Miles, Hatfield and Huseman, 1994; Tan and Lim, 2009; Wasti *et al.* 2011; Salin and Notelaers, 2017). Individuals who display high levels of benevolent behaviours, referred to as benevolents under equity theory, are highly valuable to organisations (Miles, Hatfield and Huseman, 1994). However, such benevolent employees are particularly affected by behaviours such as breaches in autonomy and control, which can violate the psychological contract and lead to turnover intentions (Salin and Notelaers, 2017). These findings highlight the importance of leaders not only acting benevolently towards employees, but also in granting autonomy and control, such reliance conveying trust in the employee (Gillespie, 2003).

As seen in table 2.2 integrity can mean different things to different people. Within the leadership and trust literatures researchers have linked integrity to openness, honesty, being fully integrated and whole, being true to oneself/one's principles and values, fair treatment, avoidance of hypocrisy, discreetness, moral trustworthiness and acting in accordance with one's words (Kee and Knox, 1970; Gabarro, 1978; Larzelere and Huston, 1980; Butler and Cantrell, 1984; Butler, 1991; Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Mishra, 1996; McKnight *et al.,* 1998; Cunningham and McGregor, 2000; Simons, 2002; Dietz and den Hartog, 2006; Doney *et al.,* 2007; Palanski and Yammarino, 2007; Bauman, 2013). The variation in definitions of integrity have led to confusion (Audi and Murphy, 2006; Bauman, 2013).

CHARACTERISTIC	SUB COMPONENTS & ALTERNATIVE LABELS	AUTHORS
Ability	Ability	Deutsch (1960); Jones, James and Bruni (1975); Cook and Wall (1980); Good (1988); Sitkin and Roth (1993); Mayer et al. (1995); Mishra (1996); Cunningham and McGregor (2000)
	Competence	Griffin (1967) (Expertness), Kee and Knox (1970), Rosen and Jerdee (1977), Gabarro (1978) (functional/specific competence, interpersonal competence, business sense; judgement), Lieberman (1981), Butler and Cantrell (1984), Butler (1991), Mishra (1996)
	Capability	Henttonen and Blomqvist (2005), Dirks and Skarlicki (2009)
Benevolence	Benevolence	Strickland (1958), Solomon (1960), Larzelere and Huston (1980), McAllister (1995), Mayer et al. (1995), Mishra (1996), Cunningham and McGregor (2000)
	Loyalty	Butler and Cantrell (1984), Butler (1991)
	Availability, Receptivity	Butler (1991)
	Caring	Mishra (1996)

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CHARACTERISTIC	SUB COMPONENTS & ALTERNATIVE LABELS		AUTHORS
Integrity	Integrity		Kee and Knox (1970), Gabarro (1978), Butler and Cantrell (1984), Butler (1991), Mayer et al. (1995), Mishra (1996), Cunningham and McGregor (2000)
	Predictability	Promise fulfilment	Butler (1991), Doney et al. (2007)
			Mishra (1996), McKnight et al. (1998), Cunningham and McGregor (2000)
		Consistency	Gabarro (1978), Butler and Cantrell (1984), Butler (1991), Dietz and Den Hartog (2006)
		Reliability	Mishra (1996)
	Discreteness		Gabarro (1978), Butler (1991)
	Fairness/ Fair Treatment		Butler (1991); Dietz and den Hartog (2006)
	Openness		Mishra (1996); Farris et al. (1973), Gabarro (1978), Butler and Cantrell (1984), Hart et al. (1986), Butler (1991), Mishra (1996)
	Honesty		Larzelere and Huston (1980), Dietz and den Hartog (2006)
	Motives/ Intentions		Kee and Knox (1970), Gabarro (1978), Cook and Wall (1980)
	Morally trustworthy		Bauman (2013)
	Adherence to principles or espoused values		Simons (2002); Dietz and den Hartog (2006)

Table 2. 2: Bases of Trust

Congruency of action with words is a central pillar of Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) conceptualisation of integrity and of what Doney *et al.* (2007) refer to as credibility trust. This is referred to by a number of authors as behavioural integrity (Whitener *et al.,* 1998; Simons, 2002). Palanski and Yammarino (2009) argue for the inclusion of a moral or ethical dimension, without which a tyrant could be deemed to be a person of integrity simply by doing what they said they would do, regardless of the nature of the action. Other scholars have included an ethical or moral dimension in their definitions of integrity (George, 2003; George and Sims, 2007) and Bauman (2013) argues that integrity is fundamentally, but not exclusively, a moral concept. He notes that a person who is unwilling to compromise their values or statements (whether moral, non-moral or a-moral) displays 'personal integrity', but this is distinct from 'moral integrity', which he also refers to as moral trustworthiness. Integrity shares many of the same characteristics as ethical leadership, with ethical leaders characterised as honest, caring, principled individuals who make fair decisions and practice what they preach (Brown and Trevino, 2006). Integrity is a core feature of a number of leadership theories and as such will be revisited in section 4.7.

Predictability has been identified as a fourth construct (alongside ABI) by a number of authors (Mishra, 1996; Cunningham and McGregor, 2000; Dietz and den Hartog, 2006; Hope Hailey *et al.,* 2012). Predictability, or behavioural predictability, refers to the judgment of another's likely behaviour (Shapiro *et al.*, 1992). However, the literature could be deemed somewhat confusing in its coverage of predictability and similar characteristics such as consistency, reliability and integrity. While Shapiro *et al.* (1992) argue that behavioural consistency is evidenced by congruence of actions with words, other authors refer to this as evidence of integrity (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995) or behavioural integrity (Whitener *et al.,* 1998), as discussed above. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) instead refer to consistency when speaking of past actions (that behaviour is consistent with other behaviour, as opposed to words). Meanwhile, Whitener *et al.* (1998) link consistency and predictability, noting that behavioural consistency reflects the reliability or predictability of managers' actions, based on their past actions. This confusion in terminology is unhelpful.

As Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) integrity factor incorporates both consistency of behaviour and congruency of actions and words, and these factors are likely to influence perceptions of predictability, the addition of a distinct predictability characteristic is deemed by this author to be unnecessary. In fact, Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) caution against the use of predictability noting that predictability is not necessarily a good thing, as someone may behave in a negative fashion and therefore others will not be willing to take a risk. Paul and McDaniel (2004) also exclude predictability from their trust model arguing that predictability is not enough to explain trust. For the purposes of this study three factors will be referred to: Ability, Benevolence, Integrity, with integrity encompassing predictability which can be inferred if there is congruence of actions with words and consistency in behaviour. Integrity is discussed in further detail in section 4.6.

Studies have found support for all three bases of trust proposed by Mayer *et al.* (1995) (Breuer, et al., 2020; Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998 and Robert *et al.,* 2009; Knoll and Gill, 2011). All may be potentially significant as a trustor may decide not to trust if they consider any of the qualities to be absent in the trustee (Dietz and Den Hartog, 2006). Alternatively, the trustor may overlook one factor if another factor is more important to them. Culture may be important in this regard as it can impact upon perceptions of trustee characteristics and the importance given to each one. Perceived national cultural differences, for example, may lead to members perceiving colleagues as different from themselves, which can make trust more difficult to develop (Newell, David and Chand, 2007). While action-oriented, competitive, performance-oriented cultures tend to place a higher value on the ability variable, more collaborative, being-oriented, "feminine" cultures tend to put more of an emphasis on the benevolence variable (Schoorman, Mayer and Davis, 2007, p. 351).

Research suggests that certain bases may be more or less important, depending on the relationship under consideration. In a study of co-workers, Dirks and Skarlicki (2009) found the integrity * capability interaction (the authors include ability as a sub factor of capability) was a significant predictor of trustee performance with the best results when both factors were high. The results for high integrity with low capability or high capability with low integrity were significantly lower than the results for high integrity/ high capability. They found that an individual who is perceived as trustworthy will receive a larger volume of resources, which will in turn enhance the individual's performance.

Colquitt *et al.* (2007) in their meta-analysis of trust studies found integrity to be most important to manager-employee trust. Tyler and Dogoey (1994) also found integrity to be a much stronger predictor of employees' willingness to accept managers' decisions than competence. Research into the impact of leader transgressions on employee trust also points to the importance of leader integrity. Kim *et al.* (2006) and Dirks *et al.* (2011) differentiate between competence- and integrity-based transgressions. While competence-based transgressions, which signal a leader's lack of knowledge or skills, may damage or halt trust development, integrity-based transgressions are seen as intentional and may have a greater negative impact on trust (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman*,* 1995; Kim *et al.,* 2006).

Knoll and Gill (2011) subsequently found that the three components (ability, benevolence and integrity) accounted for 47 percent of the variance of trust in the supervisor. Their study found that benevolence was the most important consideration for employees, accounting for 43 percent of the variance figure, with integrity accounting for 38 percent and ability 19 percent. This finding, along with the aforementioned findings suggests that benevolence and integrity are more important to employees when assessing the trustworthiness of their manager.

In terms of managers' trust in employees, Knoll and Gill (2011) found that ability, benevolence and integrity accounted for 56 percent of the variance of trust in a subordinate. Trust in employee ability was the most important component, accounting for 38 percent, followed by benevolence and integrity, each accounting for 31 percent. This suggests that managers are ultimately concerned about employee performance. However, there has been limited research into generative mechanisms of trust in subordinates, or into understanding how leaders decide which employees should be deemed trustworthy (Kelley and Bisel, 2014) - the literature has focused predominantly on trust in supervisors.

The aforementioned range of trustworthiness characteristics are manifest in behaviours. These behaviours are discussed in section 4.7 along with the various mechanisms which influence these behaviours. At the early stages of a relationship and prior to observing behaviours trustors will form opinions on trustworthiness using information from third parties or by categorising the trustee in some manner. These initial perceptions of trustworthiness are discussed in section 4.4.

2.5 The multi-dimensional nature of trust

Trust is often viewed as cognition-based, the belief that 'we choose whom we will trust, in what respects and under what circumstances, and we base the choice on what we take to be good reasons constituting evidence of trustworthiness' (Lewis and Wiegert, 1985, p. 970). Models of cognition-based trust posit that the decision to trust is based on a body of evidence about the other party's motives and character which leads to a belief prediction or faith judgement about the other's likely future behaviour (Dietz *et al.,* 2010).

However, trust is often referred to as a multi-dimensional construct which encompasses both cognitive and affective elements, with trust scholars increasingly highlighting the centrality of affect or emotion in trust development. For example affective state/emotion is one of three components of trust belief (along with cognition and behavioural intention) cited by Cummings and Bromiley (1996), one of three factors cited by Barber (1983) (along with moral and cognitive) and one of two factors (along with cognition) cited by both McAllister (1995) and Lewicki *et al.* (2006). Furthermore, Jones and George (1998) propose that moods and emotions play an important role in relation to trust, influencing initial decisions to trust, colouring one's experience of trust and providing signals about the quality of trust in a relationship. They argue that moods and emotions are part of a multi-dimensional experience of trust, along with a person's values (which provide standards of trust that people strive to achieve), and attitudes (containing beliefs about the trustworthiness of others).

While perceptions of ability and integrity (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995) can be important to cognitive-based trust, demonstration of the third of Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) bases of trust, benevolence, (care or concern) can be important to the development of affect-based trust. People make emotional ties based on perceived benevolence, which can form the basis for trust (Mc Allister, 1995).

A number of studies (Clark and Payne, 1997; Cummings and Bromiley, 1996) have found cognitive and affective modes to be indistinguishable from each other but distinct from behavioural factors. While most trust studies do not differentiate between the two, McAllister (1995) found empirical support for the separation of cognition- and affect-based trust as distinct forms of interpersonal trust, also finding that once high levels of affect-based trust are reached cognition-based trust may no longer be required. However, emotions are not fully distinct from cognition. They are intertwined with rationality, and play a part in reason (Nooteboom, 2006). The emotional/affective subfactor is likely to affect the cognitive subfactors (Lewicki *et al.,* 2006) or vice versa, with McAllister (1995) arguing that a minimum level of cognition-based trust is necessary for affective forms to materialise. This reflects the sequence of cognition, affect and intention to act put forward by Fishbein and Azjen (1975). Neurological research into how the brain processes judgements on trustworthiness appears to support the view that trust has both a cognitive and affective aspect (Adolphs, 2002; Winston *et al.,* 2002).

However, McAllister (1995) cautions against considering affect-based trust as a higher level of trust, stating that it is merely distinct to cognition-based trust with different antecedents and consequences. Lewis and Weigert (1985) argue that affect-based trust should be limited to contexts of frequent interaction, where there are sufficient social data to allow for confident attributions. This raises questions about the possibility of building this type of trust in virtual relationships, where there are less social cues or opportunities to form social relationships. This issue in revisited throughout chapter four.

This section has discussed the role of emotions in trust. It is at the level of emotions that some trust scholars have differentiated between trust and distrust. While the discussion to date has focused mainly on the positive side of trust, with definitions referring to the willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations, individuals may not deem another individual to be trustworthy and may in fact distrust them based on negative expectations (Lewicki *et al.,* 1998). The discussion now turns to the relationship between trust and distrust.

2.6 Trust and Distrust

While research on distrust has grown significantly in recent years, such research is limited in scope due its treatment as the opposite of trust and as a fundamentally negative construct (Isaeva, *et al.,* 2015; Guo *et al.,* 2017) whilst trust is considered as inherently positive (Skinner *et al.,* 2014). There has been considerable debate in the literature about the relationship between trust and distrust (often referred to as mistrust – Sitkin and Roth, 1993; Dube and Robey, 2008; Saunders, Dietz and Thornhill, 2014). Some authors view distrust as one end of the trust-distrust continuum (Bigley and Pearce, 1998) arguing that a lack of trust and distrust are the same thing (Schoorman *et al.,* 2007). However others view trust and distrust as separate constructs on separate continua (Sitkin and Roth, 1993; Lewicki *et al.,*1998; McKnight and Chervany, 2001; Saunders and Thornhill, 2004) and empirical research has found them to be distinct constructs (Gillespie, 2003). Lewicki *et al.,* (1998) argue that they can co-exist in the same manner as love and hate. Researchers highlight differences in emotions between trust and distrust with McKnight and Chervany comparing a placid elephant in a zoo (trust) with a raging wild bull elephant charging the tusk hunter who threatens the herd (distrust) (2001:42) – the suggestion being that distrust involves much stronger emotions. Lewicki *et al.* (1998) differentiate no trust (which they label as low trust) from high distrust (which Schoorman *et al.* (2007) argue are the same) noting that no trust is characterised by uncertainty and expressed as 'no hope', 'no faith', 'no confidence', 'passivity' and 'hesitance'. Conversely distrust, they argue, is characterised by 'fear', 'skepticism', cyncism', 'wariness and watchfulness' and vigilance' (Lewicki *et al.*, 1998: 445).

While trust is associated with positive expectations that the actions of another will be "beneficial, favourable, or at least not detrimental to one's interests" (Robinson, 1996: 576), distrust arises where there is a 'positive expectation of injurious action' (Luhmann, 1979:72) or confident negative expectations regarding another's conduct (Lewicki *et al.,* 1998). Viewed in this light, distrust may lead to defensiveness and paranoia and individuals may not be willing to make themselves vulnerable. Functional interaction, enabled by monitoring, controlling and compartmentalising of roles may be all that can be expected (Lewicki *et al.,* 1998). McKnight and Chervany (2006) provide empirical support for the separation of trust (disposition to trust – faith in humanity) and distrust (disposition to distrust – suspicion of humanity), finding that the two coexist and predict different dependent variables in their model.

However, the debate is not exactly straightforward, Schoorman *et al.* (2007) argue that due to the domain specificity of trust, discussed in section 2.2, there is no need for separate continua. Their original conceptualisation (Mayer *et al.,* 1995) allows for a trustor to both trust and distrust the same individual, based on separate criteria. However, an overall view of trust or distrust towards the same individual is unlikely, they argue.

In their attempt to answer the longstanding question as to whether trust and distrust can coexist in the mind of an employee, Saunders, Dietz and Thornhill (2014) found some support for both sides of the debate. They found support for Lewicki *et al.'s* (1998) contention that an absence of trust is not the same as distrust and vice versa and that trust and distrust are independent with their own distinct antecedents and consequences. However, the same authors found only partial support for the coexistence of trust and distrust, with only one respondent reporting weak feelings on both counts. This suggests that the co-existence of trust and distrust may be, as argued by Schoorman *et al.* (2007) unsustainable. However, while Saunders, Dietz and Thornhill (2014) did not specifically measure trust/distrust in different interpersonal domains (ability, benevolence, integrity) it seems possible for an individual to both trust and distrust another individual. A manager may, for instance, have high distrust in an employee when it comes to managing company money (integrity) but high trust in the same employee when it comes to organising an event (ability), hence the importance of context when it comes to issues of trust and distrust.

Some of the words used in the literature to describe distrust (suspicion, paranoia, harmful motives assumed, pre-emption) (Deutsch, 1958; Lewicki *et al.,* 1998) seem more suited to judgements of integrity or benevolence than ability, with Sitkin and Roth (1993) linking mistrust to more general value incongruity (linked to integrity) and trust to perceptions of task-specific reliability (linked to ability).

While distrust is often characterised as having stronger emotional connotations, this may not be the case for the ability domain. It is likely that in most instances judgements of ability-related trust will range between no-trust and high-trust, with the manager making decisions relating to delegating tasks based on perceptions of high- or low-ability rather than considering harmful motives. Questions relating to whether the employee will deliberately underperform or harm the manager in some way are questions of integrity or benevolence and as such can be separated from judgements of ability.

The current study is focused on the process through which trust is built and maintained in manager-employee relationships. Trust will be examined in specific referents (i.e. trust in employee A and trust in manager B) and across different bases (ability, benevolence, integrity). The possibility of high trust and high distrust co-existing in the same relationship, but in different domains, will be considered, along with the possible existence of weaker levels of trust and distrust co-existing within the same domain (i.e. a manager having ‘some’ level of trust in an employee’s integrity but not enough to remove monitoring completely).

2.7 Models of Trust Development

A number of trust models have been proposed in the literature. Four of these models are analysed in this section due to their relevance to the current study. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman’s (1995) model was presented in their seminal article and is perhaps the best known model of trust. Their definition of trust is adopted in this study and their ABI model, discussed earlier in this chapter, is central to perceptions of trustworthiness and is revisited in chapter four. Whitener *et al.’s* (1998) model is specific to managerial trustworthy behaviours, a key focus of this study, while McAllister’s (1995) model made a strong contribution to the trust literature due to its inclusion of both affect- and cognition-based trust and the argument that cognition-based trust is a precursor to affect-based trust. McKnight *et al.’s* (1998) model focuses specifically on initial trust development, which is an important consideration given that it challenges the longstanding belief (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996) that trust develops sequentially over time from lower to higher levels. As such all four models are important to the current study which examines the development of manager-employee trust.

Mayer, Davis and Schoorman’s (1995) model (figure 2.1) suggests that trust is influenced by perceived trustworthiness (relating to ABI) and propensity to trust. Trust then leads to a certain amount of risk taking - the amount of trust affecting how much risk a party will take. If trust is higher than perceived risk the trustor will take a risk, if perceived risk is higher they will not take the risk. Any assessment of risk will take into consideration the relationship with the trustee, along with contextual mechanisms – including the stakes involved, the balance of power in the relationship, the perception of the level of risk and the alternatives available to the trustor (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995). Risk taking leads to certain outcomes (including certain trustee behaviour) which in turn inform perceptions of employee trustworthiness, thus starting the cycle again.

The authors discuss other contextual mechanisms which affect trust development, even if they don't graphically account for these in their model. These include the impact of changes in the political climate on perceived trustworthiness, the role of third parties, and the effect of monitoring. Support has been found for this model in both face-to-face and virtual contexts (Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner, 1998; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Aubert and Kelsey, 2003). However, other influencing mechanisms proposed in the literature, such as the potential impact of category-based trust, role-based trust and rule-based trust (Kramer, 1999) or third parties (Burt and Knez, 1996) on perceptions of trustworthiness are excluded. Furthermore, while theirs was the first model to include characteristics of both the trustor and the trustee, the treatment of trustor characteristics lacks depth – ignoring some of the other possible influences such as values, self-efficacy and actual competence.

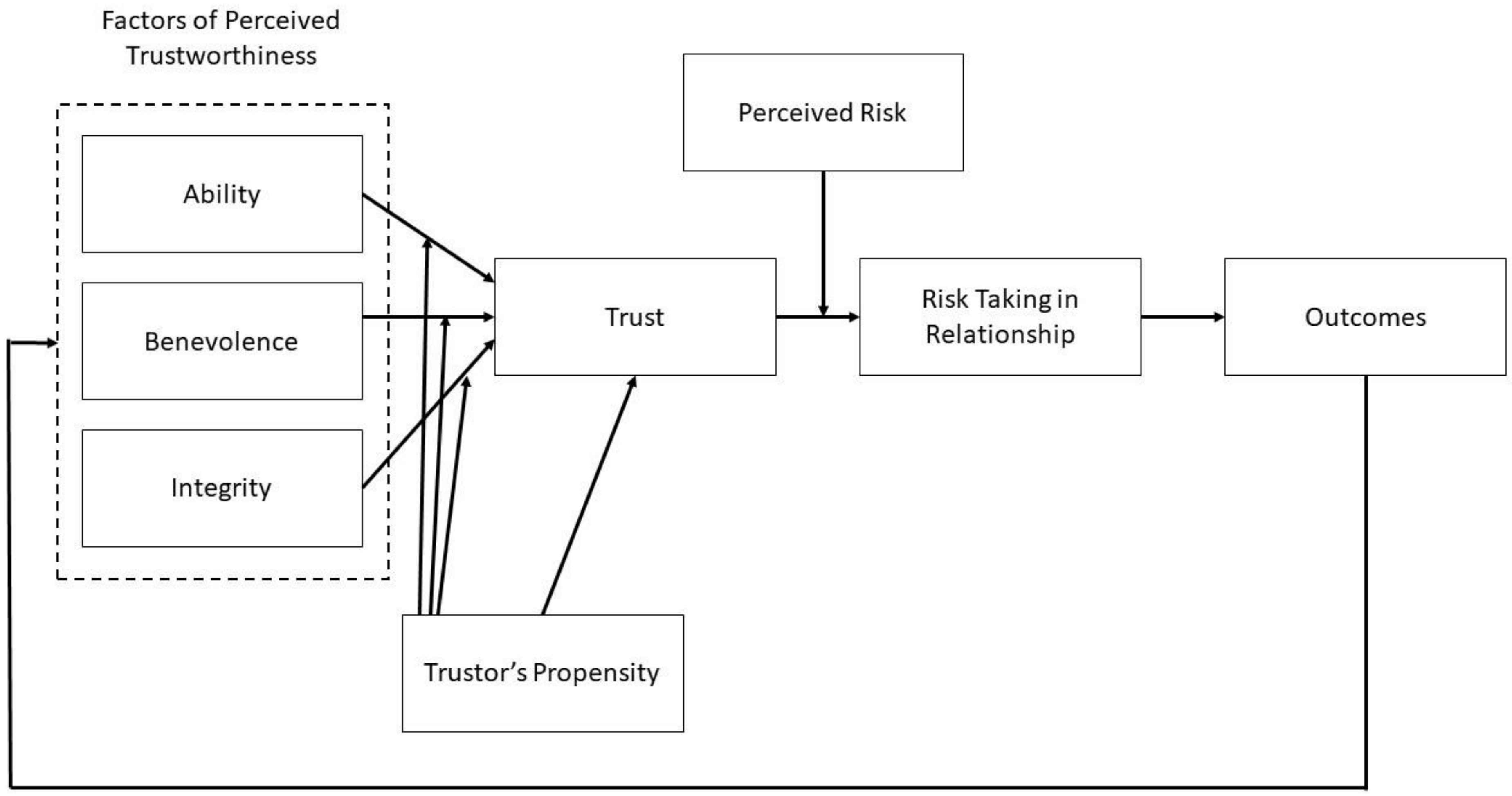

Factors of Perceived Trustworthiness
Ability
Benevolence
Integrity
Perceived Risk
Trust
Risk Taking in Relationship
Outcomes
Trustor's Propensity

Figure 2. 1: Model of Trust (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995, p.715)

Mayer*,* Davis and Schoorman (1995) highlight as a limitation, that their model is not designed to examine the development of mutual trust in a relationship. This is an important omission given the dyadic nature of trust. Research suggests that employee behaviour and intentions are most favourable when there is mutual trust between the manager and employee, with trust in the employee having unique consequences beyond trust in the manager (Brower *et al.,* 2009).

While Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) model does not specify a trustor or trustee, Whitener *et al.'s* (1998) model (figure 2.2) focuses specifically on managerial trustworthy behaviour, the antecedents to behaviour and the boundary conditions which impact upon employee perceptions of trust. Given the focus on manager-employee trust development this model is particularly relevant to the current study. It differs to Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) model in that instead of focusing on perceived trustworthiness, along the three dimensions of ability, benevolence and integrity (ABI), it speaks of the manifestation of benevolence (demonstration of concern) and integrity (behavioural consistency and behavioural integrity) in behaviours and includes competence as a boundary condition. The model also includes other behaviours which the authors argue have an impact on employee trust perceptions. Like Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995), Whitener *et al.* (1998) include propensity to trust. However, the latter's model goes further in highlighting other personal mechanisms (self-efficacy and values) which affect managerial trustworthy behaviours. Furthermore, Whitener *et al.'*s (1998) model encompasses a range of organisational and relational mechanisms which affect managerial trustworthy behaviour and boundary conditions which impact upon an employee's perception of trust based on this behaviour.

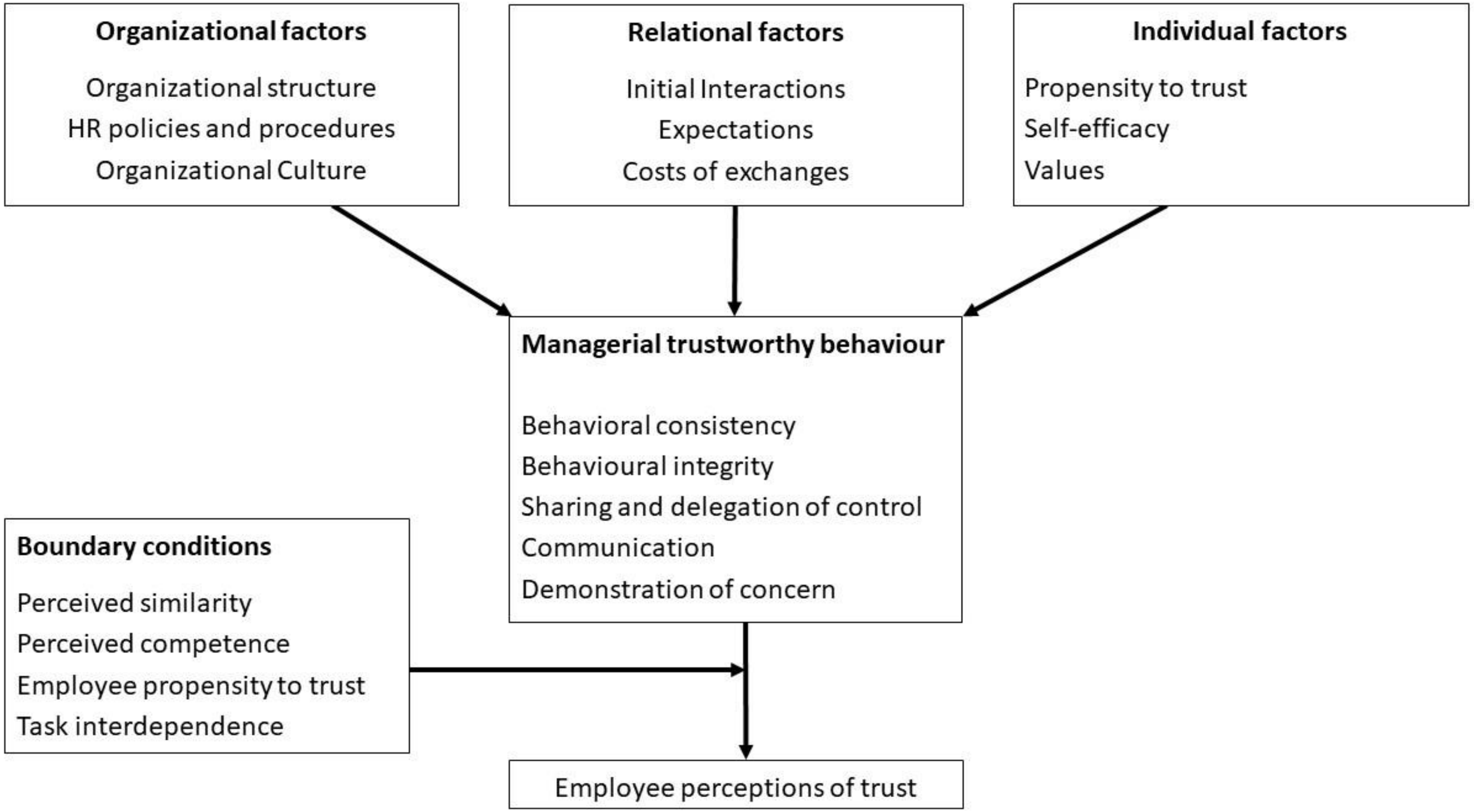

Organizational factors
Organizational structure
HR policies and procedures
Organizational Culture
Relational factors
Initial Interactions
Expectations
Costs of exchanges
Individual factors
Propensity to trust
Self-efficacy
Values
Managerial trustworthy behaviour
Behavioral consistency
Behavioural integrity
Sharing and delegation of control
Communication
Demonstration of concern
Boundary conditions
Perceived similarity
Perceived competence
Employee propensity to trust
Task interdependence
Employee perceptions of trust

Figure 2. 2: Exchange Framework for Initiating Managerial Trustworthy Behaviour (Whitener *et al.* (1998, p. 519)

However, while Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) model is dynamic in nature, Whitener *et al.'s* (1998) model does not include a feedback loop and so does not account for ongoing trust within the relationship. Such a feedback loop is important as a trust relationship is constantly evolving and every interaction has the potential to impact upon trust levels. Employee trust in a manager is likely to impact upon employee behaviours, which in turn will affect the manager's level of trust in the employee (relational factor) and their views towards existing behaviours and controls.

As discussed in section 2.5, there is a commonly held belief that individuals choose to trust others based on evidence of trustworthiness. While such cognition-based trust can be based on many of the mechanisms included in the two aforementioned models, such as perceptions of ability (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995) or competence (Whitener *et al.,* 1998) and integrity (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Whitener *et al.,* 1998), perceptions of benevolence (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995) or demonstration of concern (Whitener *et al.,* 1998) can influence affect-based trust. Although most trust studies do not differentiate between these two forms of trust, McAllister's (1995) model (figure 2.3) highlights the antecedents and consequences of both cognition- and affect-based trust, two distinct but related forms of interpersonal trust.

McAllister (1995) found no relationship between several antecedents proposed in the literature (role performance, cultural similarity and strong professional credentials) and cognition-based trust. However, he did find support for two antecedents to affect-based trust; interpersonal citizenship behaviour and frequent interaction.

In testing the behavioural outcomes of trust, McAllister (1995) found a link between affect-based trust and both need-based monitoring and citizenship behaviours (general citizenship behaviour (affiliative) and task specific citizenship behaviour (assistance-orientated) – both of which are important for collaboration. However, there was only partial support found for hypothesised links between management citizenship behaviours directed at peers and performance ratings. Results showed strong links between these behaviours and the supervisor's performance rating of the person engaging in these behaviours (trustor), but no performance link to those on the receiving end of the citizenship behaviours (trustee).

McAllister (1995) found empirical support for the distinction between cognition- and affect-based trust. In fact, he proposes that cognition-based trust is a necessary pre-cursor of affect-based trust, given a person's need to be confident in the reliability and dependability of another before investing emotionally in the relationship. Furthermore, although he did not test for it, McAllister (1995) proposed that others' views of the dependability of a peer, will most likely impact upon an individual's assessment of that peer. This brings to light the possible need to include the impact of third parties in models of trust. This discussion is revisited in chapter four, section 4.4.2.

However, McAllister's (1995) model, like Whitener *et al.'s* (1998) model, omits a feedback loop from behaviours to perceptions of trustworthiness. It also excludes any other mechanisms which may influence trust perceptions, such as the dispositional (Mayer *et al.,* 1995) or broader personal mechanisms (Whitener *et al.,* 1998). Moreover, McAllister’s (1995) final model focuses on affect-based trust; hypotheses relating to cognition-based trust, included in their initial model, were either unsupported or untested. However, subsequent research has found that cognitive-based trust may be more relevant to team performance than affective-based trust (Chua, Ingram and Morris, 2008; Hempel, Zhang, and Tjosvold, 2009).

Furthermore, McAllister’s (1995) model was tested empirically amongst triads of peers, with each individual asked to provide information on one colleague from the perspective of a focal manager and another colleague from the perspective of a peer. However, the focus of the study was on lateral interdependence, peers were randomly assigned to management positions for the purposes of the study. Trust was not examined within actual manager-employee dyads, where the antecedents to trust may differ from those antecedents found in peer dyads (Colquitt *et al.,* 2007).

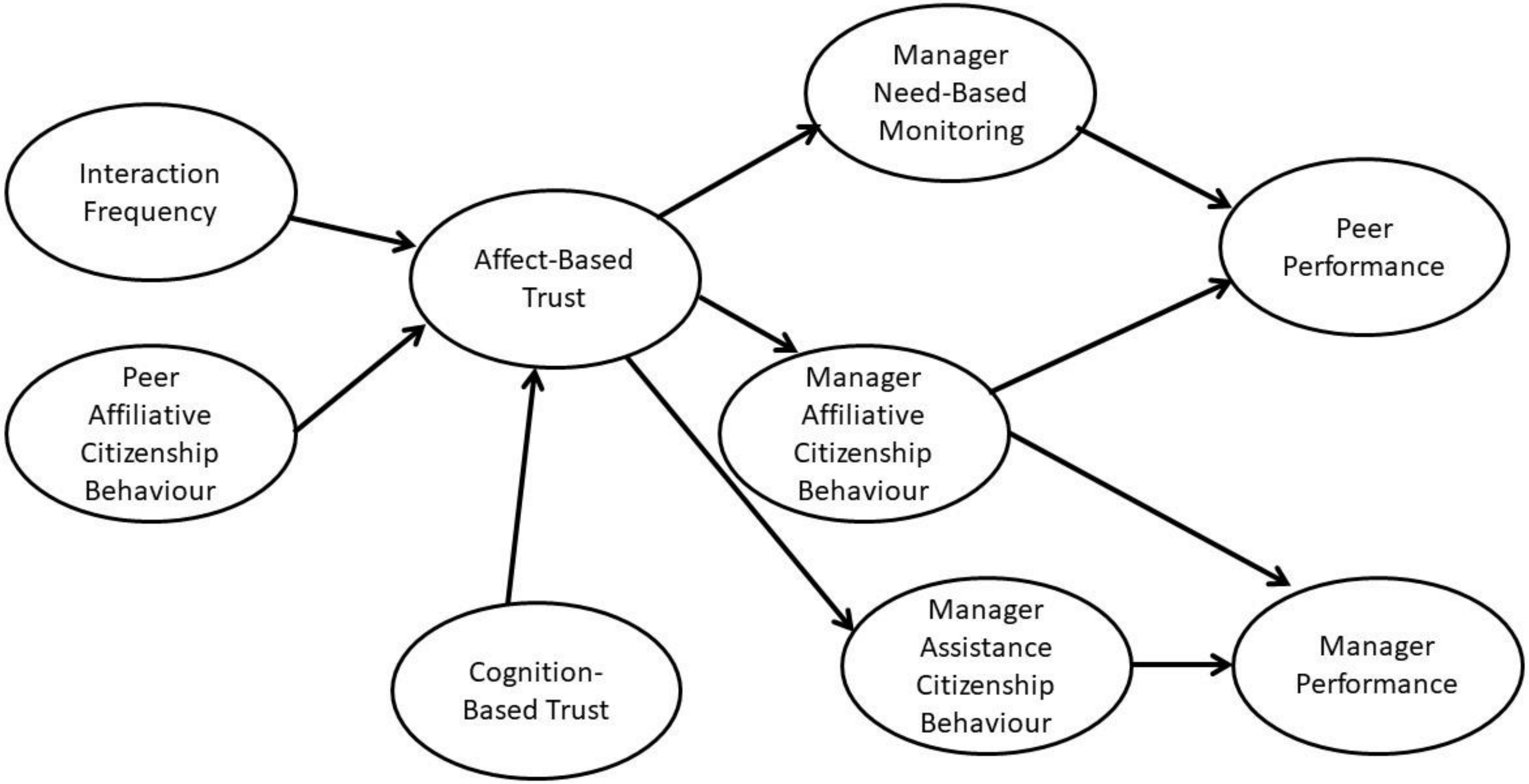

Interaction Frequency
Peer Affiliative Citizenship Behaviour
Cognition-Based Trust
Affect-Based Trust
Manager Need-Based Monitoring
Manager Affiliative Citizenship Behaviour
Manager Assistance Citizenship Behaviour
Peer Performance
Manager Performance

Figure 2. 3: The role of Trust in Interpersonal Relationships in Organisations (McAllister, 1995, p. 48)

Conventional theories of trust stress the development of cognition- or affect-based trust over time, as a result of ongoing interaction and a greater knowledge of the other (Blau, 1964; Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Burt and Knez, 1996; Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). However, McKnight *et al.'s* (1998) model (figure 2.4) supports the notion of swift trust (Meyerson *et al.,* 1996), whereby high initial trust can be found among strangers, who use substitutes for knowledge of others (including category-based trust, role-based trust, rule-based trust and knowledge from third parties – Kramer, 1999). Despite its specific focus this model shares some characteristics with the models proposed by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) and Whitener *et al.* (1998), namely disposition to trust (which is further sub-divided) and trusting beliefs – although it includes competence instead of ability (Mayer *et al.,* 1995) and predictability and honesty instead of integrity (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995). It also refers to the possible impact of organisational structures, although on perceptions of trust and intention to trust as opposed to on trustor behaviours (Whitener *et al.,* 1998).

McKnight *at al.'s* (1998) model differs from the Mayer *et al.'s* (1995) and Whitener *et al.'s* (1998) models in discussing cognitive processes which allow a trustor to form trusting beliefs towards the trustee in the absence of first-hand knowledge. McAllister (1995) did test for certain antecedents to cognition-based trust but found no support for same. The processes used to form trusting perceptions in the absence of first-hand knowledge are discussed in the early sections of chapter four.

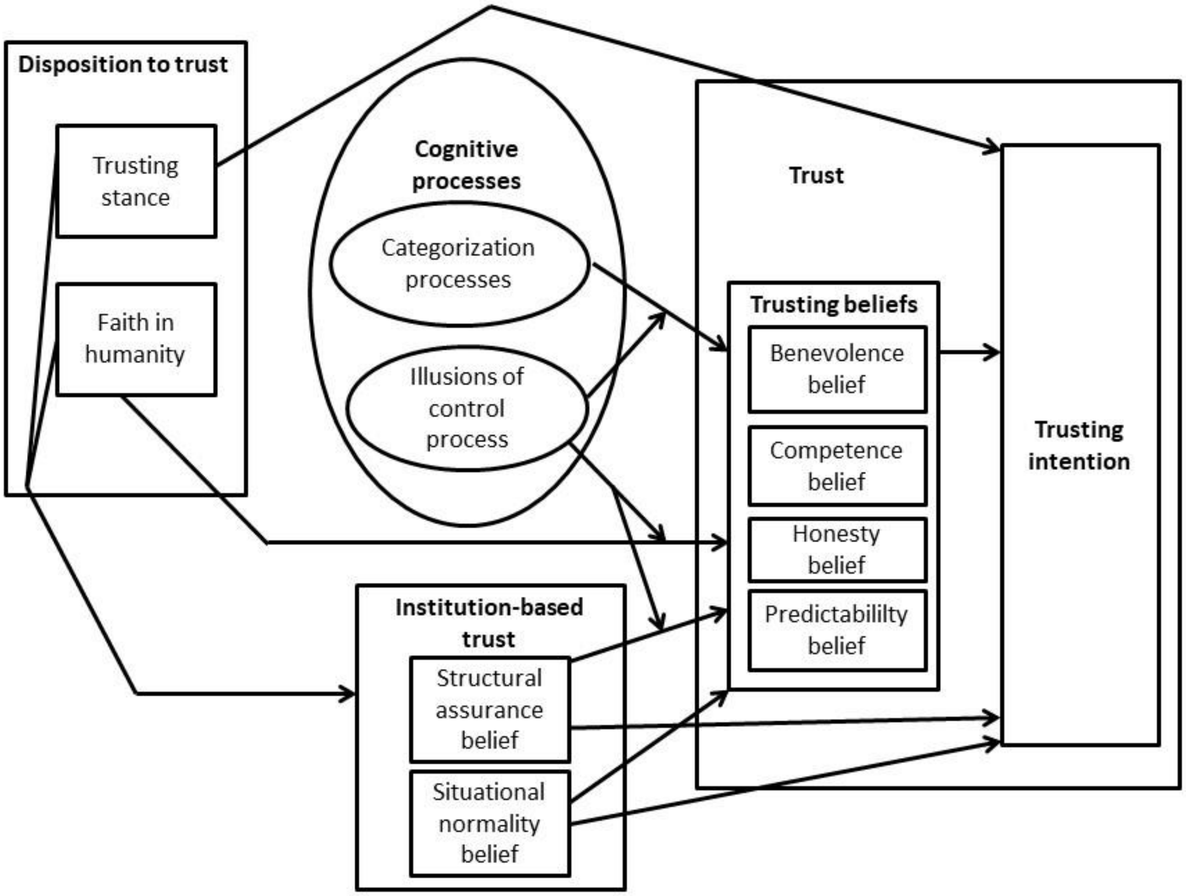

Disposition to trust
Trusting stance
Faith in humanity
Cognitive processes
Categorization processes
Illusions of control process
Trust
Trusting beliefs
Benevolence belief
Competence belief
Honesty belief
Predictabililty belief
Trusting intention
Institution-based trust
Structural assurance belief
Situational normality belief

Figure 2. 4: Detailed Model of Initial Formation of Trust (McKnight *et al.,* 1998, p.476)

As McKnight *et al.'s* (1998) model is focused solely on initial trust foundation it does not allow for trust development over time, based on reciprocation, first-hand knowledge and relational mechanisms. The model is also uni-directional and excludes, as do the models proposed by Whitener *et al.*, (1998) and McAllister (1995), the process of two-way trust development. Nonetheless, this model has important implications for new working arrangements, where employees are often required to work together with little or no face-to-face contact and with little opportunity to get to know each other. However, many of the antecedents of trust development at later stages of the relationship differ from this initial stage and so a comprehensive model of trust development, incorporating initial and later stages of the trust relationship, is required.

Each of the four models analysed above propose mechanisms which impact upon trust relationships. However, no model in itself provides a comprehensive picture of the manager-employee trust relationship. Furthermore, despite the fact that research has highlighted the benefits of mutual and reciprocal much of the empirical research focuses only on one side of the manager-employee relationship, namely the employee's trust in the manager (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002 and Colquitt *et al.,* 2007; Nienaber *et al.,* 2015; Jawahar *et al.,* 2019). These models, along with the content on dyadic trust development covered in chapter four, inform the creation of a framework for VT leader-member trust which is proposed in figure 4.3.

2.8 Conclusion

The level of interest in trust within the academic literature has grown significantly in recent decades. Academics from a variety of disciplines have contributed to this literature, bringing with them unique viewpoints and insights. While this initially led to conceptual confusion there is now broad agreement on the definition of trust, which is characterised by a willingness to be vulnerable in a situation of risk, based on positive expectations. Some disagreement remains in the literature on the exact relationship between trust and distrust, with some scholars arguing that they exist on the opposite end of the same continuum and others arguing that they are separate constructs which can coexist. However, if one adopts a domain specific view of trust then it is possible for an individual to both trust and distrust another person, on different criteria. While trust has been studied in many different relationships both within and between organisations trust between managers and employees is deemed to be the most resilient and one of the most important trust relationships.

A number of models of trust development have been proposed by trust researchers. While traditional models view trust as developing over time as a result of increased interaction and knowledge of the other party, relationships may begin with initial trust due to the use of substitutes for first-hand knowledge, including categorisation, institutional trust and disposition. However, researchers argue that this initial form of trust is fragile and that knowledge or the other party's trustworthiness will dominate trusting beliefs over time. A broad range of personal and organisational mechanisms will combine to influence this ongoing trust relationship.

Much of the literature on trust referenced in this chapter is set in the context of traditional face-to-face working environments. However, managers are increasingly managing people virtually, and research suggests that new leadership models and approaches may be required for this new working environment. The next chapter sets the context for this study, discussing the emergence of virtual teams and the importance of trust to the success of such teams.

CHAPTER 3: VIRTUAL TEAMS AND TRUST

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by discussing the emergence of virtual working and in particular VTs. Definitions of VTs are reviewed and an adapted version of an existing definition is adopted for this study. Within this, in accordance with the terminology used in VT literature to describe direct line managers (Zander *et al.*, 2012; Avolio *et al.,* 2014; Liao, 2017), the manager-employee virtual dyad is hereafter referred to as the leader-member dyad. While the title leader is used here, the definitional distinction between a manager and a leader (Kotter, 1988; Yukl, 1989) is recognised and the use of both terms, manager and leader, in this study aligns with my view of line management leadership and is consistent with previous researchers who used the terms interchangeably (Yukl, 1989). Following a discussion on VT definitions, the focus of the chapter then turns to the benefits and challenges associated with VTs. The chapter concludes with a discussion on trust in VTs.

3.2 Changes in working arrangements – the emergence of the Virtual Team

A variety of factors have changed the nature of business in the last number of decades. Organisations now face increasing demands relating to rapid environmental changes, globalization, and heightened technical complexity (Schaubroeck and Yu, 2017). Such changes have led organisations to change structures and processes in order to become more flexible and adaptable, moving to horizontal structures and placing greater emphasis on team-based work (Jones and George, 1998; Bell and Kozlowski, 2002; Kimble, 2011). However, the nature of teamwork itself has also changed. With greater connectivity, through advances in communication technologies, along with a more flexible approach to job design (Aubert and Kelsey, 2003) and a shift to knowledge work (Kayworth and Leidner, 2000), employees no longer have to be co-located. Employees can now work remotely, within or between countries.

All of these trends have led to the emergence of virtual teams (VTs) - also referred to as transnational teams (Shapiro *et al.,* 2002), global virtual teams (Kayworth and Leidner, 2000), computer-mediated teams (Wilson, Straus and McEvily, 2006) and e-teams (Zacarro and Bader, 2003). At the time of writing much of the world is in a form a lockdown due to Covid19. As such, the prevalence of virtual work has increased immeasurably in the past two months and high levels of adoption are set to continue (EY, 2020; Hern, 2020).

While remote working has grown considerably due to Covid19 related measures, its growth trajectory was already clear. Initially used in the 1990s for short-term projects, organisations began to make increasing use of such teams for routine tasks (Alsharo *et al.,* 2017). By 2009 a study of executives from a variety of industries across Europe, found that 78 percent of the 407 participants were working in VTs (Witchalls, 2009). A subsequent US-based study suggested that virtual teams were growing at an unprecedented pace, with 64 percent of participants claiming that at least 20 percent of their colleagues worked on VTs and 21 percent stating that over 60 percent of their employees worked on VTs (Bullock and Tucker

Klein, 2011). A 2013 study by the Business Research Consortium in collaboration with the American Management Association found that nine out of 10 of their 1500 plus respondents (globally) said that there were VTs in their organisations, prompting these authors to claim that VTs were the new normal and *the* team framework of the digital age (Dennis, Overholt and Vickers, 2014).

While it is difficult to determine the prevalence of VTs across specific organisations and in different countries, it is clear that VTs have emerged from a somewhat “exotic” niche phenomenon (Breuer, Hüffmeier and Hertel, 2016) to a situation where they are now regarded as ubiquitous (RW3 Culture Wizard, 2018). In an Irish context (the location of this study), a recent government study found that close to 50 percent of the 3500 participants worked remotely (DBEI, 2019). The authors note that these figures are likely to be skewed due to a high response rate from finance and ICT workers, there are a large number of multinational organisations operating in both sectors in Ireland, and previous studies have highlighted the prevalence of VTs in both the high-tech sector (Daim *et al.,* 2012) and in multinational organisations (SHRM, 2012). Nonetheless, it is clear from the various studies cited in this section that the adoption of virtual working and VTs was increasing steadily in advance of Covid19.

3.3 Defining the Virtual Team

VTs are similar to co-located teams in that they are made up of groups of people performing interdependent tasks with a common purpose, who are mutually accountable for their results and possess complementary expertise (Aubert and Kelsey, 2003, p. 576). However, VTs differ from co-located teams in a number of ways. Table 3.1 contains a diverse selection of VT definitions chosen from a range of studies. These definitions highlight several factors which can differentiate VTs from co-located teams, including the fact that VT members may be separated geographically (mentioned by all but Kristof *et al.*, (1995), and/or by time (Piccoli and Ives, 2003; DeRosa *et al.,* 2004; Hertel, Geister and Konradt, 2005) and the fact that the dominant form of communication is via technology (DeRosa *et al.,* 2004), also referred to as information technology (Townsend, DeMarie and Hendrickson, 1998; Zigurs, 2003), information and communication technologies (Piccoli and Ives, 2003), computer mediated communications (Walther and Bunz, 2005) or electronic communication (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Hentonnen and Blomqvist, 2005; Hertel, Geister and Konradt, 2005; Malhotra, Majchrzak and Rosen, 2007). In fact, Breuer *et al.,* (2020) argue that the reliance on electronic communication is the key defining element of all VT definitions.

However, just as co-located teams can differ in many ways, there are also various types of virtual teams and many internal dynamics, including leadership styles, will differ accordingly (Jackson, 1999). While most research treats VTs as a single category, sometimes comparing apples and oranges (Webster and Wong, 2008), they can in fact be quite different (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002). DeRosa *et al.* (2004) argue that it is important to recognise these differences as treating all VTs as if they are the same impedes our understanding of these teams. The factors which differentiate VTs are now discussed in detail prior to presenting the definition chosen for this study.

DEFINITION	AUTHOR(S)
“groups of geographically and/or organizationally dispersed co-workers that are assembled using a combination of telecommunications and information technologies to accomplish an organizational task”	Townsend, DeMarie and Hendrickson (1998, p.18)
“a collection of individuals who are geographically and/or organizationally or otherwise dispersed and who collaborate via communication and information technologies in order to accomplish a specific goal”	Zigurs (2003, p. 340)
“ a self-managed knowledge work team, with distributed expertise, that forms and disbands to address a specific organizational goal”	Kristof et al. (1995, p. 230)
“a temporary, culturally diverse, geographically dispersed, electronically communicating work group”	Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999, p.792)
“teams of people who work interdependently across space, time and organizational boundaries through the use of technology to facilitate communication and collaboration”	DeRosa et al. (2004, p.219)
“Groups of geographically and/or temporally dispersed individuals brought together via information and telecommunication technologies (DeSanctis and Poole, 1997; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Lipnack and Stamps, 1997; Powell et al, 2004)”	Picolli and Ives (2003, p.365)
“ a boundaryless network organization form where a temporary team is assembled on an as-needed basis for the duration of a task and staffed by members who are separated by geographic distance and who use computer-mediated communications as their primary form of communication and interpersonal contact”.	Kelsey (1999, p.104)
“Virtual teams are teams whose members are geographically distributed, requiring them to work together through electronic means with minimal face-to-face interactions”	Malhotra, Majchrzak and Rosen (2007, p. 60)
“a non-temporary, diverse, geographically dispersed and electronically communicating work group”	Henttonten and Blomqvist (2005, p.108)
“ ..virtual teams consist of (a) two or more persons who (b) collaborate interactively to achieve common goals, while (c) at least one of the team members works at a different location, organization, or at a different time so that (d) communication and coordination is predominantly based on electronic communication media (e-mail, fax, phone, video conference, etc.”	Hertel, Geister and Konradt (2005, p.71)
“A global virtual team is an example of a new organization form, where a temporary team is assembled on an as-needed basis for the duration of a task, and staffed by members from the far corners of the world. In such a team, members (1) physically remain on different continents and in different countries, (2) interact primarily through the use of computer-mediated communication technologies (electronic mail, videoconferencing, etc.) and (3) rarely or never see each other in person”.	Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner (1998, p.30)

Table 3. 1: Virtual Team Definitions

Virtual teams can be fully virtual (where members never meet), or hybrid (Fiol and O'Connor, 2005), the latter of which have been found to be more common in studies (Webster and Wong, 2008). In fact, researchers are moving away from contrasting VTs with co-located teams to discussing the virtuality of all teams (Zigurs, 2003; Martins *et al.,* 2004; Schaubroeck and Yu, 2017; Breuer *et al.,* 2020), in the belief that that it is more sensible to think of a team along a continuum of virtuality. This is the view adopted in the current study.

Global Virtual Teams (GVTs) (Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner, 1998; Daim et al., 2012) are viewed in this study as a type of VT. Members of GVTs live and work in different countries (Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000), whereas in general members of VTs may or may not live in different countries. The degree to which the team is spread out geographically, referred to geographic dispersion (Zigurs, 2003, p.340), often goes hand in hand with temporal dispersion, given the differences in time zones between countries. However, this is not always the case, as some teams work in different locations but at the same time. As such, I believe it is important to adopt an inclusive definition regarding geographical and temporal dispersion.

VT members may differ culturally, for example in relation to collectivism, individualism and power distance (Hofstede, 1980), or on a range of other cultural factors, if one is to adopt a broader perspective on culture. Chao and Moon (2005), for instance, consider an individual's cultural mosaic as encompassing demographic tiles (physical in nature or inherited from one's parents and ancestors e.g. age, gender, race, and ethnicity); geographic tiles (physical features of a region e.g. climate, temperature, coastal– inland, urban–rural, and regional–country distinctions) and associative tiles (all groups with whom an individual chooses to identify, formal and informal e.g. one's family, religion, profession, employer, politics, and avocations). Chao and Moon's (2005) broader conceptualisation of culture leaves open the possibility of VT members being quite diverse when it comes to demographic and geographic tiles, but similar regarding associative tiles - see section 4.4.1 for a discussion on categorisation-based trust.

VTs can also be differentiated based on the timespan or lifecycle of the team. Some definitions of VTs in table 3.1 highlight the temporary nature of the team, often focused around a project or task (Mowshowitz, 1997; Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner, 1998; Mancini, 2010) while other definitions specifically highlight the non-temporary nature of VTs (Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005), or the fact that VTs can be either temporary or long lasting (Lipnack and Stamps, 1997; Townsend, DeMarie and Hendrickson, 1998; Duarte and Snyder, 1999). The lifecycle of a VT is often dependent upon the nature of the task, with more complex tasks requiring a relatively stable membership, and less complex tasks characterised by a dynamic membership, with people leaving once tasks are complete (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002). The focus of this study is on non-temporary teams.

Membership or member roles is a distinguishable feature of VTs. Team members may belong to a range of teams, some of which may be local co-located teams (Zigurs, 2003) and others which may even be outside the organisation (see references to organisational dispersion or working across organisational boundaries in table 3.1 - Townsend, DeMarie and Hendrickson, 1998; Zigurs, 2003; DeRosa *et al.,* 2004; Kimble, 2011). As a result, members can leave the team before the completion of a task, member roles in VTs are therefore often more dynamic (Townsend, DeSanctis and Hendrickson, 1998). This study focuses only on VTs comprised of colleagues from the same organisation.

The aforementioned differences are of significant importance to members and leaders of VTs. It is worth noting that while Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) define VTs as self-managed (table 3.1), most definitions do not do so and for the purposes of this study leadership is deemed an important consideration, as VT leaders may have to adopt a different approach or style depending on the lifecycle and diversity within the team. It is argued (De Sanctis and Poole, 1997) that the greater the team diversity the more time will be required to form strong bonds and that teams that are more globally dispersed and who are only together for short periods of time may be the most difficult to manage (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002). Furthermore, if rich communication technologies are required the leader will have to ensure that they are comfortable using these technologies or else they risk damaging their reputation and possibly losing the respect of team members. This may impact upon perceptions of trustworthiness along the ability domain (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995).

The preceding discussion highlighted both the similarities and possible differences between virtual teams. Given the broad range of factors on which VTs can differ, it makes sense to adopt an inclusive definition of a VT as '*a team whose members might be culturally,* *temporarily and/or geographically dispersed and who collaborate primarily via communication and information technologies in order to accomplish specific goals'.*

The focus of this study is on non-temporary, intra-organisational VTs whose members may be geographically or otherwise dispersed. While leaders and members will primarily rely on electronic communication, there may be some face-to-face communication – truly virtual teams, where members only communicate through technology are quite rare (Kimble, 2011). While extreme cases where all team members work from different locations are possible, most existing virtual teams have some face-to-face contact (Hertel, Geister and Konradt, 2005).

The aforementioned growth of virtual teams has no doubt been influenced by their many potential benefits and this is where the focus of the discussion now turns.

3.4 Benefits of Virtual Teams

The continued growth in VT adoption may be attributed in large part to the benefits which they can potentially bring to organisations. It is argued that VTs can offer organisations the flexibility to respond quickly to competition (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002) or indeed to meet any need through the rapid formation and disbanding of teams (Townsend, DeMarie and Hendrickson, 1998; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Solomon, 2001; DeRosa *et al,* 2004). VTs have been linked to shorter cycle times (Lipnack and Stamps, 1997), as work can be completed around the clock (Hertel, Geister and Konradt, 2005), using a 'relay race' approach to ensure a continuous workflow (Cascio, 2000). VTs allow organisations to maintain a global presence (Monalisa *et al.,* 2008) and to bring together skilled personnel, with the required knowledge and skills, regardless of their location (Kayworth and Leidner, 2000; Lipnack and Stamps, 2000; Bell and Kozlowski, 2002; Zaccaro and Bader, 2003; Hertel, Geister and Konradt, 2005; Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005). This, it is argued, allows organisations to compose teams to tackle problems and pursue new opportunities (Shaubroeck and Yu, 2017), bringing together a greater number of team members (Anderson, McEwan and Carletta, 2007), with a greater variety of cultural backgrounds, perspectives or experience levels (Hunsaker and Hunsaker, 2008; Kirkman *et al*., 2002; Greenberg, Greenberg and Antonucci, 2007).

Moreover, it is claimed that VTs can facilitate improved time to market, enhanced customer service, a closer connection to suppliers and customers (Hertel, Geister and Konradt, 2005), reduced office and travel expenses (Kayworth and Leidner, 2000; DeRosa *et al.,* 2004; Hertel, Geister and Konradt, 2005) and less travel time (DeRosa *et al.,* 2004). Empirical studies have found greater levels of idea generation in VTs (Dennis and Valacich, 1993) along with significant cost savings and more successful projects delivered in a shorter timeframe (Majchrzak *et al.,* 2004).

From an employee perspective virtual working can reduce commuting time, allow for greater focus (EY, 2020) and better work-life balance (Cook, 2019), while a greater level of remote working can lead to significant environmental benefits (Green Child Magazine, 2020).

The aforementioned benefits are no doubt driving VT adoption as organisations look to compete in an increasingly competitive global environment. Given the prevalence of VT usage, it seems reasonable that organisations and VT leaders would be concerned with ensuring effective VT functioning. However, despite the potential benefits discussed above, VTs are not without their problems and there can be additional challenges inherent in leading virtual teams. Zigurs (2003) argues that the more virtual a team becomes, characterised by greater dispersion on a number of factors, the more complex the issues it must address in order to function effectively. Findings on VT outcomes have been mixed (Gilson *et al.,* 2015; Schaubroeck and Yu, 2017). The next section discusses the challenges associated with virtual teams and in particular the issues relating to leading VTs – an important consideration given the focus of this study on leader-member relationships.

3.5 Challenges Associated with Virtual Teams

Despite the potential benefits associated with VTs, the literature suggests that these teams often fail to meet their potential (Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000; Greenberg, Greenberg and Antonucci, 2007; Savolainen, 2014). Discontinuities of geography, time zones, organisational and national cultures, work practices and technology all present specific challenges (Dube and Robey, 2008). According to DeSanctis and Monge (1999) VTs are more likely to experience problems with communication and coordination. From a leader perspective it can be difficult to supervise team members and ensure that they are using their time productively (Hertel, Geister and Konradt, 2005). Challenges such as social loafing and absenteeism common to co-located teams, can become amplified in VTs (O’Hara Devereaux and Johansen, 1994; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999), while commitment to other teams can lead to misunderstandings, role overload, role ambiguity and goal conflicts (O'Hara Devereaux and Johansen, 1994; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Hertel, Geister and Konradt, 2005). In fact, Costa *et al.* (2018) in their review of the literature on trust in work teams highlight the dearth of research into the impact of multiple team memberships on trust in teams.

Furthermore, Ross (2006) argues that the lack of face-to-face contact makes it easier to hide errors and problems, which can become disastrous when not dealt with openly. Traditional social and cultural norms are not available for influencing attitudes and behaviours (Greenberg, Greenberg and Antonucci, 2007) and cultural and language difficulties become magnified (Ross, 2006). A lack of face-to-face contact can also leave some members feeling isolated (DeRosa *et al.,* 2004; Dube and Robey, 2008), which may lead to dissatisfaction and turnover if left unmanaged.

It has been suggested technology-mediated communication can exacerbate communication related challenges (Schaubroeck and Yu, 2017) and that the very ICT tools which enable virtual teamwork can also hinder the development of group cohesion and satisfaction (Warkentin *et al.,* 1997) and reduce knowledge sharing (Griffith *et al.,* 2003; Dube and Robey, 2008). Respondents in Dube and Robey's (2008) study cited difficulties associated with using ICTs, and their lack of comfort compared with face-to-face communication. Furthermore, ICTs may not be sufficient to bridge cultural differences (Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000) and they may lead to a sense of 'always on' connectivity which impacts upon work-life balance, which in turn might damage trust (Hacker *et al.,* 2019). Paradoxically technology has been described as the Achilles' heel of virtual collaborative relationships (Paul and McDaniel, 2004).

The various challenges associated with VTs have the potential to mitigate, and in some cases supersede, the advantages of VTs (Schaubroeck and Yu, 2017). Such challenges raise serious concerns about leading, controlling and motivating VT members (Aubert and Kelsey, 2003; Malhotra, Majchrzak and Rosen, 2007), managing performance and working on team development (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002). Leadership of VTs, a form of 'e-leadership', is therefore challenging and traditional leadership theories and skills may not be suitable (Avolio and Kahai, 2003; Pauleen, 2003) – see section 4.7 for a discussion on leadership theories and styles.

In fact, it has been argued that most managers (and management theory) have not kept pace with the rate of technological advancement (Witchalls, 2009) and that the use of VTs has outpaced our understanding of them (Oakley, 1998). In recent years authors have lamented the lack of research into leadership of virtual teams (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002) from which leaders can seek guidance, or empirical studies addressing the attributes of VT leaders (Hertel, Geister and Konradt, 2005) to guide organisations when making such appointments. Virtual leadership roles are not fully understood and given their complexity they need more scholarly attention (Zuofa and Ochieng, 2017).

E-leadership roles are viewed as somewhat different from traditional leadership roles, and may require a greater emphasis on human relations and interaction skills (Savolainen, 2014). E-leaders in Savolainen's (2014) study noted that getting a clear picture of the employee's daily life was one of their most difficult challenges. Zigurs (2003) claims that VT leaders must devise new ways of monitoring employees along with providing timely feedback and resolving problems. However, any such monitoring may negatively impact upon trust within the leader-member dyad – see section 4.8.

DeRosa *et al.* (2004) note the importance of leaders developing strong interpersonal relationships with team members. As discussed throughout chapter two, trust is an essential ingredient of successful interpersonal relationships and in fact it has been identified as critical to the success of VTs (Hertel, Konradt and Lehmann, 2004), and a key factor in successful leader-member relationships (Pauleen, 2003). In fact, Hacker *et al.* (2019) concluded, based on a systematic review of multidisciplinary literature on trust in VTs, that the challenges of VT leadership are not sufficiently addressed in the current research but note that trust is one of the most promising solutions for overcoming myriad problems.

3.6 Trust in Virtual Teams

The study of trust in VTs is multidisciplinary in nature, with contributions most common within the computer science, communication and management disciplines (Hacker *et al.,* 2019). Within this literature the importance of trust has been well documented. It is argued that a basic level of trust must exist between team members - to make up for a lack of face-to-face contact (Monalisa *et al.,* 2008), to reduce concerns about others' behaviour and to facilitate interdependence (Greenberg, Greenberg and Antonucci, 2007).

Trust has been identified as particularly important for knowledge sharing and collaboration in a virtual environment (Alsharo *et al.,* 2017), acting like a glue that binds collaborators in their faith that neither party will behave opportunistically (Brown, Poole and Rodgers, 2004). It has also been described as the emotional link that connects members of a VT (Lipnack and Stamps, 1997) preventing physical distance from creating a psychological distance (O'Hara, Devereux and Johansen, 1994).

In their study conducted at IBM, Sun Microsystems and Motorola, Lipnack and Stamps (1997) found trust to be a prerequisite to the success of VTs, while Paul and McDaniel (2004) found integrated trust (comprised of calculative-, competence- and relational-based trust – discussed throughout chapter 4) to have a positive impact on virtual collaborative relationship performance. More recently, half of the respondents in Dennis, Overholt and Vickers' (2014) study agreed that VTs require a greater emphasis on trust than co-located teams.

Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner (1998) found that high trust VTs exhibit better team dynamics, are more proactive, focused on task output and have an optimistic spirit, dynamic leadership, frequent interactions with few gaps and substantive, predictable feedback. Conversely, low trust VTs focus on process rather than task and are characterised by a pessimistic team spirit, static leadership, infrequent communications with many gaps, and unpredictable and non-substantive feedback.

Finally, a meta-analysis conducted by Breuer, Hüffmeier and Hertel (2016) found team trust to be positively related to team effectiveness criteria (including: team-related attitudes, information processing in teams, and team performance), along with risk taking, team satisfaction, team cohesion and team commitment. Given these findings it is perhaps no surprise that many argue for the centrality of trust to the success or failure of VTs (Handy, 1995; Kanawattanachai and Yoo, 2002; Zaccaro and Bader, 2003; Daim *et al.,* 2012; Schaubroeck and Yu, 2017).

However, while the importance of trust has been highlighted in the VT literature, more so than the literature on face-to-face teams, it is unclear whether the antecedents relating to perceived trustworthiness are similar in both team types (Breuer *et al.,* 2020). While some research has found that trust forms in a similar manner in VTs and co-located teams (Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005) other research suggests that trust forms differently in a virtual environment, that there are certain challenges unique to VTs (Coppola *et al.,* 2004) and that organisations may need assistance in dealing with trust related challenges.

In a 2009 report conducted by the Economist (Witchalls, 2009) 'difficulty in building camaraderie and trust' was rated as the third biggest challenge, cited by 44 percent of respondents. Kimble (2011) also found issues of trust to be a serious impediment to the success of virtual teams in a range of organisations. In a subsequent study of virtual team members in 102 countries (RW3, 2012), 75 percent of respondents cited difficulties in establishing rapport and trust as their most significant challenge, while two thirds of respondents to Dennis, Overholt and Vickers' (2014) study reported trust building to be a challenge, with one third citing it as a major challenge.

Furthermore, while there has been a growth in research into trust and VTs in recent years much of this research has been conducted in simulated settings with college students (Iacono and Weisband, 1997; Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Kayworth and Leidner, 2000; Kanawattanachai and Yoo, 2002; Piccoli and Ives, 2003; Walther and Bunz, 2005; Krebs, Hobman and Bordia, 2006; Wilson, Straus and McEvily, 2006; Robert *et al.,* 2009; Chen *et al.,* 2011). There have been relatively few studies conducted in field settings, leading to many authors (Kanawattanachai and Yoo 2002; Martins *et al.* 2004; Krebs, Hobman and Bordia, 2006) calling for research in organisational settings, in order to advance the literature.

While trust between team members is the dominant focus of the trust-virtual teams literature and studies on team dynamics are almost ubiquitous, there has been comparatively little focus on trust development in leader-member relationships (Hertel, Geister and Konradt, 2005), especially from a management viewpoint (Brower *et al.,* 2009). This lack of research is surprising as trust between employees and their line manager has been identified as the most important trust relationship within organisations (Hope-Hailey *et al.,* 2012). Furthermore, studies have highlighted the importance of trust building competencies for virtual leaders (Avolio and Kahai, 2003; Schaubroeck and Yu, 2017). Without further bi-directional research at the leader-member level, it is difficult to know the specific mechanisms which influence trust development in this dyad.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature on Virtual Teams (VTs) and trust. VTs have become increasingly prevalent in recent years. A form of team where members might be culturally, temporally and/or geographically dispersed and communicate primarily via technology, VTs may offer many benefits over co-located teams. However, VTs face many unique challenges and do not always produce the desired outcomes. Research suggests that trust is central to VT effectiveness. However, studies of trust in VTs have been largely focused at the team member level, with little focus on the leader-member dyad, despite the importance of this dyad in modern organisations (Ferris, *et al.,* 2009; Martinez *et al.,* 2012; Jawahar *et al.,* 2019). This member-member research may offer limited insights into leader-member trust development as research suggests that different mechanisms influence the latter relationship when compared to the former (Gillespie, 2003). Therefore, it is not known how trust develops in VT leader-member dyads. Some or all of the mechanisms identified in the trust models presented in section 2.7 may influence trust in this dyad, or alternative factors might be more prevalent. The next chapter analyses the mechanisms identified in chapter two in further detail and discusses the research conducted thus far in the VT literature in an effort to explain how trust develops in the leader-member VT dyad.

CHAPTER 4: TRUST DEVELOPMENT IN THE VIRTUAL LEADER-MEMBER DYAD

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the range of mechanisms which have been identified as antecedents to trust in co-located relationships and analyses the research conducted thus far in the VT literature. The purpose of this study is to explain how trust is built and maintained between leaders and members of VTs. As the impact of specific antecedents is likely to vary depending on the stage of the relationship (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996; McKnight *et al.,* 1998; Robert, Dennis and Hung, 2009), this chapter adopts a temporal view to the development of trust. The chapter begins by discussing lower levels of initial trust such as deterrence-based trust, calculus-based trust and quick forming swift trust, a fragile form of initial trust. The antecedents to lower levels of trust identified in the literature are then analysed in detail in the context of virtual settings. The focus of the chapter then turns to higher levels of trust. Characteristics of trustworthiness are examined, followed by a detailed discussion of the behaviours that are deemed to signify trustworthiness. A section on leadership behaviours and theories is followed by discussions on control and communication. The chapter concludes with the presentation of a theoretical framework for leader-member VT trust (figure 4.3), to guide the primary research, and a discussion of the primary research objectives.

4.2 The Initial Phase

The initial phase of a relationship is one in which the parties are unfamiliar with each other and what they do know is not from first-hand, personal experience. This phase of a relationship is characterised by uncertainty and doubt, as parties try to ascertain the right level of trust to accord the other (McKnight and Chervany, 2006). This decision to trust is important as many crucial transactions such as negotiations, sales, chance business meetings and temporary tasks (Meyerson *et al.,* 1996) can occur during this phase. This phase is also important as opinions and beliefs are formed early and may be maintained (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; McKnight and Chervany, 2006), thus impacting longer term relationships.

There are two dominant views of trust in the initial phase of a relationship. Traditional models (Blau, 1964; Burt and Knez, 1996; Currall and Epstein, 2003) would suggest that relationships begin at the neutral point and change over time as a result of interactions and visibility of behaviours. Jones and George believe that at the beginning of a social encounter, each person does not simply assume that the other is not trustworthy, in fact they suspend belief about the other person’s values or trustworthiness (1998).

For Virtual Teams (VTs) there are considerable challenges related to trust building between team members who might not have previous first-hand knowledge of each other, may be from different professional backgrounds and cultures, and work across different time zones, communicating primarily via ICTs (Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005). Therefore, traditional trust models would assume a low level of initial trust for VTs (Robert, Dennis and Hung, 2009).

However, swift trust (Meyerson *et al.,* 1996) challenges the assumption of traditional trust models. Swift trust allows for the possibility that individuals have higher levels of initial trust based on a number of factors including the characteristics of the trustee, the individual's natural disposition to trusting others and feedback from third parties. McKnight *et al.'s* (1998) model of initial trust development (figure 2.6) effectively captures many of the factors which may lead to relationships beginning with a certain level of trust. This model proposes that trust can be built quickly, supporting Meyerson *et al.*'s (1996) work on 'swift trust' and challenging the traditional assumption (Blau, 1964; Burt and Knez, 1996) that trust is built gradually over time. This opens up the possibility that individuals, in a highly connected business environment, may begin relationships with some form of trust attitude already formed, even if this must be then tested or validated through first-hand experience.

Models of trust development suggest that trust ranges from initial levels of either deterrence-based trust or calculus-based trust through process- or knowledge-based trust (based on increased interaction and knowledge of the other), to higher levels of relational- or identification-based trust (based on shared values and a strong emotional connection) (Shapiro *et al.,* 1992; Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). Swift trust is referred to as a fragile form of trust (Robert, Dennis and Hung, 2009) and therefore it is categorised as a form of initial trust in the ensuing discussion, above deterrence-based trust and category-based trust, but below knowledge-based trust. With the exception of swift trust, the aforementioned trust levels are generally viewed as sequential, with the achievement of trust at one level enabling trust at the next level (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). However, higher levels of trust might be difficult to reach or may not be desirable; one level is not necessarily better than the previous.

Furthermore, the nature of virtual work may make it difficult to develop high trust relationships, characterised by strong social and relational ties. Due to the dearth of research into trust in leader-member VT dyads, it is not known if these levels of trust are achievable and if there are, how they develop. Trust research suggests that initial forms of trust can influence ongoing trust development and higher levels of trust and that initial interactions can make a lasting impact. However, is this the case in virtual dyads and if so in what way is this manifest? Initial levels of trust are now discussed in detail, 'initial' refers here to when parties first meet or interact (McKnight *et al.,* 1998).

4.3 Initial levels of trust

One of the lowest forms of trust, deterrence-based trust, was first introduced by Shapiro *et al.* (1992) who noted that it was characterised by low risk and forced compliance. These authors argued that people decide to trust due to the presence of deterrents which safeguard them against harm. Lewicki and Bunker (1996) later suggested that calculus-based trust was a more suitable name for this level of trust, arguing that individuals, while influenced by deterrents, were also motivated by possible future rewards. As such calculus-based trust involves a cost-benefit analysis, or rational-choice behavioural approach (Lewicki *et al.,* 2006) and it has also been labelled as calculative trust (Child, 1998; Lane, 1998); rational trust (Gambetta, 1988a; Williamson, 1993a; Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995), commitment trust (Newell and Swan, 2000) and contractual trust (Sako, 1998).

According to Tyler and Degoey (1996) where trust is calculative or instrumental in nature (and not relational) judgments about the competence of authorities should be the most important factor when deciding whether or not to accept a decision. Rousseau *et al.* (1998) suggest that calculus-based trust relies on credible information about another, along with the existence of deterrence. This credible information may therefore relate to ability, as suggested by Tyler and Degoey (1996) or to other trustworthiness factors discussed in section 2.4, such as benevolence or integrity. In the absence of deeper levels of knowledge-based trust (see section 4.5 for a discussion) i.e. at the early stages of relationships, this credible information could come from categorisation or third parties - discussed in section 4.4. This is important in the context of VTs as individuals, when joining new teams, may not have had previous opportunities to develop first-hand knowledge of their new subordinates or leaders, given their geographic dispersion (Zigurs, 2003), and therefore their decision to trust may be influenced by a range of antecedents.

However, while individuals may be influenced by knowledge of the other, Lewicki and Bunker (1996) and Shapiro *et al.* (1992) argue that deterrence is still a more dominant motivator at this stage of the relationship when trust is non-relational in nature. McKnight and Chervany (2006) note that structural assurance may be an antecedent to calculus-based trust, providing the legal or other contextual sanctions that allow this form of trust to develop. However, this view of deterrence being the dominant motivator could be construed as being somewhat cynical or simplistic. While it may be true for some people, others may have a higher disposition to trust others (see section 4.4.3) or may wish to build high trust relationships quickly and as such will be willing to take risks. In these cases deterrence may not be the dominant factor.

Numerous trust researchers have questioned the concepts of calculus- or deterrence-based trust. Bachmann (2006) argues that it is misleading to assume that a trustor can calculate the level of risk. Kramer (1999) questions the notion of calculus-based trust, given that a deep suspicion of the other remains and Williamson (1993b) states that calculative trust is a contradiction in terms. Furthermore, Bromiley and Harris (2006) believe that trust and calculativeness are not mutually exclusive but that they are qualitatively different constructs. They argue that a person's behaviour towards another could reflect trusting or calculative beliefs or both. As deterrence-based trust only exists where compliance is expected due to the existence of sanctions (Shapiro *et al.,* 1992), this could be considered foreign to the notion of trust (Nooteboom, 2006). However, trust and deterrence cannot be totally separated as trust involves risk taking and deterrents may be useful in reducing the level of risk and encouraging trusting behaviours (risk-taking).

Luhmann (1979) views trust as thoughtless or routinized, not something which is weighted up rationally against risk. However, while this may be the case in existing relationships, where a decision on the trustworthiness of the other, or trust attitude (Whitener *et al.,* 1998) has been formed and decisions to trust can be made quite quickly, risk is often higher in new relationships and in these situations the decision to trust could be more rational in nature, and dependent on deterrents.

The discussion on definitions of trust (section 2.2) highlighted the centrality of risk and vulnerability to trust. Therefore, instead of getting caught up in an argument about whether calculus- or deterrence-based trust are misnomers, it would be more useful to view trust as existing only where risk is present, no matter how small the risk is, and to view trust which is based on calculation and deterrence as low-level trust. I agree with the view that trust is something greater than pure deterrence. Calculus-based trust is a low form of trust, given that there is some opportunity for opportunism and this has to be weighed against the trustor's belief in the trustworthiness of the trustee. As the knowledge of others increases and relationships develop, stronger forms of trust may emerge.

As previously mentioned some authors have challenged the notion of relationships beginning with zero trust. Meyerson *et al.'s* (1996) work on Swift Trust has been supported by the work of McKnight et al. (1998) and subsequently in a range of other studies (Zaheer *et al.,* 1998; Cunningham and MacGregor, 2000; Oliver and Montgomery, 2001; Williams, 2001; Siau and Shen, 2003; Gefen, 2004). While swift trust has been identified in virtual teams (Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner, 1998; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999) much of this research has focused at the member level in temporary teams. While Kanawattanachai and Loo (2002) found that high performing teams were able to establish trust quickly and then maintain it over time, their study was focused over a relatively short eight week period. While fragile forms of initial swift trust have been identified in temporary VTs*,* this form of characteristic-based cognitive trust may only be useful in the early stages of a VT; once members generate sufficient knowledge of each other knowledge-based trust may then become dominant (Robert, Dennis and Hung, 2009).

However, despite the claims that knowledge-based trust becomes more important over time swift trust may have important lasting effects, with Kanawattanachai and Yoo (2002) finding that it continued to colour knowledge-based trust judgements after the initial stage. Nevertheless, it must be noted that this may not happen in all cases, as Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner (1998) found that while teams seemed to begin with swift trust, it was only the teams in which members showed initiative that maintained trust. These studies highlight the importance of not only building high trust relationships from the outset but also maintaining these relationships. While swift trust is important, and can have a lasting effect on knowledge-based trust intentions, little is known about how leaders and members successfully attract each other's trust at the initial stages of the virtual relationship and then maintain that trust over time. The next section discusses the mechanisms which could potentially influence initial trust levels within the leader-member dyad.

4.4 Antecedents of Initial Trust in Virtual Teams

Existing models of trust (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Priem and Weibel, 2012) suggest that perceived trustworthiness can lead to trusting intentions (willingness to accept vulnerability/take a risk) and then to trusting behaviour (actual risk taking). As leaders and members try to ascertain each other's trustworthiness at the outset proxies or substitutes for direct personalised knowledge may be used (Kramer, 1999). These proxies, also known as presumptive bases of trust (Dietz and den Hartog, 2006) can include category-based trust, third-party recommendation-based trust, and dispositional-based trust (Kramer, 1999; Robert, Dennis and Hung, 2009). Each is now discussed in detail.

4.4.1 Extra-Relational Mechanisms – Categorisation

Initial perceptions of trustworthiness may be influenced by information regarding a trustee's membership of a social or organisational category (category-based trust – Shapiro *et al.,* 1992; Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). This categorisation may happen consciously or spontaneously (Chaiken, Duckworth and Darke, 1999).

In-group categorisation (McKnight *et al.,* 1998) or shared membership can function as a "rule for defining the boundaries of low-risk interpersonal trust that bypasses the need for personal knowledge and the costs of negotiating reciprocity" when interacting with other members of that category (Brewer, 1981: 356). Members of the same group are more likely to share similar values, attitudes and behaviours (Gargiulo and Ertug, 2006). Individuals who are grouped together tend to perceive themselves in a common positive light (Duffy and

Ferrier, 2003) and in-group bias leads individuals to attribute positive characteristics such as honesty, cooperativeness, and trustworthiness to other in-group members (Brewster, 1996). For example, individuals with shared cultural memberships share norms, values and socialisation experiences and are therefore likely to hold a common understanding about what is required to establish and maintain a trusting relationship (Dietz *et al.,* 2010).

Research into similarity suggests that individuals may be more inclined to trust people based on perceived similarity (Levin, Whitener and Cross, 2006). In a study by Turban and Jones (1988) subordinates reported higher levels of trust in leaders who they perceived as similar to themselves. Other studies into age and tenure (Ferris *et al.,* 1994; Judge and Ferris, 1993; Tsui and O'Reilly, 1989; Turban and Jones, 1988), race and education (Ferris *et al.,* 1994; Tsui and O'Reilly, 1989; Turban and Jones, 1988) found that individuals tend to like and trust people who are similar to themselves. While some studies found a link between gender and trust (Tsui and O'Reilly, 1989) other studies (McAllister, 1995; Bauer and Green, 1996) found no such relationship. Bauer and Green (1996) also found a link between personality similarity and leader-member exchange, which is characterised by mutual trust (see section 4.7.2).

When considering the trustworthiness of those outside of one's own group stereotyping may be used, which involves placing another party in a general grouping, from which inferences can be made about trustee attributes (McKnight and Chervany, 2006). Similarly knowledge of a person's role within an organisation can serve as a proxy for personalised knowledge (role-based trust - Kramer, 1999). People will expect competent role performance from others (Barber, 1983) and will be aware of the barriers to entry into organisational roles, the training and socialisation processes associated with the role and the accountability mechanisms which are used to ensure role compliance (Kramer, 1999).

While categorisation may help an individual to trust people in certain categories, it can also heighten distrust and suspicion between individuals from different groups within an organisation (Brewer, 1981). As people tend to trust people similar to themselves, diversity can lead to conflict and inhibit trust formation (Clark *et al.,* 2010). However, research conducted on categorisation and diversity in VTs has found mixed results. Some researchers suggest that diversity in VTs can be particularly problematic, due to dissimilar backgrounds and the lack of social context (Chen *et al.,* 2011). In fact, a number of studies have identified problems with in-group biases in VTs. Armstrong and Cole (2002), cited in Webster and Wong (2008) found that colleagues in one office site created an ‘us’ group, referring to colleagues at distant sites as ‘them’. Furthermore, Malhotra *et al.* (2001) found discussions between local team members to be a source of resentment amongst remote team members. These findings are perhaps unsurprising, given the fact that local team members have opportunities to meet face to face (F2F) on an informal basis and pick up non-verbal cues. Webster and Wong (2008) argue against the use of semi-virtual or ‘hybrid’ teams, as these can create in-group/out-group issues whereas no such differences emerged in fully co-located or fully virtual teams.

Furthermore, cultural differences can be more pronounced in VTs, where members are geographically dispersed, and can lead to reduced trust (Zolin *et al.,* 1994). Such differences may have an impact on how individuals perceive information, act on it and relate to other individuals (Kayworth and Leidner, 2000). National cultural diversity, for example, can present difficulties between VT members (Kayworth and Leidner, 2000; Maznevski and Chodoba, 2000) as individuals from different cultures have different basic assumptions (Schein, 1996). Huff and Kelley (2003) found that individuals place higher trust in people from their own national or ethnic group and Monalisa *et al.* (2008) found the passivity of Malaysian teams in their study to be a problem (with other team members), as issues were not raised and so not dealt with in time. Gudykunst *et al.'s* (1996) research also suggests that individuals from individualistic cultures might be more ready to trust others in computer-mediated communication environments than those individuals from collectivist cultures. However, it is worth noting that while culture might present problems in virtual teams it may be as a result of cultural misunderstandings rather than prejudices (Zolin *et al.,* 2004).

Despite the potential difficulties associated with diversity between virtual team members, a number of studies have highlighted reduced diversity related problems in VTs. DeRosa *et al.* (2004) argue that the lack of physical cues might actually supress the diversity related discomfort, leading to impressions being dominated by task performance and technological competence. Moreover Krebs, Hobman and Bordia (2006) found partial support for the effectiveness of computer-mediated groups in reducing negative consequences of dissimilarity, finding a negative link between age dissimilarity and trust in co-located teams but no such link in VTs.

Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) found that culture did not impact upon trust levels between virtual team members and argued that the lack of nonverbal trust cues in electronically mediated communication may actually eliminate evidence of cultural differences. Henttonen and Blomqvist (2005) also found cultural differences to be less pronounced in VTs (than in co-located teams), with few participants experiencing any cultural or geographical related problems. In Luo's (2002) study trust was slow to develop among culturally diverse groups but once developed it was equally predictive of performance as in culturally homogenous groups, suggesting that cultural differences, where present, can be overcome.

Johnson and Cullen (2002) conclude that when trusting involves a specific referent, national cultural differences do not seem to play a significant role. This may be due to that fact that individuals have many cultural identities, any of which may overshadow national cultural identities. While much of the work on cultural differences in VT research refers to national culture (Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner, 1998; Dube and Pare, 2001; Zigurs, 2003) this is quite a narrow conception of culture. As mentioned in section 3.5, Chao and Moon (2005) refer to an individual's cultural mosaic, which encompasses demographic tiles; geographic tiles and associative tiles. While Chao and Moon's (2005) original work was not related to trust, it has been successfully adopted in trust research (Saunders *et al.,* 2010; Altinay, Saunders and Wang, 2014). Further trust research in VTs could take guidance from this wider view of culture as research suggests that other cultural tiles might be more important than national culture/demographic tiles (Gerhart, 2009; Gibson *et al.,* 2009).

The preceding discussion suggests that categorisation may be an important consideration for researchers investigating trust development in VTs. In fact Robert, Dennis and Hung (2009) found that category-based trust dominated the initial formation of swift trust between VT team members. However their study, along with the majority of the aforementioned studies of VTs, was focused at the team-member level. To date no studies have explored the role of category-based trust in the initial stages of the leader-member trust relationship. Therefore, the question remains as to how influential categorisation is when it comes to trust development between leaders and members of VTs?

4.4.2 Extra-Relational Mechanisms - Third Parties

Third parties can play an important role in the trust process, helping to pass on their knowledge from well-established relationships to others who have not yet had the opportunity to obtain the knowledge required to make a trust judgement (Uzzi, 1997). Mutual third parties can also be important as a trustee may be discouraged from untrustworthy behaviour by the possibility that the trustor will communicate the malfeasance to mutual third parties (Ferrin, Dirks and Shah, 2003). There are social sanctions for rule breakers (Tyler and Kramer, 1996) people value their reputations and seek to protect them.

According to McKnight *et al.* (2002a) reputation can predict trusting behaviours and trusting intention – willingness to depend. It is also argued that positive reputation makes a negative event less likely to reduce trust levels (McKnight *et al.,* 1998), which may be important given people's natural alertness to negative information and gossip over positive news (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000). Burt and Knez (1996) found that stories from third parties may affect trust intensity, impacting positively on trust within strong relations and negatively on trust within weak relations, but will not impact upon direction. However, other empirical research has shown that reputation can overcome initial scepticism (Klaas, 2003), which is a feature of distrust (Lewicki *et al.,* 1998) suggesting that it may be capable of influencing direction.

Despite claims that reputation is a well-developed trust factor (McKnight and Chervany, 2006), the coverage of both reputation and third party influencers in the VT trust literature has been limited. Of the studies available Henttonen and Blomqvist (2005) found support for third party influences on team member trust, Breuer *et al.,* (2020) found that reputation influenced perceived trustworthiness of team members and Pauleen (2003), in a study conducted with team leaders, highlighted the importance of trust by reputation in building relationships with team members. However, the question remains as to how specifically and how frequently third parties and reputation influence trust in leader-member VT dyads and the weight of their impact. With this in mind, and given the aforementioned need for further research into categorisation, there is a need *to establish the extra-relational mechanisms which affect leader-member trust in a virtual environment*.

4.4.3 Personal Mechanisms – Disposition/Propensity to Trust

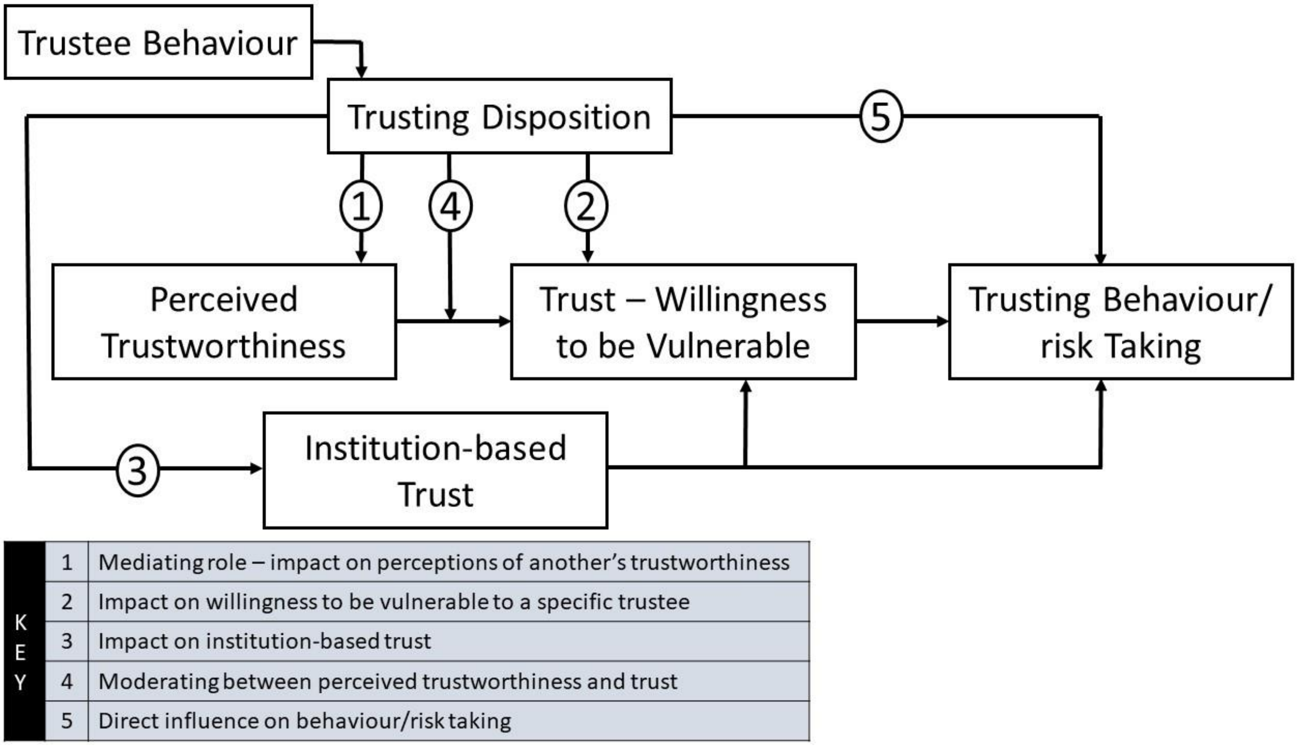
Disposition to trust (Payne and Clark, 2003), also referred to as propensity to trust (Rotter, 1971; Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995), refers to an individual's general willingness to trust others, with researchers believing that some individuals are simply more prone to trusting than others (Whitener *et al.,* 1998). Rotter (1971) proposed that people extrapolate from their early trust-related experiences to build up general beliefs about other people. Schoorman *et al.* (2007) subsequently argued that personality was also an antecedent to disposition, while Young and Daniel (2003) argued for the role of both experience and personality, noting that personality is partially shaped by experiences and that it changes over time.

National culture has been identified as another important influence on disposition to trust. One particularly important dimension is the task- versus relationship-orientation of a given culture, as task-orientated cultures tend to have a higher initial trust of strangers and therefore a higher propensity, while relationship-oriented cultures need time to develop a relationship prior to working on the task (Schoorman *et al.,* 2007).

Meta-analytic research has shown a correlation between disposition to trust and trust/trustworthiness perception (DeNeve and Cooper, 1998; Colquitt *et al.,* 2007) and studies have highlighted a number of possible ways in which disposition can impact upon the trust process, as portrayed in figure 4.1. Disposition has been identified in trust models as a direct antecedent to perceptions of trustworthiness (McKnight *et al.,* 1998) the suggestion being that some people will naturally find others more or less trustworthy and may interpret individual behaviours differently depending on their disposition (labelled 1 in figure 4.1). Whitener *et al.* (1998) highlight propensity as a boundary condition, mediating between managerial behaviour and employee perceptions of manager trustworthiness. Parks, Henager and Scamahorn (1996) also argue that high trustors are more sensitive to signs of trustworthiness and that low trustors are more sensitive to signs of non-trustworthiness. As such, the same behaviour exhibited by a member in a VT may be perceived in a different manner by two leaders, depending on each leader's propensity to trust. While this perspective suggests that disposition to trust plays a mediating role, other authors have suggested that disposition moderates between trustworthiness and trust (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Aubert and Kelsey, 2003) – labelled 4 in figure 4.1.

Models of trust (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; McKnight *et al.,* 1998) have also linked disposition directly to trust (willingness to be vulnerable) in interpersonal relationships, the belief being that some people will simply be more or less willing to take a risk and trust others given their view of people being generally trustworthy (labelled 2 in figure 4.1). While disposition is often thought of in terms of generalised trust in strangers, it is also conceptualised as generalised trust in institutions (such as the justice system and public officials - Dietz and den Hartog, 2006) and has been identified as an antecedent to institution-based trust (McKnight *et al.,* 1998; Kaplan and Nieschweitz, 2003) – labelled 3 in figure 4.1 and discussed in detail in section 4.4.4. Therefore, a VT member who generally believes in the trustworthiness of institutions may be more willing to trust their leader, as they feel that they will be protected from any wrongdoing that might occur.

Whitener *et al.'s* (1998) model links disposition directly to manager behaviours (trusting behaviours). Disposition may, for example, influence a manager's initial willingness to take risks at the early stages of the relationship (e.g. delegate a task or share sensitive information), before they have had a chance to ascertain a specific employee's level of trustworthiness. This decision to take a risk demonstrates risk taking in the relationship but may be separate to perceptions of an individual's trustworthiness (labelled 5 in figure 4.1). However, it still impacts the relationship as regardless of the manager's motives to display trusting behaviour, this behaviour will impact the employee's 'felt trustworthiness' (Lester and Brower, 2003) and may begin a process of reciprocation and dyadic trust development.


Trustee Behaviour
Trusting Disposition
⑤
①
④
②
Perceived Trustworthiness
Trust – Willingness to be Vulnerable
Trusting Behaviour/ risk Taking
③
Institution-based Trust

KEY		
	1	Mediating role – impact on perceptions of another's trustworthiness
	2	Impact on willingness to be vulnerable to a specific trustee
	3	Impact on institution-based trust
	4	Moderating between perceived trustworthiness and trust
	5	Direct influence on behaviour/risk taking

Figure 4. 1: Potential influence of trusting disposition on the trust process

Research suggests that disposition plays a stronger role in situations where information on the perceived trustworthiness of the other is unknown (Rotter, 1971; Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995) and that it does not have a lasting impact once additional trust cues become plentiful (Van der Werff and Buckley, 2017). In studies of trust between VT members Yakovleva, Reilly and Werko (2010) found that disposition has more of an influence in virtual relationships than in co-located dyads while Robert, Dennis and Hung (2009) found support for disposition to trust at the early stages of virtual relationships and highlighted its impact on swift trust. Such an influence at the early stages of a relationship may be particularly important as increased early stage trust will positively bias the overall view of the other party unless information is made available which contradicts this view (Jarvenpaa, Shaw and Staples, 2004).

Knoll and Gill (2011) found that disposition was related to trust in supervisor and trust in peers but not trust in subordinate. While Schoorman *et al.* (1996) found similar results, Knoll and Gill (2011) urge caution when assessing the robustness of their findings, highlighting potential methodological issues as few other researchers had used Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) model to study trust in subordinates.

In summary, while research suggests that disposition plays a role in dyadic trust, much of the research has been conducted in traditional work settings or with VT team members. Further research is required to better understand how disposition might influence trust in the virtual leader-member dyad and the potential role of situational strength. Hence there is a need *to establish the personal mechanisms which affect leader-member trust in a virtual environment.*

4.4.4 Contextual Mechanisms- Institution-based trust & Trust in the Organisation

Disposition was identified in the previous section as an antecedent to institution-based trust. Similar to 'system' trust (Luhmann, 1979), institution-based trust refers to beliefs that the situation and/or structures make the context conducive to trusting (McKnight and Chervany, 2006).

It is suggested that parties might begin a relationship with a baseline of moderate to high trust due to institution-based structures that assure them protection (McKnight *et al.,* 1998), provide a form of deterrence, which may be needed for calculus-based trust (Rousseau *et al.,* 1998) or reduce risk to a manageable level. This form of trust may therefore reduce the need for interpersonal trust or may impact upon interpersonal trust beliefs (Nyhan, 1999; Galvin *et al.,* 2001; Child and Mollering, 2003; McKnight and Chervany, 2005).

According to Zucker (1986) institution-based trust is an industrial-age substitution for trust based on social similarity (characteristic) or successful exchange relationships in an age when society has become more complex and less homogenous (Creed and Miles, 1996). Van de Ven and Ring (2006) argue that there appears to be a growing reliance on this form of trust, as a move to more temporary, mobile and interpersonal relationships threatens to undermine long-term relationships built on interpersonal trust. Institution-based trust may therefore influence leader-member trust in the initial stages of the relationship.

McKnight *et al.* (1998) refer to two institutional-based trust mechanisms; situational normality and structural assurance belief. Situational normality refers to 'the degree to which the work setting appears customary, with everything in proper order' (Baer *et al*., 2018: 1718), which in turn helps an individual to feel comfortable enough to rapidly form a trusting intention toward the other party (McKnight *et al.,* 1998). Structural assurance belief may be thought of as a general confidence in contextual actors brought about by a range of mechanisms which provide safety nets or redress loses due to opportunism (McKnight and

Chervany, 2006). Legislation and codes of conduct have been cited in the literature as forms of such mechanisms (Zucker, 1986; Sitkin and Roth, 1993; Kramer, 1996; Johnson and Cullen, 2002; Lewicki *et al.,* 2006; Dietz et al, 2010).

However, as discussed in section 2.3.2 it is important to distinguish between institutional-based trust (trust in abstract structures such as legislation) and trust in an organisation as a depersonalised institution (Hope-Hailey *et al.,* 2012) - these forms of trust are often conflated in the literature. When discussing institutional-based trust, McKnight *et al.* (1998) reference factors which could be external or internal. Similar to abstract structures external to the organisation such as laws, an individual's trust in their organisation might also impact trust in dyadic relationships. For instance, Kramer (1999) discussed the concept of 'rule-based trust', which he defines as 'shared understanding regarding the systems of rules regarding appropriate behaviour', which incorporates transaction norms, interactional routines and exchange practices' (Kramer, 1999: 579). Similarly, organisational culture can play an important role in shaping behaviours. Defined as "the set of shared, taken-for-granted implicit assumptions that a group holds" (Schein, 1996:236) culture can exert strong pressure on individuals to act in either trustworthy or untrustworthy ways (Gillespie *et al.,* 2012). Culture influences how organisational members understand and respond to their environment. For example, through social learning processes, managers develop insights into how their organisations respond to others along with the type of behaviour that is rewarded and punished (Whitener *et al.,* 1998).

Organisational policies and procedures may also be relevant in this regard. Such policies and procedures and perceptions of adherence to same, play a part in shaping the organisational culture. The potential impact of policies and procedures on leader-member trust development is now discussed in detail.

4.4.5 Contextual Mechanisms - Policies and Procedures

Organisational policies and procedures may impact upon leader-member trust development in a number of ways. They can communicate information about authorities' motivation and intention to behave in a trustworthy manner (Brockener and Siegel, 1996) and as such can influence the levels of trust an employee has in an institution. Those policies and procedures which are highly visible and easy to understand (Sztompka, 1998) and that are structurally and interactionally fair (Brockener and Siegel, 1996) increase trust. Grey and Garsten (2001) argue that bureaucratic organisations are very effective at producing trust, due to clear rules and procedures, while post-bureaucracy organisations may instead build trust based on elements of standardization and communal values which drive perceptions of predictability and trustworthiness.

Policies and procedures can also send powerful signals to employees about the extent to which the organisation trusts them (Iles *et al.,* 1990; Guzzo, Noonan and Elron, 1994). Legge (1995) states that many private-sector organisations are developing high trust organisational cultures by adopting HR practices intended to reinforce trust between employees and employers. Policies which demonstrate management's trust in employees may foster trust through felt-trustworthiness and reciprocation (Lester and Brower, 2003).

HR policies and procedures can have a major impact on a VT leader's ability to build relationships with team members. For example, Pauleen (2003) found instances in which HR policies were deemed to be inequitable and caused resentment. For instance there may need to be complete clarity when it comes to issues of performance management. Clark, Clark and Crossley (2010) propose that organisations should determine clearly how team performance will be evaluated, arguing that an environment with a low level of uncertainty will make it more hospitable for trust to exist and grow. Compensation can be an important motivator for VT members and leaders (Pauleen, 2003) while inadequate reward structures may not foster trust (Greenberg, Greenberg and Antonucci, 2007).

Recruitment policies are particularly important given the extent to which virtual work differs from traditional co-located office work. It is argued that organisations must choose individuals with the necessary skills and experience (Holton, 2001), who will be perceived by others as having ability - one of Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) three bases of trustworthiness. Managers may wish to look for individuals who score highly in personality tests on agreeableness and conscientiousness, as these people tend to be viewed as more trustworthy (Evans and Revelle, 2008), particularly in relation to benevolence and integrity dimensions (Clark, Clark and Crossley, 2010). The same authors argue that individuals with a high disposition to trust might be more suited to virtual work and it may be particularly important to consider VT leaders with a higher disposition to trust, as they need to place trust in employees which they may not be able to monitor or control in the traditional manner (see section 4.8).

The learning and development function also has the potential to influence trust development in VTs. While the literature focuses on team building interventions designed to enhance the team's efficiency and effectiveness, relatively little attention is paid to building trust relationships between leaders and members. Goodbody (2005) stresses the importance of setting goals and norms for the team, securing agreement on the mission, assigning tasks, reviewing members' roles, skills and experience and providing an opportunity to discuss these issues. A misunderstanding on any of the aforementioned issues could strain the leader-member trust relationship and it is argued that team building activities should not only give team members an opportunity to assess each other's ability, benevolence and integrity but they should also allow leaders and members to assess each other against these criteria (Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998).

Communication has particular relevance to VT effectiveness (see section 4.9 for a discussion). However, as ICT enabled communication may not be natural to some people, training may be required to ensure that leaders and members know how to use certain communication tools effectively (Anderson and Shane, 2002; Greenberg, Greenberg and Antonucci, 2007). This is important as a lack of comfort with communication technologies may impact upon perceptions of ability, a crucial cognitive trust factor (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995).

Warkentin and Beranek (1999) found a positive link between communication training and improved perceptions of the interaction process over time, specifically with regard to trust, commitment and frank expression between members. While this research focused on member-member trust, training may be useful in helping leaders to communicate effectively and in a manner which helps to demonstrate their trustworthiness. However, despite the need for specific skills only 22% of VT members who participated in the study by RW3 (2018) received formal training, and only 24% reported that their companies provided virtual team charters or guidelines. In the same study, almost one-third of VT leaders rated themselves as ineffective or only slightly effective, with 53% stating that they are only moderately effective. However, only 19% had formal global leadership training.

While the aforementioned organisational mechanisms may be quite relevant in virtual environments they remain under researched and the question remains as to which mechanisms impact trust in the leader-member VT dyad and in what way? Hence there is a need *to establish the contextual mechanisms which affect leader-member trust in a virtual environment.*

4.4.6 Relational Mechanisms: Initial Interactions

While initial perceptions of trustworthiness may be influenced by mechanisms such as categorisation, third party reports, and trusting disposition, once dyad members enter the 'early encounters' stage they take actions such as initiating communication, gathering trust-relevant information and seeking and interpreting cues (Dietz *et al.,* 2010). These actions will influence perceptions of trustworthiness.

However, for a genuine state of trust to exist a belief in the trustworthiness of the other party must be accompanied by an intention to act based upon this belief. This decision to trust has been defined as the willingness to render oneself vulnerable (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Rousseau *et al.*, 1998). While the decision to trust implies an intention to act, for the trustor to demonstrate unequivocally her/his trust in the trustee, (s)he must follow through on this decision by engaging in some of the trust-informed risk-taking behaviours proposed by different authors in various theoretical (Edmonson, 2002; Zand 1972; McKnight and Chervany, 2001) and empirical (Costa *et al.,* 2001; Gillespie, 2003; Langfred, 2004; Costa and Anderson, 2011) studies. McKnight and Chervany (2001a) amended the McKnight *et al.* (1998) model to include a behavioural concept, supporting the view that risk taking is the true manifestation of trust (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995).

Gillespie (2003) divided the willingness to be vulnerable into two resulting behavioural types 'reliance' related behaviours (relying on another's skills, knowledge, judgements or actions, including delegating and giving autonomy) and 'disclosure' related behaviours (sharing work or personal information of a sensitive nature. In a study of virtual team members, Breuer *et al,* (2020) found support for Gillespie's (2003) work. They identified two specific reliance related behaviours: asking for help and forbearance from control (the latter links to the discussion on control and autonomy in section 4.8) along with disclosure related activities including sharing confidential information and discussing mistakes and weaknesses in an open manner. These findings, along with previous studies which identified openness as a signifier of one's trustworthiness (Mishra, 1996; Farris *et al.*, 1973; Gabarro, 1978; Butler and Cantrell, 1984; Butler, 1991), suggest that openness is both an antecedent and outcome of trust.

Breuer *et al.,* (2020) also identified a third category of risk-taking behaviours as 'Contact-Seeking' which refers to showing interest in spending time, including leisure time, with others and affirming of a future working relationship. However, much of the aforementioned work was conducted with co-located teams or with VT members and there is a need *'to determine the specific behaviours which impact upon leader-member trust in a virtual environment'.*

The first move

Strickland (1958) argues that if one is to trust another they must act on the assumption that the other person is trustworthy and give them a chance to demonstrate trustworthiness. Someone must make the first move and accept vulnerability. While Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) state that the employee may have to be vulnerable to see how the manager deals with such vulnerability, Creed and Miles (1996) argue that managers must be willing to risk trusting if they wish to gain full returns from their investments in developing employee skills and abilities. Whitener *et al.* (1998) also advocate managers making the first move engaging in trusting behaviour pre-emptively, perhaps even before the subordinate has demonstrated their trustworthiness. This initial decision to trust is important. Without a demonstration of trusting behaviours employees may not view the manager as trustworthy and therefore may not engage in a trustworthy manner towards them – “trust is built by trusting” (Creed and Miles, 1996, p. 33).

The hierarchical power difference and the asymmetry of information can play an important role in influencing initial risk taking (Schoorman *et al.*, 2007), with the party who has more power (most likely the manager) more likely to take a risk. For example if the manager has more information and can initiate opportunities to gather information about ability, benevolence and integrity, and if these opportunities are not made available to the subordinate, then the manager’s trust in the subordinate may develop more quickly than vice versa.

Risk can be viewed as a functional equivalent to trust (Bachmann, 2006) when it comes to coordinating expectations and controlling relationships. That said, by engaging in initial risk taking this may be perceived by the employee as trusting behaviour which could influence perceptions of felt trustworthiness (Lester and Brower, 2003) and in turn lead to trust in the relationship.

Research suggests that power may have ongoing implications for trust development in the leader-member dyad. Power has been defined as the capacity to produce effects on others (House, 1984) or the potential to influence others (Pfeffer, 1992), and it usually stems from resource dependence (Martinez *et al.,* 2012). As interdependence is central to definitions of trust (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995) power may therefore play an important role in trust development. Martinez *et al.* (2012) found that leader power affected relationship quality via met expectations. This, they note, may be due to the fact that a leader requires power to fulfil the dependencies of followers.

A manager's level of risk will vary in different situations and it is suggested that the higher the perceived risk, the less likely the manager will be to trust (Whitener *et al.,* 1998). According to Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) perceptions of risk will involve perceptions about the trustee's trustworthiness, along with external factors, such as the context, the stakes involved, and likelihood of gains or losses. Sitkin and Pablo (1992) further specify domain familiarity, organisational control systems and social influences as impacting risk. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) suggest that a trustor will compare the level of trust with the level of perceived risk and if trust is higher they will engage in risk-taking. The nature of virtual working arrangements may impact upon perceptions of risk, given the unique context, characterised by less face-to-face contact, lower levels of traditional monitoring (see section 4.8 for a discussion on electronic monitoring), and the difficulties associated with developing social relationships at a distance.

Despite an advantageous position in power relations, leaders are far from free of vulnerability or uncertainty (Kramer, 1996) and therefore may be reluctant to trust members, preferring instead to impose tight controls or to closely monitor behaviour. However, a number of organisational factors might help to encourage initial risk taking. Managers can be encouraged to delegate control and engage in open communication (Whitener *et al.,* 1998) and effective human resource policies and procedures can also help (Creed and Miles, 1996), with programmes which make employees more trustworthy in the eyes of managers advocated by some authors (Young and Daniel, 2003). While support mechanisms, such as team building exercises, may provide opportunities to build relationships (Robert *et al.,* 2009), Jarvenpaa *et al.* (1998) found only limited support for the effect of team building exercises on trust levels between VT members. Relatively little is known about the impact of other organisational mechanisms on trust in virtual working environments. Nonetheless, it may be important for managers to learn to trust employees, given Brower *et al.'s* (2009) findings that trusted employees (who also trust their manager) are more productive, perform Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (OCBs) and are less likely to quit the organisation.

Research argues that social exchange relations usually begin with low risk transactions, which require little trust (Blau, 1968) and that if initial interactions are positive this will lead to a breakthrough (Dietz *et al.,* 2010). Parties may continue to trust one another either on the strength of a cost-benefit analysis (calculative trust, Dietz *et al.,* 2010) or higher levels of trust such as 'process-based'/ 'knowledge-based', relational-based and 'identification-based' trust (Lewicki and Bunker; 1996) may develop. However, if trust is not reciprocated once offered a 'breakdown' will occur, possibly leading to the emergence of distrust (Dietz *et al.,* 2010).

Therefore, initial interactions appear to be an important antecedent to deeper levels of future trust (Whitener *et al.,* 1998). It is argued that first impressions define the direction and depth of future cooperation (Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005) and will put an initial shape on the relationship, hence the labelling of initial interactions as a relational factor in the current study. Research conducted with VTs further highlights the importance of relationships getting off to a good start. For instance Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) found that first impressions seemed to indicate subsequent interactions between team members, with only four out of the twenty nine teams in their study who began with low initial trust reaching high levels of trust. Zolin *et al.* (2004) found that initial perceptions of trustworthiness may determine the extent to which one believes the trustee has followed through on work expectations. However, this study along with the majority of the aforementioned studies (Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Breuer *et al.,* 2020) was conducted with team members - little research has been conducted at the leader-member level.

As leaders are likely to base decisions of trust primarily on employee performance, or work related currencies (Liden and Maslyn, 1998; Sue-Chan *et al.,* 2012), it may be important for members to demonstrate competence in their early interactions with a leader. If initial interactions are positive a leader may then choose to give the member some latitude and allow them to prove themselves (Whitener *et al.,* 1998), thus beginning the process of social exchange. Similarly a leader might spend time mentoring a member, who may reciprocate positively, in turn encouraging the leader to devote further time to mentoring the member (Blau, 1964 in Holtz and Harold, 2008). Such successful social exchanges between leaders and members can lead to higher levels of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). In fact Liden *et al.* (1993) found that LMX remained stable over the first six months of the relationship.

Therefore, initial performance is arguably as important as later performance in developing the leader-member relationship, hence its inclusion in this discussion of early stage trust.

The discussion above suggests that if an individual behaves in a trustworthy manner, this will lay the foundations for a high trust relationship. However, behaviours may be perceived in a different manner, depending on the individual trustor. Trust has been described as an attributional process (McKnight *et al.,* 1998), with an individual developing beliefs about another person's trustworthiness based on whether the person's behaviour is judged to be caused by internal versus situational factors (Korsgaard *et al.,* 2002). Therefore, personal mechanisms might impact upon perceptions of trustworthiness (Jarvenpaa, Shaw and Staples, 2004) and specific behaviours might be viewed differently by individual trustors.

Situational mechanisms, such as opportunities for defection, can be important in allowing a party to gain insights into the intentions of another. Studies have found that situations which allow for opportunism are more informative (Molm *et al.,* 2000; Malhotra and Murninghan, 2002). When a party is unable to behave opportunistically due to situational constraints then a trustor is unlikely to attribute behaviour to the party's trustworthiness (Gargiulo and Ertug, 2006). Therefore, an employee who feels that their manager's behaviour is influenced by situational mechanisms may be less inclined to label that behaviour as trustworthy. As such, initial interactions might be perceived very differently depending on the situation. There is dearth of research on initial interactions within leader-member VT dyads and the question remains as to what influences initial risk taking in these dyads?

Following initial interactions individuals look to ongoing behaviours for signs of trustworthiness such as ability, benevolence and integrity (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995) and rely more heavily on first-hand information, in place of information from third parties, categorisation or disposition. They examine behaviours over time to see if the trustee's actions match their words and if their behaviours are consistent with past behaviours. As this is an ongoing process the discussion on trustworthy behaviours is included in section 4.5, alongside other antecedents to higher level trust. These behaviours, if positive, may lead to higher levels of trust, discussed in the next section.

4.5 Beyond Initial Trust

With repeated positive exchanges process-based trust (Zucker, 1986) may build between parties. This form of trust is based on reciprocity, where ongoing transactions become embedded in a social context (Granovetter, 1985) and greater levels of risk and cooperation ensue. Making a decision to trust based on enhanced knowledge of the other and an ability to anticipate or predict other's behaviour is also referred to as knowledge-based trust (Shapiro *et al.,* 1992; Lewicki and Bunker, 1996) and is the beginning of trust, as it is most commonly referred to in the literature (Dietz and den Hartog, 2006).

Researchers suggest that as parties get to know each other the influence of dispositional mechanisms (Johnson, George and Swap, 1982; McKnight *et al.,* 1998; Mayer *et al.,* 1995) and other external sources of evidence lessen and information from within the relationship usually becomes a more salient and valid basis of trust (Dietz *et al.,* 2010). Individuals may look instead for cognitive bases of trust such as evidence of integrity (including performance reliability - Greenberg, Greenberg and Antonucci, 2007) and ability (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995). Robert, Dennis and Hung (2009) found support for this shift in antecedents, finding that disposition to trust and in-group bias, both influencers of early stage trust, did not affect knowledge-based trust in virtual teams.

History-based trust (Deutsch, 1958; Solomon, 1960; Boon and Holmes, 1991) can be viewed as an important form of knowledge-based trust. These models of trust postulate a link between prior experiences and a person's perceptions of others' trustworthiness and their willingness to engage in trusting behaviour. Trust thickens or thins as a result of cumulative interaction, people's views of others' trustworthiness are linked to expectations of their behaviour, and these expectations are either validated or discredited through interaction (Kramer 1999). Currall and Judge (1995) (cited in Currall and Inkpen, 2006) found past trustworthiness of the trustee to be the most significant determinant of the trustor's intention to engage in trusting behaviour. From a behavioural perspective trust builds through collaboration or indication about the other person's motives (Lewicki *et al.,* 2006), thus trust is both an antecedent to and a result of, collaboration (Newell *et al.,* 2007).

From a psychological perspective developing knowledge about the others' qualities and being able to predict their behaviour facilitates trust (Shapiro *et al.,* 1992). Lewicki and Bunker (1996) argue that even if the other party is predictably untrustworthy this may help to build trust, as the ways in which they will violate trust can be predicted. However, there has been little research into the impact which virtual working arrangements have on the ability of leaders and members to ascertain the trustworthiness of the other. Furthermore, leaders and members may not be afforded the opportunities to demonstrate trustworthy behaviours in the same manner that they would in a face to face environment (Robert *et al.,* 2009), or these behaviours may be interpreted differently.

Over time an individual can move beyond observing the other party's behaviours to being influenced more by the quality of the relationship (Dietz and den Hartog, 2006). Blau (1964), in proposing Social Exchange Theory, differentiated social exchanges from economic exchanges. While economic exchanges involve exchanging work for pay, social exchanges are voluntary in nature and based on the expectation of positive but less tangible returns such as appreciation and support. Social exchange relationships go beyond purely economic transactions, or employment contracts, leading to feelings of personal obligation and trust. Social exchange theory is the foundation of a leadership theory labelled Leader Member Exchange (LMX) which is discussed in detail in section 4.7.2.

Over time thick forms of interpersonal trust (Zucker, 1986) referred to as relational-based trust (Rousseau *et al.,* 1998) can form. Relational-based trust, along with identification-based trust could be seen to be equivalents of Tyler's (2003) social trust (Dietz and Den Hartog, 2006; 563). Identification-based trust (Shapiro *et al.,* 1992; McAllister, 1995; Lewicki and Bunker, 1996; Nooteboom, 2006) is a strong form of affective trust which is characterised by an internalisation of the other's preferences, identification with other's desires and intentions and an ability of one party to act on behalf of the other. Gillespie (2003) argues that relationships in which there is a willingness to both rely on the other party and disclose information to the other party are characterised by relational-based trust.

A number of factors are pertinent to building identification-based trust. Lewicki and Bunker list four activities namely: *developing a collective identity* (a joint name, title, logo etc.); *colocation* in the same building or neighbourhood; *creating joint products or goals* and committing to *commonly shared values* such that the parties are committed to the same objectives (1996:123). This raises questions for virtual working arrangements. Firstly, colocation is not usually a feature of virtual leader-member relationships. Secondly, it is not known whether it is more difficult to get employees to commit to shared values when there is a lack of face-to-face contact. Finally, and this also applies to face-to-face teams, it is not known whether it is actually possible to develop identification-based trust when working virtually.

Distance may make it more difficult to develop relational-based trust (Rousseau *et al.,* 1998), which is subjective and emotional in nature and derived more from the quality of the relationship over time than from observation of the other party's specific behaviours (Dietz and den Hartog, 2006). Yakovleva, Reilly and Werko (2010), for instance, found that it is more difficult to develop affective trust in VTs, while various other studies (Walther, 1995; Chidambaram, 1996; Alge *et al.,* 2003) have found that reliance on ICT-based communication in virtual teams has slowed down the development of personal relationships. It is suggested that distance might also make trust repair more difficult. Bierly, Stark and Kessler (2009) found that greater degrees of virtuality exacerbated the negative consequences between relationship conflict and trust as colleagues did not have the same opportunities to resolve conflict.

Tyler and Degoey (1996) conducted three separate studies and found that on average relational characteristics explained 27% of the unique variance in trustworthiness attributions, compared to 6% explained by instrumental variables. Gillespie (2003) also found a link between trust (willingness to be vulnerable) and both social interaction and frequency of interaction. These findings raise questions for virtual work settings, which may inhibit social cues. While studies have found social similarity to be an important antecedent to trust with VTs (Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998, Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005), given the lack of opportunities for socialising it may be more difficult to get to know one's leader or member in a virtual setting. It is therefore important to understand how these parties overcome potential barriers of location and time to get to know each other.

However, while it may be difficult to develop strong levels of relational trust between leaders and members in VTs, it may not be desirable to do so. While a lack of time may prohibit thicker forms of trust from emerging, this may not be a bad thing as it may mean that the parties involved avoid some of the corrosive interpersonal and group dynamics (such as conflicts, jealousy, misunderstandings, hurt feelings, revenge fantasies and pursuit of hidden agendas) (Meyerson *et al.*, 1996). There are a number of other reasons cited in the literature as to why identification-based trust may not be desirable. For instance a trustor can be so confident that their interests will be protected that they do not feel the need to monitor the other party (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). This is potentially dangerous as it increases the trustor's vulnerability and exposes them to high levels of risk. In fact identification-based trust may go so far that one is not willing to consider the possibility of untrustworthiness, leading to cognitive dissonance whereby one does not want to face evidence of the untrustworthiness because it conflicts with deep-seated convictions or feelings, as discussed in chapter two section excessive identification-based trust can also lead to rigidity of relations and can block innovation (Nooteboom, 2006). Trust is strongest at this stage and violations are more related to common interests or agreements, or moral violations, than unpredictability (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996).

While a number of stages of trust are proffered by trust researchers, Lewicki and Bunker (1996) state that one stage is not necessarily better than another and people may wish to have varying forms of relationships. Parties may maintain productive relationships but remain in the calculus-based trust or knowledge-based trust stages, due to a lack of time or energy or a lack of desire for closer relationships (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). There is a dearth of research into the stages of trust within leader-member relationships in virtual environments. This raises a question about the most common stages of trust in this dyad, the stages which are possible to achieve and the stage seen as optimum by both managers and employees. These issues are explored within the current study.

Having discussed the various levels of trust in an ongoing leader-member relationship, the focus of this chapter now turns to the various mechanisms which influence a member's perception of their leader's trustworthiness and vice versa. Characteristics of the trustee are those individual qualities that lead one party to consider another party trustworthy (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Dietz and Den Hartog 2006). These are the characteristics which trustors identify over time, allowing them to form perceptions and beliefs about the trustee (Whitener *et al.,* 1998) on which they base their decision to trust. These trustee characteristics, introduced in section 2.5, have been found to impact upon trust (willingness to be vulnerable) more than propensity to trust (Scott, 1980a) and have received a lot of attention in the trust literature.

4.6 Trustee Characteristics – the importance of Ability, Benevolence and Integrity in Leader-Member Virtual Dyads

Empirical support has been found for Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) ABI model in both co-located work settings (Colquitt *et al.*, 2007) and in virtual teams (Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998). Ability, along with integrity, may dominate initial trust development between VT members (Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005), and both are particularly important to trust development in short-term virtual teams (Robert, Dennis and Hung, 2009). Ability has been found to be the most important basis of a leader's trust in a member (Kramer, 1996; Wells and Kipnis, 2001; Knoll and Gill, 2011) along with employee performance (Knoll and Gill, 2011; Sue-Chan, Au and Hackett, 2012). As such it has been suggested that employees may best demonstrate their ability through initial strong performance (Maslyn and Uhl-Bien, 2001).

Studies have highlighted the importance of VT workers having effective communication skills (Townsend, DeMarie and Hendrickson, 1998) and media literacy has been identified as an antecedent of trustworthiness (Breuer *et al*., 2020), specifically the ability to write emails appropriately and to use media technologies effectively and appropriately for the task at hand.

These attributes may be developed in new VT workers. However, the media naturalness theory suggests that individuals with experience of working in virtual teams will adapt more quickly to new VTs according to the learned schema diversity principle (DeRosa *et al.,* 2004). Therefore, leaders may look for experienced VT members with appropriate technical or functional skills (Greenberg, Greenberg and Antonucci, 2007) not only to ensure that the leader will trust them to complete tasks, but also to ensure that fellow members will trust this individual.

While research suggests that ability is not as important as integrity in shaping a member's trust in their leader, it still has a significant impact (Knoll and Gill, 2011). Pauleen (2003) suggests that VT leaders may require a different skillset than leaders of co-located teams, for instance unless they are au fait with the technology used by the team this could create credibility issues. They may also need to develop different coordination and control mechanisms (Pare and Dube, 1999) and to be skilled at reading communication nuances such as silences and misunderstandings (Cramton, 2001). Furthermore, Savolainen (2014) highlights the importance of VT leaders possessing socioemotional skills, specifically social skills (open communication, listening and assertiveness), technical skills (use of facilities/ICT) and authenticity (showing trustworthiness/openness, honesty and Integrity). However, as leaders are sometimes selected on the basis of technical ability, rather than interpersonal competencies (Hogan *et al.,* 1994), they may not necessarily be competent people managers, and this might impact upon their ability to build high trust relationships with members.

Studies on leadership of VTs have focused almost exclusively on aspects of leadership effectiveness and team performance (Avolio and Kahai, 2003; Zigurs, 2003; Majchrzak *et al.*, 2004), there is a lack of research which investigates how leaders might effectively gain members' trust. Many of the studies conducted on trust in VTs focus on trust between members. For instance, Breuer *et al.* (2020) identified positivity and friendliness as two aspects of ability which led to trust between team members. Without more research at the leader level we do not know whether such findings transfer to leader-member dyads.

While members' perceptions of their leader's ability is important, the importance of self-efficacy has also been highlighted in the literature. Leaders with low self-efficacy regarding their ability to delegate control may find it difficult to use participative management processes (Whitener *et al.,* 1998). This may be an issue as Breuer *et al.* (2020) found that team cultures which allowed all team members to express their opinions and participate in decision making led to trust within teams.

Whitener *et al.,* (1998) also found that those leaders with low self-efficacy regarding their conflict management skills may be reluctant to engage employees in two-way communication. Mishra (1996) found that a self-perceived lack of basic knowledge, skills and ability, hampered managers' motivation to initiate trust or led to poor performance and unsuccessful attempts to establish trusting relationships. Conversely, leaders may create trust dilemmas due to an 'over confidence' bias, whereby they over commit to promises which will be difficult to fulfil (Dirks, 2006).

While ability and self-efficacy have been studied in the traditional trust literature, with some coverage in the VT literature, there is a lack of research focused on leader-member dyads and a need *'to establish the personal mechanisms which affect leader-member trust in a virtual environment.'*

Benevolence, or demonstrating concern for others, has been highlighted as an important basis of trust (Strickland, 1958; Mayer *et al.,* 1995; McAllister, 1995; Cunningham and McGregor, 2000). Studies of leader-member relationships have found that employee's perceptions of supervisor trust may be based primarily on the supervisor's ability to satisfy the employee's need for personal growth and advancement (Sue-Chan, Au and Hackett, 2012), in other words perceptions of benevolence. Within VTs research highlights the importance of leaders ensuring that they are available to offer support and guidance (Greenberg, Greenberg and Antonucci, 2007), being as responsive as they would be to colleagues down the hall (Ross, 2007).

A number of studies have found that the impact of benevolence in VTs increased as relationships developed (Jarvenpaa *et al.*, 1998; Piccoli and Ives, 2003) which supports Mayer et *al.*'s (1995) initial hypotheses that the effect of perceived benevolence would increase over time. However, Whitener *et al.* (1998) note that employees may not always be aware of benevolent deeds. Given the lack of face-to-face contact and possible time differences VT members may have even less visibility of leaders' actions. Furthermore, while member performance might be viewed as a form of benevolence (Sue-Chan *et al.,* 2012) there is little focus on member benevolence in the VT trust literature.

Judgements of integrity can be based on whether a person keeps their word (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Whitener *et al.,* 1998), whether they consistently behave in an acceptable manner, adhering to a clear and acceptable set of values, and/or whether they appear to share common values (Gillespie and Mann, 2004). Studies have found that integrity is important to trust development in VTs (Aubert and Kelsey, 2003; Breuer *et al.,* 2020), and may in fact dominate initial trust development (Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998).

In studies by Henttonen and Blomqvist (2005) and Breuer *et al.,* (2020) team members looked for evidence of consistent behaviour in others. Breuer *et al.,* (2020) categorise consistency as a type of predictability and Kirkman *et al.* (2002) also refer to predictability of behaviours. While Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) differentiated predictability from consistency, the aforementioned findings are consistent with the link between trust and predictable performance suggested in the mainstream trust literature (including Shapiro, 1992; Whitener *et al*., 1998; Hoper-Hailey *et al.,* 2012).

Simons (2002) suggests that employees place a high level of scrutiny on leader behaviours and therefore they are particularly likely to notice when leaders do not fulfil expectations. He adds that Behavioural Integrity (BI), which refers to a person keeping their word, also encompasses perceptions of adherence to psychological contracts, mission statements, corporate value statements, priorities and management styles. Studies by Kirkman *et al.* (2002) and Breuer *et al.,* (2020) reported a link between trust and promise fulfilment along with a link between trust and worth ethic/conscientiousness, the latter of which relate to values.

Research has identified the centrality of values to perceptions of integrity. Perceived value congruence can impact upon decisions regarding trustworthiness, as people decide based on values whether a person is fit to transact with (Jones and George, 1998). For instance, Breuer *et al.,* (2020) found that team members trusted fellow members who demonstrated adherence to ethical principles and team values and those who were seen to treat private or secret information in a confidential manner. Furthermore, Whitener *et al.* (1998) and Simons (2002) both highlight the role of values in shaping behaviours, contending that a manager's values actually influence their motivation to display trustworthy behaviour. Values can be thought of as general standards or principles that are considered by the individual to be important (Gordon, 1975:2). Whitener *et al.* (1998) argue that managers with values such as universalism and benevolence may be more likely to engage in trustworthy behaviour and demonstrate concern for employees. In sum, the values held by managers are likely to provide the primary “internal compass” that promotes several dimensions of trustworthy behaviour, including demonstrating concern, behaving consistently and behaving with integrity (Whitener *et al.,* 1998; 522).

Whilst the aforementioned studies provide support for Ability, Benevolence and Integrity as bases of trustworthiness in VTs, the majority of the aforementioned studies were conducted with VT team members, with little focus on the leader-member relationship. Therefore, the importance of each factor to leader-member trust levels is unknown and there is little insight into how either party most effectively demonstrates trustworthiness. In recognition of the difficulties involved in VT members shaping their leader’s perceptions Kayworth and Leidner (2000) call for research into this area. For example it might be particularly difficult for either party to demonstrate benevolence, which has links to social relationships (Greenberg, Greenberg and Antonucci, 2007), which are more difficult to develop at a distance. While integrity and ability might dominate at the early stages or in short-term performance (Robert, Dennis and Hung, 2009) the focus of this current study is on non-temporary teams and therefore benevolence may be an important antecedent to trust between VT leaders and members, as it is in the traditional trust literature (Knoll and Gill, 2011). These issues are explored in the current study.

As trustors usually make attributions about characteristics such as ability, benevolence and integrity by observing trustee behaviours the focus of this chapter now turns to behaviours. While there is a vast literature on leadership theories and the behaviours underlying such theories, comparatively little attention has been devoted to leadership behaviours in virtual settings. Moreover, there has been little or no research into the specific member behaviours, which influence leaders' trust in virtual settings. This lack of research is problematic as behaviours which instil trust in supervisors may differ from behaviours which instil trust in subordinates, due to different vulnerabilities and dependencies (Werbel and Henriques, 2009; Sue-Chan, Au and Hackett, 2012). The next section focuses on the behaviours identified in the traditional trust literature, informed by studies which have focused on VTs.

4.7 Leader Behaviours and Leadership Styles

Researchers have identified leader behaviour as one of the most important factors influencing trust. Dirks (2006) argues that the role of other mechanisms (such as dispositional, demographic or structural mechanisms) is much smaller and in some cases they only influence trust via their impact on behaviour. Therefore, leaders seeking to build trust need to be conscious of their behaviours, as they shape members' views of their personality, values and intelligence (Hughes *et al.*, 2002), and whether they keep their word (Simons, 2002) - in other words their trustworthiness.

Exchange theory discusses how past behaviours in the relationship are used to diagnose trustworthiness in future exchanges (Blau, 1964; Konovsky and Pugh, 1994). This is important, as single violations of trust can lead to a significant reduction in trust levels and will make followers more sensitive to future actions, which may be interpreted as violations (Dirks, 2006). However, the interpretation of actions may be moderated by the level of trust which already exists within the relationship. As discussed in section 2.4 trust can mediate the effect of leadership style on employees' perceptions of managers' explanations (Holtz and Harold, 2008) and can also moderate the relationship between a psychological contract violation and subsequent trust (Robinson, 1996).

The majority of extant studies have examined employees' evaluations of managerial activities, identifying various forms of trust and their antecedents, there is a dearth of research focused on understanding managers' decisions and actions and the factors that influence them to act in ways which help or hinder trust development (Long and Sitkin, 2006). Therefore, it is important to ascertain the trustee's (leader's) views on trust, as they often see things differently to the trustor (member) (Nooteboom, 2002). Within the sales literature there have been calls for studies which focus specifically on the sales manager perspective and in different contexts (Flaherty and Pappas, 2000). The current study contributes to the literature by investigating trust development from both the sales leader and sales member perspectives, within a virtual sales team context.

Research has identified leadership style to be critical to followers trust in leaders (Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012) with certain leadership styles or approaches posited to be conducive to trust building. One strand of leadership theories focus on leader behaviours and the links between such behaviours and performance outcomes. Within this strand transactional and transformational leadership have been linked to trust development, along with a more recent style known as authentic leadership. The second strand focuses on leader-follower relationships and Leader-Member-Exchange (LMX) is perhaps the best known of these latter theories. These four theories are now discussed in relation to their impact on trust development within leader-member virtual dyads.

4.7.1 Transactional, Transformational and Authentic Leadership

Transactional leadership is characterised by a series of exchanges between leaders and followers. There are two broad approaches. Contingent reward involves reaching an agreement regarding rewards or recognition the follower will receive for a specific level of performance. Management by exception, on the other hand, focuses on mistakes, and involves the leader intervening when standards have not been met (Bass, 1985). Empirical research has supported links between transactional leadership and trust (Jung and Avolio, 2000; MacKenzie *et al.,* 2001; Hasel and Grover, 2015; Asencio and Sun, 2020) including studies in VTs (Maduka *et al.,* 2017; Ben Sedrine *et al.,* 2020; Turesky, Smith and Turesky; 2020). It is argued that transactional leaders may engender trust due to their emphasis on ensuring that they are viewed as fair, dependable, and having integrity (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). However, Jung and Avolio (2000) argue that transactional leadership is inadequate for building the level of trust required for the workforce to reach its full potential. Leadership scholars have instead looked to transformational leadership, with research suggesting this form of leadership to have a stronger relationship with trust.

In their meta-analytic study Dirks and Ferrin (2002) found that trust in leadership was strongly related to transformational leadership, with transactional leadership showing a much smaller impact. Subsequent studies have also found a link between transformational leadership and trust (Holtz and Harold, 2008; Yang, 2016), including studies of sales teams (Schwepker and Good, 2010), the focus of the current study.

Transformational leaders focus more on the relationship and on ensuring care and concern (benevolence) are present, along with taking other actions to gain the trust of their followers. Such care and concern, which signifies a person-centred approach to leadership (Hasel and Grover, 2015) has been directly linked to affective trust and in turn to outcomes such as follower OCBs (Zhu et al., 2013).

It is also argued that this form of leadership enables followers to transcend their own self-interests for a collective higher purpose, mission or vision (Bass, 1985; Kindarto *et al.,* 2020). Bass *et al.* (1993) outline four key components on transformational leadership (1) the leader considers followers' needs over their own, is consistent in their values, ethics and principles and is respected and trusted by followers (Idealised Influence); (2) the leader confidently presents a clear and compelling vision to employees, and individual and team spirit is aroused (inspirational motivation); (3) the leader encourages followers to question traditional ways of doing things and encourages innovation and creativity (intellectual stimulation) and (4) the leader treats all followers individually but equitably and supports their development through coaching and mentoring (individualised consideration).

While theories of transformational leadership can differ in terms of the specific leader behaviours they identify, each theory highlights the centrality of trust to leader-member relationships (Gillespie and Mann, 2004). It is argued that transformational leaders possess values which enable them to take actions which earn the trust of followers (Bennis and Nanus, 1985) and that the same characteristics which influence who we trust – honesty, integrity, truthfulness – are the same values espoused by transformational leaders (Kouzes and Posner, 1987).

Numerous studies have highlighted the role of both values and vision in influencing trust. Hazel and Grover (2015) argue that relationships founded on common values engender an automatic, unconscious trust, while Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996) highlight the importance of vision in positively affecting congruence between member and leader beliefs and values and members' trust in the leader. Gillespie and Mann (2004) found that the communication and role modelling of a collective vision based on shared values, was significantly related to trust. Common values, they note, influenced trust in two ways; helping members to predict how the leader would act in the future, with the leader unlikely to behave contrary to shared values, and in helping members and leaders to achieve goal alignment.

Values are related to the integrity dimension of trustworthiness (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995) and research has linked transformational leaders to trust based on both behavioural integrity (Carlson and Perrewe, 1995) and moral integrity (Burns, 1978; Bauman, 2013). Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) identified a more ethical form of transformational leadership called Authentic Transformational Leadership, and they claim that leaders adopting this style have a strong ethical core. Brown and Trevino (2006) argue that authentic transformational leaders can be distinguished from others by their virtues of authenticity, integrity, truthfulness and credibility. In fact, ethics and morality are integral to many modern leadership theories (Bauman, 2013), including Authentic Leadership, which is described by Avolio and Gardner (2005) as the root concept for positive leadership models such as transformational, charismatic, ethical and servant leadership.

This section has, so far, focused on transactional and transformational leadership styles. Charismatic leadership (CL) has not been discussed in detail due to the fact that CL is a core feature of transformational leadership and the two theories align on three core issues, namely communicating a clear vision, operationalising that vision and demonstrating a charismatic communication style (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996). However, while all transformational leaders might be charismatic, not all charismatic leaders are transformational or authentic. Furthermore, history is replete with charismatic leaders who could not be considered trustworthy and charisma is not always considered a positive trait in and of itself.

It is perhaps unsurprising that transformational leadership has been linked with trust, given the parallels between this style of leadership and the aforementioned bases of trustworthiness - ability, benevolence and integrity. However, the above-mentioned studies do not provide strong insights into the specific behaviours which build trust and there is a lack of research into transformational leadership and trust in a virtual setting. Given its centrality to modern leadership theories and its link to trust (Agote et al., 2016; Ling et al., 2017), and due to the claims that all transformational leaders are in fact authentic (Avolio and Gardner, 2005), the discussion now turns to authentic leadership.

Avolio, Luthans and Walumbwa (2004, p.4) define authentic leaders as “those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others’ values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character”. A growing interest in leader morality, coupled with falling levels of trust in leaders across the world as led to an increased focus on authentic leadership (Lyubovnikova *et al.,* 2017).

Essentially AL is about demonstrating authentic behaviour - behaving in accordance with one’s true self, namely one’s values, beliefs and principles, despite pressures from the external environment (Gardner *et al.,* 2005; Lyubovnikova *et al.,* 2017). Sticking to one's principles, moral or otherwise, in this way, in spite of temptation, is judged by McFall (1987) to be a sign of integrity. Wong and Cummings (2009) propose that authentic leadership is essential for building trust because of its focus on honesty, integrity and high ethical standards. Ethical leadership has also been linked to trust in sales leader-member dyads (Millind *et al.,* 2019).

However, in order for a leader to demonstrate authentic behaviour (one of four AL components), staying true to their values and beliefs, they must first know what those values are. Therefore, self-awareness is a second core component of AL (Avolio *et al.,* 2004; Ilies *et al.,* 2005; Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Lyubovnikova *et al.,* 2017) defined as an "emerging process where one continually comes to understand his or her unique talents, strengths, sense of purpose, core values, beliefs and desires" (Avolio and Gardner, 2005 p.324). Authentic leaders also demonstrate balanced processing (component three), which involves the processing of self-esteem and non self-esteem related information in order to form an objective view of positive and negative attributes and qualities.

Relational transparency is the fourth component of AL and one which involves the presentation of one's genuine self (Wong and Cummings, 2009). This is achieved through a leader's openness (Lyubovnikova *et al.,* 2017) (linked to integrity in table 2.2.) in relation to their values, identity and motives (Wong and Cummings, 2009). As with transformational leadership integrity is a dominant feature. But again very little research has been conducted in a virtual team setting and a greater understanding is required of authentic leadership development to explore how leaders can best demonstrate authenticity, and integrity at a distance. The three leadership theories discussed in this section are focused around leadership behaviours and outcomes. The second strand of leadership theories focuses on leader-member relationships.

4.7.2 Trust and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

Proposed in the 1970s (Dansereau, Cashman, & Graen, 1973; Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975) as an alternative to traditional leadership theories focused on leadership characteristics, situational features, or an interaction between the two (Gerstner and Day, 1995), LMX is unique in its focus on the dyadic relationship between leaders and followers. Proponents of LMX purport that effective leadership occurs through the development of high quality dyadic relationships, based largely on met expectations and reciprocity of social exchanges (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Sue-Chan, Au and Hackett, 2012). As such LMX is rooted in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and theorists suggest that leaders establish different social exchange relationships with different followers (Jawahar et al., 2019).

LMX theory holds that managers determine the roles held by employees (Graen, 1976) and consequently the quality of the relationship that the employee will enjoy with the manager. Trust is at the heart of LMX (Martin *et al.,* 2016), with high quality LMX relationships characterised by mutual trust, respect, common goals, influence and obligations (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995, Flaherty and Pappas, 2000; Mushonga, 2018). It is suggested that in high-quality LMX relationships, where managers like or trust the employee (Kacmar *et al.,* 2003), employees accrue considerable benefits that do not accrue to employees in lower-quality LMX relationships (Herdman *et al.,* 2017), receiving greater resources (including information), superior assignments, emotional support and cooperative interactions (Liden and Graen, 1980 cited in Kacmar *et al.,* 2003). In return subordinates offer task performance, loyalty, commitment and behave as good organisational citizens (Sue-Chan, Au and Hackett, 2012), take on additional tasks and deliver beyond contractual expectations (Dunegan *et al.,* 1992; Sparrowe and Liden 1997; Wayne *et al.,* 1997) – see Gerstner and Day (1997) and Martin et al. (2016) for meta-analyses of the LMX literature.

A number of authors suggest that that LMX should incorporate both transactional and transformational processes (Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Gerstner and Day, 1996). According to Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) low-quality LMX relationships are analogous to Bass' (1985) transactional leadership where employees are motivated towards personal interests. All LMX relationships begin as transactional social exchange with more formal exchanges aligned to the normal employment contract (Liden *et al.,* 1997). However, Howell and Hall-Merenda (1999) highlighted the importance of differentiating between contingent reward and management by exception, two types of transactional leadership mentioned in the previous section. The former, they note, may be linked to higher-quality LMX relationships while passive management by exception may be linked to lower quality relationships. This supports the links between contingent reward and trust (Gillespie and Mann, 2004).

High-quality LMX relationships are aligned with transformational leadership in which leaders inspire followers to transcend their personal self-interests (Gerstner and Day, 1997; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). In high quality relationships followers interact frequently with supervisors, communicating in a manner which reinforces affect and relationship building with supervisors whereas in low-quality LMX relationships they communicate in an adversarial and antagonistic manner (Kacmar *et al.,* 2003). Research has also suggested that frequent (negative) communications in low-quality relationships reinforces supervisor negative views towards the employee whereas frequent (positive) communications in high-quality relationships strengthens the supervisor’s positive opinion of the subordinate (Fairhurst, 1993; Kacmar *et al,* 2003).

There is general agreement that LMX is intertwined with mutual trust (Bauer and Green, 1996). However, researchers have only recently begun to integrate the literatures on LMX and trust (Mushonga, 2018) and there is some disagreement over whether trust is best considered an antecedent, outcome or inherent property of high quality leader-subordinate relationships. Several authors treat trust as an antecedent to LMX believing that trust is a necessary precondition for entering into and developing high quality dyadic relationships (Brower, Schoorman and Tan, 2000; Sue-Chan et *al.,* 2012). Jawahar et al., (2019) found that follower perceptions of leader trustworthiness were related to followers’ perceptions of LMX and led to leaders’ trust in followers.

However, the quality of relationships is likely to impact behaviours and the trust literature suggests that behaviours will in turn impact upon perceptions of trustworthiness. Thus, trust can thicken over time, as a result of positive exchanges and increased knowledge of another party and as such can be viewed as a property of the relationship or an outcome of LMX.

Bauer and Greene (1996) compared Graen and Scandura's (1987) three phases of LMX development – role taking (both parties evaluate each other), role making (member performance and leader delegation begin to formalise the relationship) and role routinization (the relationship becomes affect laden) to trust development over time. This parallels with perceptions of trustworthiness leading to trust, as manifest in risk taking (such as delegation), and trust developing over time from a cognitive basis to an affect basis (McAllister, 1995; Lewicki and Bunker, 1996).

Bauer and Greene (1996) found a leader's perceptions of employee performance to be an important predictor of LMX and that personality similarity was positively related to perceptions of performance levels. The importance of performance links clearly with the ability dimension of trust (Mayer *et al,* 1995) and to previous studies which have found ability to be a key antecedent of managerial trust in subordinates (Kramer, 1996; Wells and Kipnis, 2001; Knoll and Gill, 2011). Bauer and Greene (1996) also found that performance evaluations influenced delegation by the leader and that performance and delegation interacted and influenced the ongoing relationship, replacing perceived similarity. This is similar to the concept of knowledge-based trust (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996) whereby knowledge from within the relationship replaces initial antecedents of trust such as categorisation.

This section has discussed the links between leadership styles and trust. However, there is a dearth of research into trust development between leaders and members of VTs. As such little is known about the leadership behaviours which may be effective for building trust in virtual settings. This is problematic as traditional leadership theorists have highlighted potential issues in trying to lead at a distance. Bass (1990) argued that physical proximity facilitates communication and quality of exchange between leaders and followers while Kerr and Jermier (1978) argued that physical distance made effective leadership impossible. Furthermore, Sparrowe and Liden (1997) contended that social exchanges are more easily facilitated through face-to-face relationships and Howell and Hall-Merenda (1999) proffered that trust between leaders and followers is more likely in close (rather than distant) relationships, where there are greater opportunities for direct interactions, continuity in personal contacts and relationship building. The same authors found that contingent reward leadership produced higher follower performance under distant versus close relationships, while transformational leadership was more strongly related to follower performance in close relationships.

However, Howell and Hall-Merenda (1999) also found that LMX positively impacted upon follower performance in both distant and close relationships. Furthermore, in a recent study of VT management approaches, Ruiller *et al.,* (2018) found that the effective use of ICT can ensure a sense of proximity in VTs. Therefore, the aforementioned differentiation between distant and close relationships may be becoming less relevant. However, further research is required to identify how virtual leaders build high trust relationships with members and which leadership styles and behaviours most effectively aid in this regard.

The approach taken by the virtual leader to monitoring and control might be an important consideration. The relationship between managerial control and trust has been a major discussion point in the literature, evidenced by the special issue of Organization Studies (2001, Vol. 22 (2)) devoted to the topic and a range of dedicated articles and textbooks. This relationship is now discussed in detail.

4.8 Trust and Control

Control can be defined as any attempt to ensure that that individuals within the organisation act in conformity with predefined strategies (Kirsch, 1997). Control mechanisms can in turn be classified into behaviour and outcome controls (Piccoli and Ives, 2003), the former focus on work practices and reward compliance with rules and procedures (Snell *et al.,* 1993) while the latter focus on outcomes and tie incentives to desired outcomes (Ouchi, 1977). The controls a manager might use to direct subordinates towards the effective completion of tasks are referred to task controls, which encompass formal (i.e. written contracts, monetary incentives and surveillance) and informal (i.e. values, norms and beliefs) mechanisms (Ouchi, 1977; Cardinal *et al.,* 2003). The inclusion of surveillance as a formal control mechanism highlights the link between monitoring and control – monitoring someone's behaviour could be viewed as an attempt to control that person's behaviour.

Research suggests a number of control related behaviours, which can impact upon trust levels. These include sharing and delegation of control (Whitener *et al.,* 1998); participative decision making (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002), consulting team members when making decisions (Gillespie and Mann, 2004), and interpersonal interactions in the decision process (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). While these findings suggest that managers might enhance trust levels by choosing to loosen controls and involving employees in decision-making (agency), they may be prevented from doing so by the organisation (structure).

Creed and Miles (1986) argue that high-control organisations will constrain certain management behaviours such as delegation, and open communication and in doing so may inhibit trust development. Whitener *et al.* (1998) also highlight the role that organisational culture can have on managerial trustworthy behaviour including risk taking and sharing and delegating control. This is an example of how organisational or institutional mechanisms can continue to affect ongoing trust levels between managers and employees even after the initial phase of the relationship.

Williamson (1975) (and other Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) scholars) do not believe that trust can be discerned ex ante and therefore organisations should act as if individuals are opportunists and cannot be trusted (Bromiley and Harris, 2006). However, monitoring and safeguards are costly (Gargiulo and Ertug, 2006) so it may be in a manager’s best interests to keep them to a minimum. Bromiley and Cummings (1995) believe that varying levels of trust exist and less costly control systems can be built for trustworthy people.

There are two opposing views on the relationship between trust and control (Dietz *et al.,* 2010). Some view trust and control as substitutes suggesting an antithetical relationship between formal task controls and relational trust (Powell, 1996; Wicks *et al.,* 1999). Schoorman *et al.* (2007) argue that very high levels of control may inhibit the development of trust. Participants in Gillespie's (2003) study viewed the presence of controlling, monitoring and checking behaviour as evidence of distrust. Das and Teng (1998) and Inkpen and Currall (2004) posit that when a partner chooses to use formal controls mechanisms that they will compromise the development of relational trust. Trust was proposed by Bradach and Eccles (1989) as an alternative form of control to price and authority and it was also seen as a response to the opportunism dominant in agency theory and transaction cost economics.

Nooteboom (2006) suggests three forms of control (which can be used to tackle opportunism): opportunity control (limiting opportunities for opportunism through contract or supervision); incentive control (limiting material incentives for opportunism through dependency on the relationship, hostages or reputation effects); and benevolence and goodwill (limited inclination towards opportunism on the basis or social norms or personal relations. The first two controls are forms of deterrence (Nooteboom, 2006, p. 250), whereas the third is more aligned to trust.

Another school of thought views trust and control as complementary (Sitkin and Roth, 1993; Leifer and Mills, 1996). In this view, trust and control co-exist: one party may trust another due to the presence of controls or may accept controls due to their trust in the other party. Atuahene-Gima and Li (2002) suggest that trust mediates the relationship between controls and sales performance. Choi, Dixon and Jung (2004) found that output information controls (monitoring sales person performance against set goals and providing feedback on performance – Challagalla and Shervani, 1996) may reduce dysfunctional behaviours of sales people, while capability information controls (monitoring performance against goals and providing feedback on improvement of sales skills and abilities) may help to build sales persons' trust in sales managers. This they note may be due to the fact that by focusing on the sales person's development the manager may seem to be less interested in personal gain. In the context of trust this may align to benevolence and the demonstration of concern and it may also align to a transformational leadership style, where the leader demonstrates individualised consideration.

Some authors have argued that it is the interaction of forms of trust and control – rather than either in isolation – that is key to obtaining both performance and relationship effects (Bachmann, 2001a; Nooteboom, 2002). Schoorman *et al.* (2007) do not view control and trust to be mutually exclusive, claiming that a control system can lower the perceived risk to a level that can be managed by trust, in situations where the risk is greater than the trust. In this sense, the use of control may reduce risk to an acceptable level. However, as discussed in section 2.2, once risk remains there is likely to be a need for trust.

Empirical research supports the complementarity position (Costa and Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007), suggesting that managers may attempt to simultaneously promote trust and control (Kim and Mauborgne, 1997; Nooteboom, 2002). Long and Sitkin (2006) argue that managers concurrently promote levels of trust and control that they deem appropriate to achieving organisational goals and developing superior subordinate relationships (p.89) – they must find a balance. Bachmann (2001b) also argues that managers must balance the mix of trust and control in their organisation if they are to achieve organisational goals and cultivate positive social relationships. Long and Sitkin (2006) propose a model (see figure 4.2) for managerial task control and trust building activities. They suggest that managers refine their managerial approach as a result of observing subordinate performance and the quality of the superior-subordinate relationship, which inform the manager about the efficacy of control mechanisms and the appropriateness of the trust relationship. For example continuous poor performance may signal a breakdown in calculative trust, whereby the employee does not believe that their efforts will be appropriately rewarded, or a failure of relational trust. Manager-employee conflict is important in this regard as it allows the manager to decide if the current controls are appropriate for a given context – the belief being that appropriate controls should limit conflict (Long and Sitkin, 2006).

The same authors calls for further research into trust to develop a clearer understanding of what leads managers to promote various forms of trust and control, how combinations of trust and control may impact upon subordinate performance, the quality of the manager-employee relationship and managerial evaluations and actions. While research has been conducted on trust and control in co-located working environments, there has been limited research conducted on the use of controls in virtual working arrangements. As such uncertainty remains as to how different types of controls might impact upon trust in this environment.

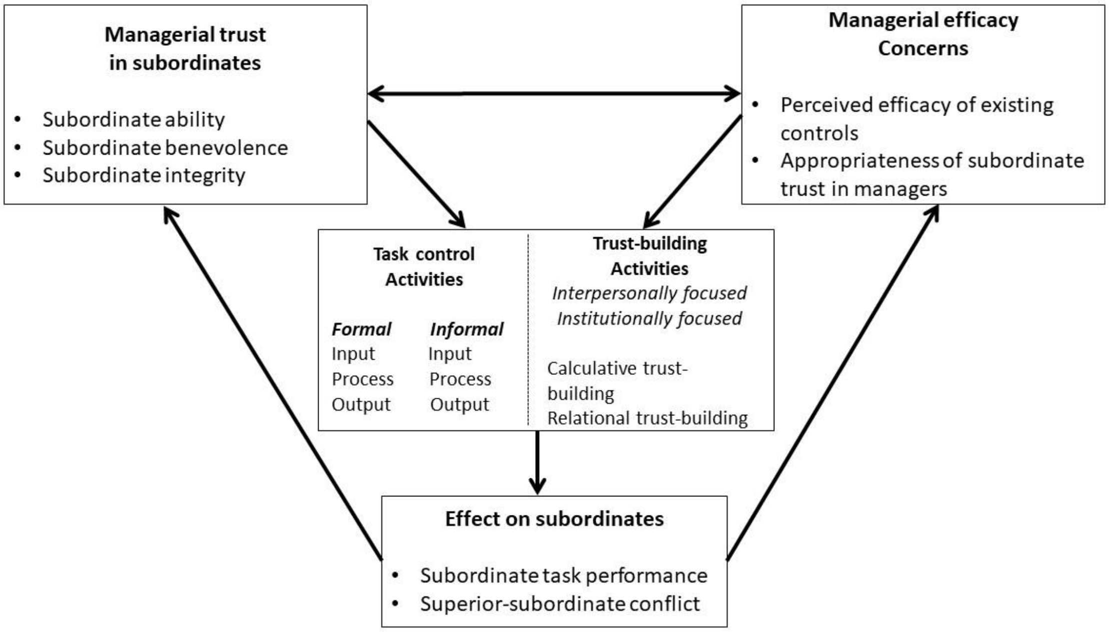

Managerial trust in subordinates
• Subordinate ability
• Subordinate benevolence
• Subordinate integrity
Managerial efficacy Concerns
• Perceived efficacy of existing controls
• Appropriateness of subordinate trust in managers
Task control Activities
Formal
Input
Process
Output
Informal
Input
Process
Output
Trust-building Activities
Interpersonally focused
Institutionally focused
Calculative trust-building
Relational trust-building
Effect on subordinates
• Subordinate task performance
• Superior-subordinate conflict

Figure 4. 2: Model for managerial task control and trust building activities (Long and Sitkin 2006, p. 97)

4.8.1 Monitoring and Control in Virtual Teams

While leaders of physical teams can observe sluggishness and identify when the team needs direction, focus or resources, leaders of VTs do not have the same visibility (Malhotra, Majchrzak and Rosen, 2007). Traditional monitoring mechanisms such as direct supervision, geographical collocation, and shared experiences are often missing in virtual environments (Picolli and Ives, 2003; Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner, 1998). It is argued that performance management is by far the biggest challenge to leaders of VTs (Cascio, 2000), as members may belong to a number of other teams leaders may find it difficult to assess how they are spending their time. They may also find it difficult to assess the work or a member from a different disciplinary background (Zolin *et al.,* 2004).

However, while monitoring and control of a distributed team may appear problematic, the rich communication environment, and archived data and communications, may actually make monitoring easier for leaders (Townsend, DeMarie and Hendrickson, 1998). A meta-analysis conducted by Breuer, Hüffmeier and Hertel (2016) found that controls such as the documenting of interactions might decrease the need for trust. Malhotra, Majchrzak and Rosen (2007) found that effective VT leaders used the opportunity to monitor progress online. They suggest that leaders can monitor synchronous and asynchronous communications to determine who is participating and who may need coaching and training. They can also monitor the knowledge repository to identify contributions and to deal with problems of social loafing, coasting or general underperformance where necessary. The monitoring options available to leaders may vary depending on the team type, for instance the use of modern day CRM systems allows for greater visibility for sales leaders.

Electronic Performance Monitoring (EPM) is one form of control which can be used in VTs. EPM refers to the recording by computer hardware of elements of employee performance (i.e. keystrokes, claims, log-in hours etc.) and/or supervisor observations of service (i.e. on the telephone) or qualitative aspects such as courtesy tone and accuracy of information (Lund, 1992 in Hertel, Geister and Konradt, 2005). These systems allow managers to apply Tayloristic principles to job design (Lund, 1992), emphasising standardisation, separation and simplification of work processes. They allow for some level of control similar to co-located work settings. Kirkman *et al.* (2002) reported on a number of other control mechanisms used by a global technology company who used a form of team-level balanced scorecard. This organisation also tracked individual performance by measuring quantifiable outputs, conducting 360 degree performance evaluations, subtly tracking behaviours (such as tracking leadership and coaching roles) and monitoring electronic discussions, team emails and other team activities. Kirkman et al (2002, p.76) conclude that 'team members in a virtual workplace can be judged more on what they are actually doing rather than of what they appear to be doing'.

While it may be possible to measure virtual employees using a range of approaches, organisations must consider the possible downsides to control systems. Firstly, not all VT work can be appropriately monitored or controlled in the same manner. Secondly, research has found strong links between EPM and work stress and at best ambiguous effects on performance (Aiello and Kolb, 1995; Kolb and Aiello, 1996), thus calling into question the practical use of EPM for virtual teams (Hertel, Geister and Konradt, 2005). Thirdly, several studies have shown that monitoring and surveillance may lead employees to believe that they are not trusted (Buyuk and Keskin, 2012), which may lead, in turn, to increased distrust

(Kramer, 1999). This may, however, depend on the existing level of trust, as managerial oversight may be viewed in a negative light in a low trust environment or accepted more open-mindedly in a more trusting environment (Madhok, 2006). Indeed electronic monitoring of virtual workers raises potential ethical issues and brings to mind the notion of an electronic version of Bentham's panopticon, where employees never know when they are being monitored. Buyuk and Keskin (2012) note that the electronic panopticon creates an awareness of permanent visibility as a form of power. However, Bain and Taylor (2000) argue that claims of perfect supervisor power are unfounded.

In sum, the research suggests that while trust and control may be used to complement each other, managers may have to carefully balance controls and trust building activities, altering the emphasis they independently place on task control and trust-building efforts and the ways in which they integrate these activities (Cardinal *et al.,* 2004). The manager's views towards management and leadership might play an important role in this regard. McEvily *et al.* (2003) argue that managers with a philosophy of organizing around relational trust will tend to avoid using formal controls. This may be particularly important to VTs, as managers general view of the trustworthiness of employees, for instance, may lead them to micro-manage and use a raft of control mechanisms at one extreme or adopt an extremely hands off approach on the other hand. The former could damage trust levels, as employees would not feel trusted, whereas the latter could mean that issues of social loafing and underperformance would go unnoticed.

4.9 Relational Mechanisms - Communication

Communication has been defined as a process involving the exchange of information between two or more people (Marlow *et al.,* 2017). As a dyadic process the effectiveness of communication in building trust between dyad members can be impacted by not only individual behaviours (influenced in turn by personal mechanisms such as ability and values) but also by mechanisms unique to the relationship. Studies has shown that members view behaviours differently based on their existing levels of trust in the leader, perceiving communications coming from a leader in a more positive way when they trust them, irrespective of the leader's effective use of the critical communication tools and techniques. (Jarvenpaa et al., 2004; Newmann, 2020). Others argue that trust and communication interact with each other, with communication leading to trust and in turn to better communication (Anderson and Narus 1990).

Communication is recognised as being particularly important in VT relationships with Hulnick (2000; 33) opining that if "technology is the foundation of virtual business relationships, communication is the cement". More specifically, effective communication has been identified as the key to effective virtual leadership (McCann and Kohntopp, 2019; Turesky, Smith and Turesky; 2020) and essential in maintaining trust between an employees and supervisors (Pattnaik and Jena, 2020). While the literature on VTs has grown in recent years, the majority of this research has been conducted in lab settings, which has made it difficult to extrapolate the findings to actual organizational practice (Newman et al. 2020). Furthermore, researchers have largely focused on communication between members

(Marlow *et al.,* 2017) with comparably little emphasis on VT leader-member communications.

In traditional studies of leader communication researchers have distinguished between directive communication (downward communication) from leaders to members and open communication where communication flows up, down and across the organization (Caldwell, 1993). While recognizing the importance of open, interactive communication (Thornhill et al., 1994) and highlighting the usefulness of two-way dialogue (Ball et al., 2014) or two-way communication (Van Marrewijk, 2004), researchers have focused primarily on how leaders communicate *to* members and not *with* members. Similar to studies of trust, there has been little focus on how members interact with leaders. This is despite trust being recognized as bidirectional and scholars highlighting the need for employees to demonstrate their trustworthiness (Searle and Dietz, 2012).

Studies in traditional work settings (non-virtual) have found that trust (Burt and Knez, 1995; Gillespie, 2003) or specifically affect-based trust (McAllister, 1995) increases in line with interaction frequency, with highest trust levels for those with whom the trustor had daily contact. Shapiro *et al.* (1992) argue that regular communication and courtship are important aspects of knowledge-based trust. Regular communication allows parties to stay in constant contact with each other, sharing information on wants, preferences and approaches to problems. Frequent communication has also been found to lead to greater level of perceived proximity (feeling of closeness) (O'Leary, Wilson and Metiu, 2014). However, a lack of regular communication can cause parties to lose touch emotionally and can reduce their ability to think alike and to predict the reactions of the other (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996).

Courtship refers to behaviour undertaken to develop relationships and to learn more about a possible partner (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). This includes watching the other person in social settings, experiencing them in different emotional states and watching how others view their behaviour. Social relationships can be particularly important in building high levels of trust. For example a manager who has built a strong social bond with an employee who telecommutes might be more willing than another manager (without a social bond) to trust an employee despite equal levels of information asymmetry (Whitener *et al.,* 1998).

Frequency of communication has been identified in numerous VT studies as being important to trust development. Studies of trust between team members, have found that social relationships indexed by frequency or duration of contact or emotional closeness lead to greater levels of trust (Powell *et al.*, 1996) and that regular communication is particularly important at an early stage of relationships (Jarvenpaa, Shaw and Staples, 2004). Research also identifies the importance of VT leaders communicating frequently with members (McCann and Kohntopp, 2019), especially in the early stages of virtual relationships (Avolio and Kahai, 2003).

However, while frequent communications may be important, McKnight and Chervany (2005) found that quality of experience (not simply quantity) predicts both trusting beliefs and intentions. In studies of VTs, numerous authors stress the importance of the nature and quality of communication both between team members (Iaconna and Weisband, 1997; Holton, 2001; Hunsaker and Hunsaker, 2008) and between leaders and members (Zigurs, 2003).

Research into trust in VTs has highlighted the importance of openness in communication between members (Alsharo *et al.,* 2017; Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998; Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005). Whitener *et al.'s* (1998) work, while not specific to virtual settings, suggests that managers should communicate in an accurate and forthcoming way, explaining their decisions thoroughly and exchanging thoughts and ideas with employees. Such openness and information sharing may influence perceptions of honesty, a component of integrity, while explaining decisions may help with employee perceptions of procedural and/or distributive justice, which can influence trust. While openness is common to definitions of trust (see section 2.2.) further research is required into the impact of open communication on trust between leaders and members of VTs and how this might be most effectively achieved in virtual settings.

Previous research has also identified timely responses and feedback as important to trust development between VT members (Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998; Zigurs, 2003; Breuer *et al.,* 2020) and between VT leaders and members (Marlow et al., 2017). For instance, prompt responses to emails was found by Henttonen and Blomqvist (2005) to be particularly important to perceptions of goodwill at the outset of the relationship. These authors referred to goodwill as encompassing moral responsibility and positive intentions towards others, similar to Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) integrity and benevolence respectively.

Research suggests that VT workers (both leaders and members) should strike a balance between task-related and personal information, including social and emotional information, if they wish to build trust (Zigurs, 2003; Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005; Monalisa *et al.,* 2008; Jawadi *et al.,* 2013). By conveying both task and social information virtual workers can make up for the lack of non-verbal cues (Walther, 1992). Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) argue that initial social communication can be particularly important to trust formation and Cascio and Shurygailo (2003) found that teams with high levels of trust begin interactions with social messages. However, it might be particularly important for employees to communicate task achievements to VT managers, given the importance of ability (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995) and fiduciary trust (Kramer, 1996) to managers' perceptions of employee trustworthiness.

Research highlights the added complexity of virtual communication and the need for VT leaders to ensure clarity in their communications (Marlow *et al.,* 2017) and to assume that their message may not always be interpreted in the intended way (Avolio and Kahai, 2003). In order to drive such clarity and ensure communication which is effective in building trust, virtual leaders must select the right tools and modes of communication (Marlow *et al.,* 2017). Researchers suggest that communication approaches used by leaders in F2F settings may not be as effective in a virtual environment (Daim et al., 2012; Kahai, Huang, & Jestice, 2012), highlighting the need for VT leaders to master the use multiple communication channels and technologies (Powell, Piccoli, & Ives, 2004; Jawadi et al., 2013; Newman, 2020). However, virtual communication differs to F2F communication and there is considerable debate about whether it is possible to build trust in the absence of F2F communication.

4.9.1 Communication Medium – how important is face to face communication?

A number of communication theories highlight the importance of face-to-face (F2F) communication for building trust. Media Richness Theory (Daft*,* Lengel and Trevino, 1987) classifies media according to their level of richness with F2F media being the richest, followed by video communication, telephone communication, letters and memos, email, impersonal written documents and numeric documents. The theory places a premium on F2F communication, highlighting less-rich or richer media as less natural and requiring more cognitive effort (DeRosa *et al.,* 2004).

A second theory, Social Presence Theory (Short *et al.,* 1976) argues that media differ in their ability to convey social presence, the perception that communication partners are socially and psychologically present during the communication interaction (Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005). This theory highlights the centrality of social interaction, often F2F, for trust development (Andres, 2002; Clark *et al.,* 2010).

These theories question the possibility of trust development in virtual teams, suggesting that computer-mediated communication eliminates communication cues that individuals use to convey trust, warmth, attentiveness, and other interpersonal affections (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999). Some research findings lend support to the views of Media Richness Theory and Social Presence Theory, with communication in virtual settings found to be less rich than in co-located teams due to the lack of cues (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Andres, 2002; Schaubroeck and Yu, 2017). Co-located teams have been found to have greater group cohesion (Knight *et al.,* 2008), more team-wide communication and an ability to asses all three trust dimensions (ability, benevolence and integrity) in a shorter timeframe (Andres, 2006). Conversely ICT environments have been found to slow the development of relationships (Walther, 1995; Chidambaram, 1996; Alge, Wiethoff and Klein, 2003; Robert, Dennis and Hung, 2009), possibly due to the fact that it is less likely that formal information sharing will be augmented by casual chats in the hallway or parking lot, thus constraining understanding (Berry, 2011).

Numerous authors have stressed the importance of F2F encounters for both building trust and repairing shattered trust (Jackson, 1999; Jarvenpaa and Leidner 1999, Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005; Wheeler, 2018). Such research provides support for Handy's (1995, p. 46) assertion that 'trust needs touch'. Handy (1995) suggested that paradoxically the more virtual organisations become the more F2F meetings are required. However these meetings, he suggests, should be about process and getting to know each other, and not about tasks.

Where no prior relationship exists between parties F2F contact may be required at the outset to build trust (Clark, Clark and Crossley, 2010; Handy, 1995; Rocco, 1998; Holton, 2001; Oertig and Buergi, 2006). Furthermore, Newell, David and Chand (2007) found that F2F interactions helped to reduce problems of trust belief and develop relationships, once common ground was established, this common ground being easier to identify in a F2F setting. Henttonen and Blomqvist (2005) found that F2F meetings helped team members to evaluate each other's trustworthiness and led to an increased level of social- and task-related communication, while Webster and Wong (2008) found that semi-virtual team members viewed their local colleagues in a more positive light than their dispersed colleagues, communicating with local colleagues more frequently and trusting them more. However F2F meetings may be impossible in many virtual settings (Clark, Clark and Crossley, 2010) due to cost restrictions or because members are often part of other local teams and travel would disrupt this work (Malhotra, Majchrzak and Rosen, 2007).

Both media richness theory and social presence theory view technology as stable over time, with no change as a result of user experience. They do not fully account the fact that teams may get used to 'lean' non-rich media over time. Studies have found high levels of trust in purely virtual teams (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999) suggesting that trust may 'not need touch'. In fact, Walther (1995) cites examples of groups who demonstrated more social discussion and intimacy than F2F groups. Kirkman *et al.* (2002), in their study of 65 virtual teams, also found that trust formation is possible without F2F interaction. They argue the trust formed in VTs is ability-based or task-based, as opposed to the levels of benevolence and interpersonal trust which develop between teammates on F2F teams as they form social bonds. Furthermore, while virtual communication has been criticised for the lack of physical cues, DeRosa *et al.* (2004) claim that the lack of physical cues may actually supress some of the discomfort associated with diversity and bring task factors to the forefront.

A number of theories support the possibility of building trust in virtual settings, albeit at a slower rate. Through Social Information Processing theory, Walther (1996; 1997) suggests that even though the characteristics of the communication medium are fixed, individuals can overcome technological barriers. Social information can be exchanged electronically and social relationships can develop in computer-mediated teams, albeit at a slower pace. McGrath's (1991) Time Interaction and Performance Theory distinguishes between task related activities and non-task related activities, arguing that the amount of time that team members spend together and interact with each other will influence both activities and impact upon performance, satisfaction, and trust. While lower levels of trust may be experienced in virtual teams due to the limited interaction time available to members, this theory suggests that given enough time to communicate both task-relevant and task irrelevant information, trust levels will equal those of F2F teams. A range of other researchers have supported the view that computer-mediated communication is equally effective in exchanging social information and that it simply requires more time and effort (Chidambaram, 1996; Walther, 1996; Martins *et al.,* 2004; Wilson, Strauss and McEvily, 2006).

Research by O'Leary, Wilson and Metiu (2014) suggests that perceived proximity (cognitive and affective sense of relational closeness) may be more important to relationships than actual distance. They found that perceived proximity (Wilson *et al.,* 2008) mediates between communication and relationship quality and that relationships can become just as personal and close between geographically distant colleagues as between collocated colleagues. However, such perceived proximity depends on the sound use of ICT (Ruiller *et al.,* 2019).

One reason for the mixed results in relation to trust development may be due to the fact that many of the studies which have identified lower levels of trust in VTs have been conducted at one time period, with little focus on how trust might develop over time. To overcome this Wilson, Strauss and McEvily (2006) measured team member trust (cognitive and affective) at three time periods with different combinations of electronic and face-to-face teams. They found that while there was significant difference in cognitive and affective trust from the outset, there was no significant difference between teams after three meetings. Furthermore, Alge *et al.* (2003) found that while virtual team members without experience of working together reported higher openness/trust and shared more unique information when communicating F2F, virtual team members with experience of working together were able to communicate as effectively as F2F teams. This again suggests that given enough time, high levels of trust can be achieved.

Researchers have called for further research into communication and trust (Sarker *et al.*, 2011) and specifically on the communication systems that could affect the performance of virtual teams (Chang *et al.,* 2011). Of the research that has been conducted, the dominant focus is on trust between team members. Further research focused on the leader-member dyad is required. In one of the few studies focused on VT leader-member dyads, Norman et al. (2019) highlighted the importance F2F from a member perspective while Whitworth and Roccomini (2005) found that leaders were most credible in a F2F setting. However, F2F meetings are not often possible in VTs and too many such meetings may reduce the benefits associated with VTs. In another study Lengel and Daft (1988) found evidence to suggest that effective leaders know how to use the most appropriate communication medium for the type of message being conveyed, using rich media for non-routine communication and lean media for simple routine communications. This suggests the importance of leaders understanding the most appropriate communication media and of finding a balance between regular communication - to ensure clarity and progress - and too much communication which could lead the members to believe that the leader does not trust them. Hence the need *"to explore the effect of communication on VT leader-member trust".*

4.10 Presenting a Framework for Leader-Member Trust

The framework presented in figure 4.3 brings together the various antecedents to trust discussed in the literature review thus far. It is intended as a conceptual framework to guide the primary research. On a basic level this framework suggests that perceived trustworthiness leads to trusting intentions and then to trusting behaviour, as captured within the grey box. Trustworthiness is impacted by trustworthy behaviours demonstrated by the other party, hence the feedback loop. However, there are a range of mechanisms which may influence leader-member trust. These mechanisms are grouped into four categories: personal mechanisms, relational mechanisms, extra-relational mechanisms and contextual mechanisms, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The primary research objectives are aligned with this framework, each objective is now discussed in detail.

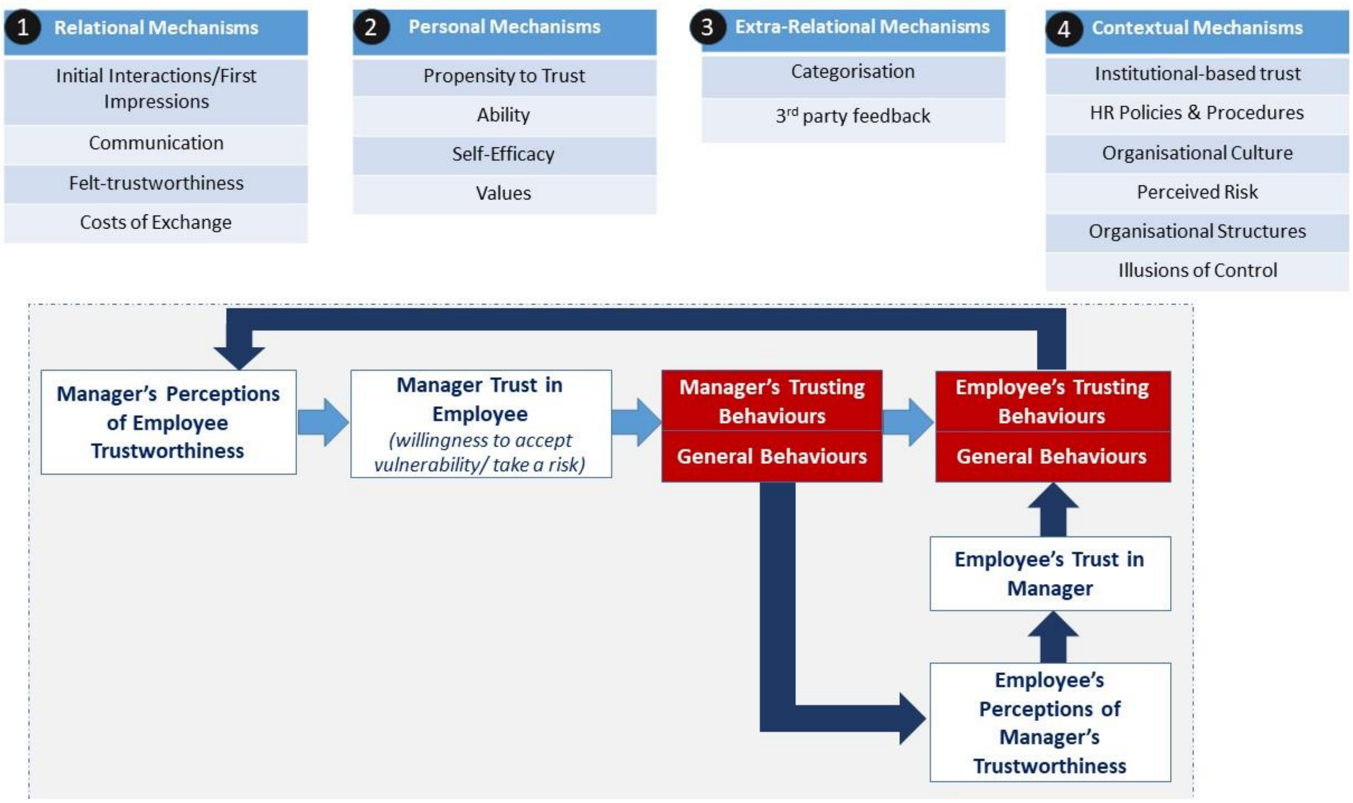

1 Relational Mechanisms
Initial Interactions/First Impressions
Communication
Felt-trustworthiness
Costs of Exchange
2 Personal Mechanisms
Propensity to Trust
Ability
Self-Efficacy
Values
3 Extra-Relational Mechanisms
Categorisation
3rd party feedback
4 Contextual Mechanisms
Institutional-based trust
HR Policies & Procedures
Organisational Culture
Perceived Risk
Organisational Structures
Illusions of Control
Manager's Perceptions of Employee Trustworthiness
Manager Trust in Employee (willingness to accept vulnerability/ take a risk)
Manager's Trusting Behaviours
General Behaviours
Employee's Trusting Behaviours
General Behaviours
Employee's Trust in Manager
Employee's Perceptions of Manager's Trustworthiness

Figure 4. 3: A framework for leader-member trust

4.11 Primary Research Objectives

Research Objective 1:
To determine the specific behaviours which impact upon leader-member trust in a virtual environment

Trustworthiness has been clearly identified in the literature as a key antecedent to trust, as represented in figure 4.3. While a range of mechanisms might influence perceptions of trustworthiness, it is claimed that the impact of behaviour is stronger than any other antecedent to trustworthiness (Dirks, 2006) – behaviours are shaded in red in figure 4.3. While other mechanisms might dominate initial trust decisions, as a relationship develops parties have an opportunity to observe behaviours and the impact of other mechanisms lessens. However, a number of mechanisms may impact upon a party's behaviour and stop them from behaving in what the other party might perceive to be a trustworthy manner. For example a manager may monitor employee behaviours, not due to a lack of trust in them but rather due to organisational policies and reporting obligations. The impact of specific behaviours on leader-member trust in virtual settings has rarely been explored from the perspective of both dyad members.

Research Objective 2:
To establish the personal, relational, extra-relational and contextual mechanisms which affect leader-member trust in a virtual environment.

While behaviours are a key indicator of trustworthiness, there are other potential influencing mechanisms. An individual's decision to trust another may be shaped by personal mechanisms (figure 4.3, labelled 1), such as that individual's disposition (general trusting nature - Rotter 1967), some people are simply more or less willing to trust than others.

Furthermore, a person’s self-efficacy, or actual ability may impact upon their ability to delegate or communicate in a manner which will gain the trust of others. Lastly, it is argued that values shape behaviours and influence member trust in leaders (Gillespie and Mann, 2004).

As trust is dyadic in nature, it will be influenced by relational mechanisms (figure 4.3, labelled 2) unique to a dyad. It is worth noting the dyadic nature of the leader-member trust framework (figure 4.3). Each member of the dyad can be both a trustor and a trustee, and each member’s trust will be influenced by the other’s trust in them (Ferrin, Dirks and Shah, 2003). If the manager perceives the employee to be sufficiently trustworthy and is willing to take a risk, (s)he will demonstrate this trust through certain behaviours. So the leader’s trust in the member will impact upon his/her treatment of that member which in turn is likely to influence ‘felt trustworthiness’ and impact upon the member’s behaviour (Brower *et al.,* 2009) and their trust in the leader (Gillespie, 2003). However, the opposite rings true, while trust can beget trust, distrust can also beget distrust (March and Olsen, 1975; Hardin, 2004).

A member’s trust in their leader may be influenced by many of the same mechanisms which influence a leader’s trust in the member. However, each party will have different levels of responsibility and reliance and power differentials will also exist in the relationship. Therefore, the levels and types of risk experienced by either party will vary (Korsgaard and Sapienza, 2002). As such, Whitener *et al.* (1998) include (along with expectations of other’s likely reciprocation) the costs of the exchange (especially if the other does not reciprocate).

While relational mechanisms may impact upon trust levels - research has highlighted the difficulties of communicating and building social relationships in virtual settings, as well as the fact that behaviours can be viewed in a different light depending on the relationship which exists between two parties.

However, there are factors outside the dyad, extra-relational mechanisms (figure 4.3, labelled 3) which might play a role in influencing trust, including categorisation processes at the early stage of the relationship and third parties. In fact, research suggests that these factors can lead to initial forms of swift trust (Meyerson *et al.,* 1996; Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner, 1998; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999). However, there is a lack of research into these factors in VT leader-member dyads.

Lastly, a range of contextual mechanisms (figure 4.3, labelled 4) may also influence trust development, for instance the perceived level of risk inherent in the situation (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995) and the level of trust in the institution which can help to lessen the risk and allow for trusting behaviour. The policies and procedures within the organisation, the culture of the organisation and organisational structure are all examples of structural mechanisms, which are external to the leader-member dyad but still impact upon it.

Research Objective 3:
To explore the effect of communication on VT leader-member trust.

Communication has been strongly linked to trust development, with individual behaviours communicating both trustworthiness and trust in another. Communicating accurate information may influence perceptions of honesty, a component of integrity (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995), while explaining decisions may help with employee perceptions of procedural and/or distributive justice. These behaviours help to communicate one's trustworthiness, while openness in the form of disclosure can signify one's trust in another (Gillespie, 2003).

Research into virtual relationships highlights the importance of communication to VT success (Hulnick, 2000) and trust building (Pattnaik and Jena, 2020) However, there is considerable debate as to whether it is possible to develop high levels of trust within virtual relationships in the absence of F2F communications. Extant research into communication and trust in VTs has found support for openness (Alsharo et al., 2017; Jarvenpaa et al, 1998; Zigurs, 2003) and has also identified timely responses (Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998) and feedback (Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998; Zigurs, 2003) as important to trust development. While timely responses to emails might be straightforward, further research is required into what constitutes openness or open communication and how this might be most effectively achieved in virtual settings.

However, the predominant focus of the VT trust literature is on communication between members and much of this work has been conducted in laboratory settings (Marlow *et al.,* 2017; Newman *et al.,* 2020). There is comparably little work on leader-member communication, especially studies which treat communication as bi-directional.

Within a virtual dyad, the nature of communication will evolve within the relationship and be influenced by mechanisms internal to the relationship, hence the inclusion of communication as a relational mechanism in figure 4.3. However, effective communication relies on each individual's ability to communicate (personal mechanism), while contextual mechanisms, such as organisational policies and culture, might influence the nature and content of their communications. Furthermore, a dyad member's communication with third parties (extra-relational mechanism) may influence their perception of the other dyad member's trustworthiness. As communication can be viewed as a form of behaviour (research objective 1) which is influenced by all four categories of trust mechanisms (research objective 2), it spans both research objectives and multiple influencing mechanisms and is therefore explored under a separate research objective.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter examined the extant literature on trust development in leader-member dyads and the various antecedents or mechanisms which can influence dyadic trust over time. These mechanisms are grouped into four categories in the framework presented in figure 4.3 and inform the research objectives introduced in section 4.11. The research findings discussed throughout this chapter highlight the need for a study conducted in the field, which gains insights from both leaders and members of VTs about how trust develops over time and the mechanisms which influence trust development. It is not known whether higher levels of relational-trust or identification-based trust are possible in VTs, given the reduced opportunities to develop affect-based trust and social relationships. These levels of trust may not even be beneficial, given their potential downsides. The current study will investigate the levels of trust which exist in leader-member virtual dyads and provide an explanation for how trust in this dyad is built and maintained.

The next chapter introduces the research methodology and methods adopted for the current study and provides a clear roadmap of the research process.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & METHODS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the chosen research design. As philosophical beliefs underpin the choice of research methodology, strategy and time horizon - which make up a research design (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) - this chapter begins with a discussion on critical realism, the research philosophy which guided this research. The research objectives, developed in the literature review, are then reintroduced, before moving to a discussion on research approaches. The focus of the chapter then turns to research methodology and research strategy. The sampling approach is discussed followed by the chosen methods of data collection and analysis. The chapter draws to a close with a consideration of research ethics and the steps which were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the data.

5.2 Critical Realism

A researcher's choice of philosophy is influenced by their assumptions about the nature of the world they want to study (ontology) and what they regard as acceptable knowledge (epistemology). While unificationists argue for the unification of business and management research under one strong research philosophy, in an effort to become more like a true scientific discipline, pluralists see value in diversity and argue that it enriches the field (Knudsen, 2003; Isaeva *et al.,* 2015). This thesis is based on the premise that one's choice of philosophy is an individual decision and that it is not a matter of deciding which research philosophy is better than another but rather reflecting on your own beliefs and values

(Saunders *et al.,* 2016) and justifying your chosen philosophy (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) in relation to the research question.

This study is underpinned by critical realism. Generally associated with the work of Roy Bhaskar (1975, 1978) critical realism has been proposed in recent decades as an alternative to positivism and competing philosophies such as hermeneutics (Bhaskar, 1975), interpretivism (Sayer, 1992), radical social constructivism and postmodernism (Reed, 2005). Critical realism focuses on the explanation of phenomena, as opposed to predicting future events and its main focus is on the underlying causal mechanisms which produce events (Danermark *et al.,* 2002), events being defined as external or visible behaviours of people, systems and things, or those which are reported, rather than directly observed (Easton, 2010).

Central to critical realism is the focus on structure and agency, which are seen as distinct strata of reality with different properties and powers (Archer, 2003). However, both are linked, as the causal power of social forms or structures is realised through people (Bhaskar, 1989 cited in Archer, 2003, p2). Archer (2003) argues that structures - such as organisations, roles and culture have the power to constrain or enable the actions of people (agents) but the impact of such structures on people will be mediated by the person's 'internal conversation' or reflexive deliberations. From a trust perspective, a leader has the power to delegate to a member (trusting behaviour) by virtue of the leader's role in the structure (leader-member reporting relationship). However, the leader's decision to exercise this power will depend on their deliberations on the trustworthiness of the member.

Critical realists focus on tendencies, believing that we can say that certain objects *tend* to act or behave in a certain way, but do not claim that they will definitely behave in that manner (Danermark *et al.,* 2002). The underlying structures and mechanisms are only contingently linked to observable empirical events (Tsang and Kwan, 1999). These structures or mechanisms possess causal powers, which may or may not generate observable events in specific situations (Reed, 2005). The context is important in this regard and consideration must be given to how the external contingency may affect events (Easton, 2010). Again, taking the example of a leader-member relationship, there are antecedents, which may influence trust in one setting but not in another, depending on other antecedents or contextual mechanisms. Specific leadership behaviours, for instance, may engender employee trust in a leader in one setting, but may not lead to trust in another setting, where there is a culture of distrust or a history of inconsistent behaviour. The absence of an observable event (in this instance trust as manifest in trusting behaviours) does not mean that certain underlying mechanisms (specific leadership behaviours) do not exist, perhaps they are simply counterbalanced by other mechanisms (Tsang and Kwan, 1999).

Therefore, the purpose of the current study is not to seek to predict trust in future relationships. Rather, the study identifies the range of possible generative mechanisms (antecedents) which influence trust. These were provisionally identified in the manager-employee trust framework presented in figure 4.3. The focus on explaining the generative mechanisms of trust aligns with a critical realist philosophy, providing an opportunity to offer a perspective which differs to the quantitative laboratory studies which have heretofore dominated research into trust in VTs, and answering calls for greater pluralism in trust research (Isaeva *et al.,* 2015).

5.2.1 Ontological and Epistemological underpinnings of Critical Realism

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019), or being concerned with 'what is' (Crotty 1998). Positivists adopt a realist/objectivist ontology, which assumes that the external world is made up of hard, tangible structures (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001) removed from social actors. However, constructionists have challenged realist ontology and radical social constructionists (Tsang and Kwan, 1999) argue that organisations are entirely discursive constructions with no ontological status beyond their textually created and mediated existence (Reed, 2005). In fact, Gergen (1994, p.72) cited in Reed (2005) argues that social constructionism is ontologically mute, "whatever is simply is".

Critical realism provides an answer to the dichotomy of realism versus anti-realism (Danermark *et al.,* 2002) with critical realists believing that the world exists independently of our knowledge of it (Sayer, 1992), while also accepting that some reality is socially constructed. Critical realists therefore argue that the world is socially constructed but not completely so, as sometimes "the 'real' world breaks through" (Easton, 2010, p. 120).

Critical realism views reality as layered, consisting of three domains: the actual, the empirical and the real (Bhaskar, 1978). The actual domain refers to events which happen, regardless of whether we experience them. The empirical domain refers to events which are observed and experienced, while the real domain is concerned with the mechanisms which cause events to take place. Applying these domains to trust, one can differentiate between an individual's level of trust in another (actual domain), another person's visibility and perception of that level of trust (based on their interactions with the person) (empirical domain) and the various generative mechanisms to the level of trust (real domain).

Central to critical realism is the belief that we cannot experience the entire of reality. Bhaskar (1978, p.36) labels the common view of the empirical world, the "epistemic fallacy" as it reduces the three domains to one, what is known is that which can be experienced. Danermark *et al.* (2002, p.20) argue that "if 'everything that is' were in the open, if reality were transparent, there would be no need for science; indeed no science would exist other than as mere data collection". In a trust relationship a member cannot know the precise level of trust held in them by their leader (actual domain) or view all of the leader's thoughts or behaviours, they can only gauge this level of trust by observing the behaviours of the leader (empirical domain).

There are a wide range of generative mechanisms which may influence the level of trust in the leader-member dyad. These mechanisms have been discussed in chapters two through four. Research suggests that perceptions of a member's trustworthiness will have a large influence on a leader’s trust in that member, defined as their willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of that member (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995). For instance, the leader’s perceptions of the member’s trustworthiness will be largely impacted by the member’s behaviours. Therefore, member behaviour could be considered an important generative mechanism (real domain) when it comes to trust building between leaders and members. If the leader develops trust in the member this trust should be manifest in trusting behaviours (such as reliance- and/or disclosure-related activities – Gillespie, 2003). This trust level and related trusting behaviours can be considered the ‘actual domain’, which exists whether noticed by the member or not. If these trusting behaviours are experienced by the employee they enter the ‘empirical domain’.

For example in a leader-member dyad if the member perceives the leader to be acting in a trusting manner and feels trusted (Lester and Brower, 2003) they are likely to reciprocate by behaving in a trustworthy manner (a generative mechanism in the real domain) thus beginning the cycle anew. This behaviour will further enhance the leader’s perceptions of the member’s trustworthiness and should lead to the maintenance or strengthening of the leader’s trust in the member (as manifest in trusting behaviours) (actual domain) thus highlighting the circular and reciprocal nature of trust – see figure 5.1. While this example refers to a leader’s trust in a member, a member’s trust in a leader could be similarly depicted by simply replacing leader with member and member with leader in figure 5.1.

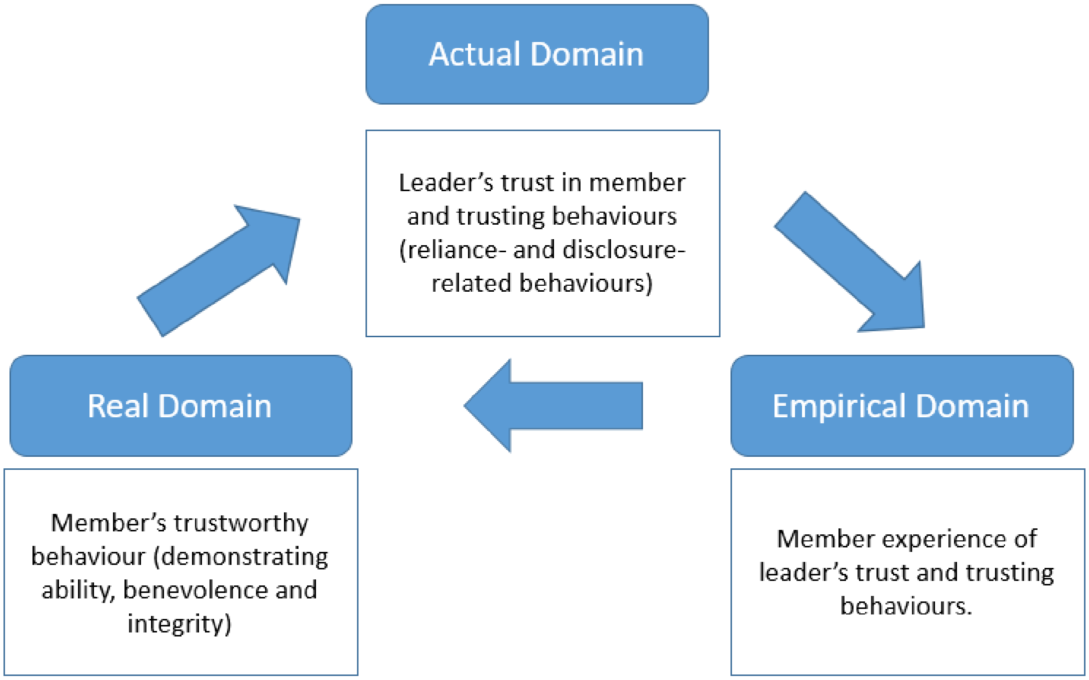

Actual Domain
Leader's trust in member and trusting behaviours (reliance- and disclosure-related behaviours)
Real Domain
Member's trustworthy behaviour (demonstrating ability, benevolence and integrity)
Empirical Domain
Member experience of leader's trust and trusting behaviours.

Figure 5. 1: The layered ontology in the leader-member trust dyad

Critical realists argue that generative mechanisms have the capability to lead to a certain action, but whether this action takes place depends on the conditions in which it operates (Welch *et al.,* 2011). Furthermore, certain mechanisms may cancel each other out. For example, a leader may, from initial interactions, deem a member to be trustworthy. However, they may subsequently receive negative feedback from a third party and this may cast doubt on their initial perceptions and thus prevent them from trusting the member.

Epistemology concerns the constitution of acceptable knowledge in a field of study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019), how we acquire knowledge and how we can know what we know (Danermark *et al.,* 2002). An individual's epistemology should be consistent with their ontological perspective as these emerge together (Crotty, 1998). A researcher's epistemological position will guide their thoughts as to what research data or information would generate acceptable knowledge or evidence about what they see as important in the social world (their ontology). If a researcher views knowledge as objective and tangible then they are likely to take an observer role and adopt methods of natural science. However, those who see knowledge as subjective and unique will seek greater involvement and interaction with their subjects (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001).

While critical realists accept the existence of an independent reality, they do not take the positivist viewpoint that this world is stable and unchanging. Critical realists adopt a relativist (Patomaki and Wight, 2000) or fallibilist epistemology, believing that one's knowledge of the world is influenced by experience, socially produced and open to challenge (Kwan and Tsang, 2001). Critical realists therefore combine epistemological relativism with ontological realism (Archer *et al.,* 1998 in Danermark *et al.,* 2002: 10).

Human limitations undermine claims to indubitable or objective knowledge (Miller and Tsang, 2010). Porpora (1998) argues that social structure does not operate independently of social actors, as claimed in positivist epistemologies, but neither can it be reduced to social agency or practice, as argued in structuration theory. Critical realism in this sense is epistemologically open or permissive (Sayer, 2000; 32). A number of mechanisms can impact upon trust levels within leader-member dyads, some external to the relationship and some a product of the relationship itself. Organisational policies and procedures, while external to the relationship, do not operate completely independently of the relationship. Certain policies and procedures may be non-negotiable but others may be left to interpretation. Therefore, while official statements on policies and procedures can be sourced from a HR department, it is also important to understand how actors view their operationalisation and the impact which they have upon trust levels, within the leader-member dyad. This information would need to come from the members of the dyad.

5.3 Research Approach

Critical realists adopt a retroductive approach over the more common approaches of deduction, induction or abduction (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Retroduction involves ‘moving backwards’, asking “what must be true in order to make the event possible” (Easton, 2010:123). It is a method for finding the prerequisites for the existence of phenomena (Danermark *et al.,* 2002). It is worth noting that critics of critical realism have called into question the uniqueness of retroduction. Contu and Willmott (2005) argue that retroduction is not unique, nor does it have the explanatory potential that it claims. They argue that Charles Peirce, who developed the notions of abduction and retroduction, did not consistently differentiate between the two terms and that Danermark *et al.* (2002) in their book on critical realism, note strong similarities between abduction and retroduction and the fact that they are almost indistinguishable.

Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett (2013) identify four stages of retroduction. The first stage involves the description or appreciation of the situation and focuses on the events or phenomena under study. This stage may be helped by extant theoretical schemes in the literature. As mentioned, the current study utilised a theoretical framework, developed from the existing trust literature. It is worth noting that while many qualitative researchers make a case for pure inductive research, such as grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) others advocate for a softer approach, which does not exclude an initial literature review. For instance, Gioia *et al.* (2012) suggest that researchers are never entirely uninformed about prior work and therefore they adopt a willing suspension of belief of previous theorising. While a theoretical framework informed the interview guide for this study, interviews were largely conversational in nature and featured largely open-ended questions, leaving open the possibility of new empirical or 'data-driven' themes to emerge.

The second phase involves the retroductive analysis of the data, hypothesising about the possible mechanisms or structures capable of generating the phenomenon (trust in this instance). This stage involves abstracting and analysing objects in order to identify the conditions or properties that generate the event and in this study involved constant reflection between academic literature, the theoretical framework and primary data.

The third phase focuses on the assessment and elimination of alternative explanations that have been produced and identifying how different mechanisms interact under certain conditions to contribute to social phenomena (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013). In order to abstract from specific empirical instances to generative mechanisms, general and essential conditions must be distinguished from incidental and nonessential conditions (Miller and

Tsang, 2010). As such, efforts were made to exclude those aspects of the context that did not influence trust development and to focus on the generative mechanisms. Efforts were also made to identify inconsistencies in the data and alternative explanations or viewpoints. Lastly, the research findings are created and circulated.

These four stages address the following questions, linkages to the current study are included in parentheses: What is happening? (A certain level of trust/distrust), Why is this happening? (Certain generative mechanisms are at play), How could the explanation be different? (What are the generative mechanisms of trust and which factors are not generative mechanisms? Might these be different to those proposed in the traditional trust literature?) and so what? (What does this mean for our current understanding of VT leader-member trust? if we understand trust development in VTs we can offer guidance to organisations, leaders and members looking to build high trust relationships). The approach taken to research analysis is discussed in section 5.10.

5.4 Research Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of this study was to explain how trust is built and maintained between leaders and members of virtual sales teams. The theoretical framework introduced in figure 4.3 highlights the range of mechanisms, which have been identified in previous studies as having the potential to influence leader-member trust building and maintenance, albeit mainly from a co-located relationship perspective. There were three research objectives, which link clearly to this framework.

- Research Objective 1: To determine the specific behaviours which impact upon leader-member trust in a virtual environment.
- Research Objective 2: To establish the personal, relational, extra-relational and contextual mechanisms which affect leader-member trust in a virtual environment.
- Research Objective 3: To explore the effect of communication on VT leader-member trust.

5.5 Methodological Choice

Research methodology can be described as a plan of action, which shapes the choice and use of particular methods (Crotty, 1998). Researchers can choose between mono-method or multiple-method designs (Saunders *et al*., 2019) and between qualitative and quantitative methods.

Critical realism, through ‘epistemological relativism’, provides a philosophical stance that is compatible with the methodological characteristics of both qualitative and quantitative research (Maxwell and Mittapalli, 2010). Sayer (1992) argues that questions of methods are primarily practical questions, considered in tandem with object and purpose, while Danermark *et al.* (2002) argue that the nature of the object of study determines which research methods are suitable.

Instead of the common distinction between quantitative and qualitative research critical realists distinguish between ‘extensive’ and ‘intensive’ research. Extensive research, which is predominantly quantitative in nature, tests empirical generalities across cases. Such quantitative or extensive methods are largely viewed as descriptive within critical realism given their inability to uncover evidence on the causal mechanisms that generate the events we observe (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013).

Intensive research, usually qualitative in nature, looks to uncover the generative mechanisms related to specific cases (Miller and Tsang, 2010). While critical realism is highly pluralist in terms of empirical research methods (Miller and Tsang, 2010), qualitative, or intensive methods are arguably more suited to retroductive studies, given their capability of describing a phenomenon and identifying structures and interactions between complex mechanisms (Sayer, 2000).

Traditions of qualitative research have proved particularly useful in highlighting processes of trust building (Lyon, Mollering and Saunders, 2012) and a mono-method qualitative approach was deemed to be most suitable for the current study, allowing for a deeper investigation into the 'how' of trust development and maintenance, uncovering the various influencing mechanisms.

5.6 Case Study Strategy

A case study can be defined as "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context."(Yin, 2009: 18) or **"**a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (Miles and Huberman, 1994:25). Case studies emphasise the rich, real-world context in which phenomenon occur (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007) and they are particularly well suited to ‘how’ and ‘why’ studies which can be explanatory in nature (Yin, 2018), such as the present study. While there are numerous methods of theorising from case studies, in keeping with a critical realist objective of identifying causal mechanisms (of trust) within a context (virtual teams), the method used in this study was contextualised explanation (Welch *et al.,* 2011).

The case study strategy is particularly suited to critical realist research (Easton, 2010). The use of intensive research, often qualitative, in a case study allows for a retroductive evaluation of whether the mechanisms proposed by theory lead to expected outcomes, while accounting for contextual mechanisms (Miller and Tsang, 2010). In the current study, individual semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with dyad members and leaders. These interviews were conducted either in-person or using videoconferencing technology, where participants were based in other countries.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to determine the generative mechanisms to trust development within the virtual leader-member dyad. These interviews also allowed for insights into beliefs, opinions and the rationale for specific actions and behaviours, which can impact upon trust development. Furthermore, specific incidents which positively or negatively impacted upon trust perceptions were investigated. Case study strategies have previously been employed within the trust literature (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Picolli and Ives, 2003; Paul and McDaniel, 2004; Newell *et al.,* 2007), although I am not aware of any studies which have focused on leader-member trust development within virtual teams using a case study strategy.

A multiple-case embedded design (Yin, 2018) was chosen for this study, as the goal of the research was to study a series of leader-member dyads (unit of analysis) within virtual teams (cases) in three organisations (context). This approach allowed for the examination of trust development within different organisational contexts, as well as different team contexts, something which a single case design would not allow for. This is important given the potential impact of contextual variables on trust development within VT dyads, such as organisational culture, team culture, policies and procedures, control mechanisms and training and other supports provided for VT members. Furthermore, a multiple case approach provides for more accurate and more generalizable theory, all else being equal (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

The case study design used in the current study is outlined in figure 5.2. Following four pilot interviews, a total 33 interviews were conducted across twenty dyads and eleven teams. While Pratt (2009) argues that there is no magic number of interviews that should be conducted in a qualitative research project, this number of interviews is in line with previous studies. Ruiller *et al.,* (2019) conducted 22 interviews in their study of VT management practices, Sloan and Oliver (2013), in their study of trust in partnerships, interviewed 11 participants from each partner organisation, while Lee-Kelley, Crossman and Cannings (2004) studied 8 teams in one organisation.

Furthermore, this number of qualitative interviews with participants is at the upper end of the guideline of 30 issued by Creswell (2007). This number of interviews should ensure saturation, even within heterogeneous populations (Saunders and Townsend, 2018). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest adding cases until each new case contributes only minor insights. Francis *et al.* (2010) in discussing saturation for interview studies, suggest that a researcher specifies a minimum sample size for initial analysis and then agrees the number of interviews that will be conducted without new ideas emerging – this is the stopping criterion. Three organisations were initially identified and a minimum target of 16 dyads and 24 interviews was targeted. A memo was kept which documented the number of new codes per interview (see Appendix A) and while the number of new codes began to reduce as the target number of dyads was approached, the third organisation (ORGC) had granted access to five teams so it was decided to continue the research with all teams. The research eventually reached saturation at twenty dyads and 33 interviews. The number of dyads per leader was restricted to two as this was deemed to be an appropriate number to allow for detailed examination of each dyad, without taking up too much of the leader's time. This number was also in line with previous studies (Gillespie, 2003; Sue-Chan *et al.,* 2012). Examining two dyads in the same team, as opposed to one, allowed for comparisons of rust development between a single leader and different team members.

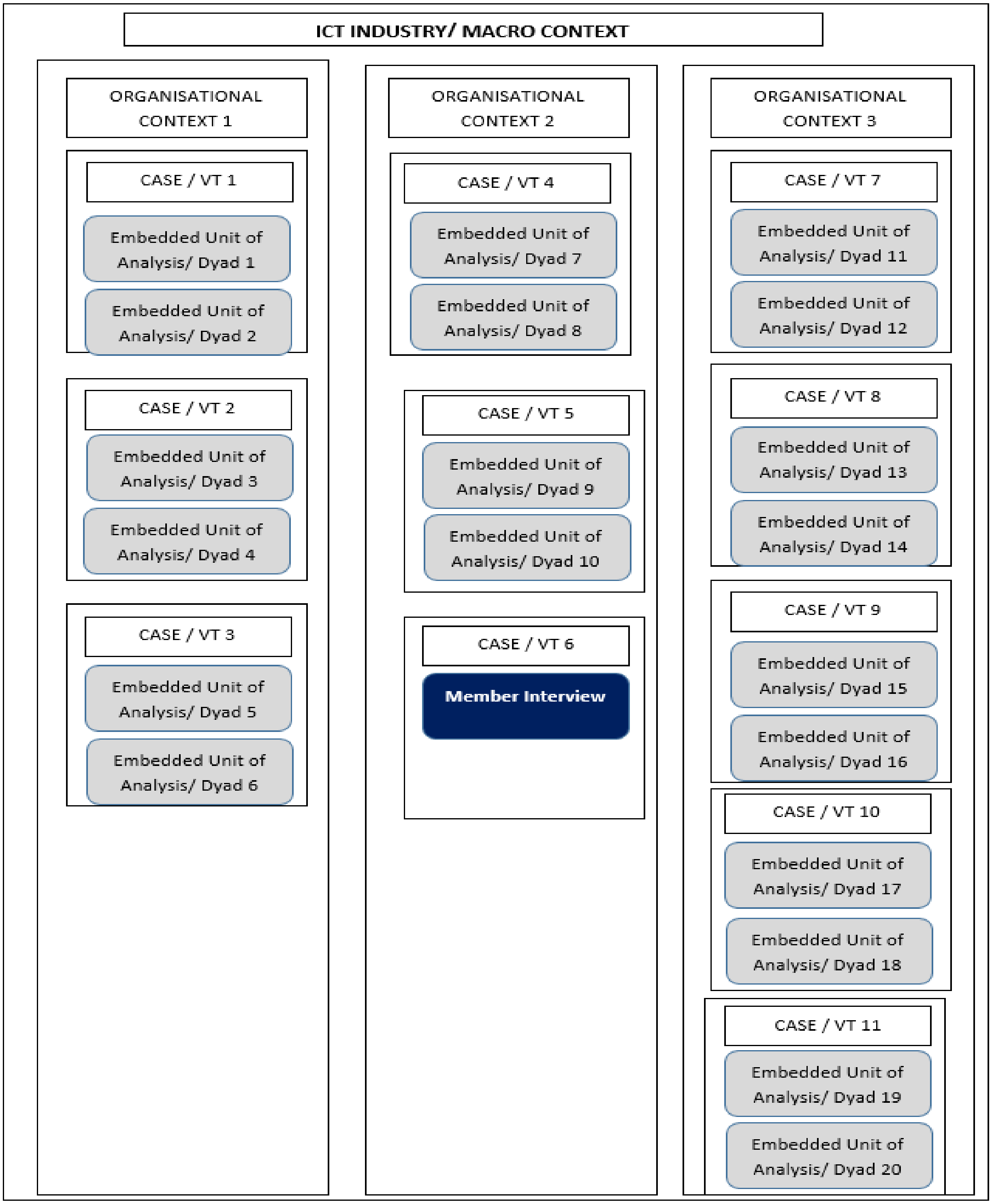

ICT INDUSTRY/ MACRO CONTEXT
ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT 1
CASE / VT 1
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 1
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 2
CASE / VT 2
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 3
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 4
CASE / VT 3
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 5
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 6
ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT 2
CASE / VT 4
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 7
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 8
CASE / VT 5
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 9
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 10
CASE / VT 6
Member Interview
ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT 3
CASE / VT 7
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 11
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 12
CASE / VT 8
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 13
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 14
CASE / VT 9
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 15
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 16
CASE / VT 10
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 17
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 18
CASE / VT 11
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 19
Embedded Unit of Analysis/ Dyad 20

Figure 5. 2: Chosen Case Study Design (adapted from Yin, 2018)

5.6.1 Choice of Organisations and Team Type

The three case study organisations were Irish subsidiaries of multinational organisations in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector. These organisations were chosen due to the growth of virtual teams in this high-tech sector (Daim *et al.,* 2012) and because research has found that multinational organisations are almost twice as likely to use virtual teams compared to organizations with domestic operations (SHRM, 2012). Furthermore, these multinational ICT organisations were known by the researcher, through preliminary discussions, to make significant use of virtual sales teams, the specific focus of this study. As such these organisations where chosen using non-probability purposive sampling (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Rather than differentiating between co-located and virtual teams, this study followed previous authors (Griffith and Neale, 2001; Martins *et al*., 2004) in categorising teams based on their degree of virtuality. Teams identified by the senior contact person in each organisation as communicating primarily via ICTs with little physical face-to-face communication were targeted. Furthermore, while some VTs are temporary in nature (Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Kanawattanachai and Yoo, 2002; Roberts *et al.,* 2009) this research sought to explain higher levels of knowledge-based trust and as such focused on virtual sales teams which were non-temporary in nature.

5.6.2 Unit of Analysis

The embedded unit of analysis for this study was the sales leader – sales team member dyad. While much of the extant VT literature refers primarily to member - member relationships, as discussed in section 3.6 many of the key challenges relating to effective team member relationships are also important to the leader-member relationship. The focus on dyads is warranted due to the call for research into the processes by which trust is built and the trust building behaviours of dyad members (Harris, Kacmar and Witt, 2005; Ferris *et al.,* 2009).

This study followed a comparative design, three contrasting cases are studied using more or less identical methods (Bryman, 2008). The intention was to identify low trust and high trust dyads, so called polar types (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007), which would strengthen the findings through examining similarities and differences across cases (Miles and Huberman, 1994). While trust levels were quite high in general, some lower trust dyads were also identified.

These lower trust cases were particularly insightful as "by seeing how something goes wrong, we find out more about the conditions of its working than we ever would by observing it working properly" (Collier, 1994, p.165). Cross-case comparison allowed for individual differences and varied perceptions of leader behaviours, and the inclusion of a number of leaders in each organisation facilitated insights into different leadership styles and the impact of different behaviours on trust building. It also offered an insight into contextual mechanisms within each team.

5.7 –Sampling Approach - Selecting Participants for Interviews

As discussed in section 5.6.1, non-probability purposive sampling (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) was used to select interview participants. This approach was necessary due to differences within each of the Case Study organisations. The sampling approach is captured in figure 5.3. A senior leader was contacted in each case study organisation and the research was explained in detail. Either this senior leader or another asked colleagues to participate in the study. Each potential participant was sent an email by the researcher outlining the purpose of the study. The email was accompanied by a personalised cover letter and a video which was produced with the intention of bringing the research to life and to build trust in the researcher (see link in Appendix B). A number of participants subsequently complemented the utility of the video in ensuring clarity.

In Organisation A (ORGA) a senior sales leader was the key contact person. Due to recent restructuring the three team leaders who had agreed to participate only had two virtual reports (members) each – the remainder were co-located. Due to heavy travel schedules and general availability issues, these three leaders were interviewed before the member interviews took place. However, this was not an issue as all virtual members had agreed to participate in advance. Therefore, each leader discussed their relationships with both of their direct reports (members) in detail.

In Organisation B (ORGB) the four leaders contacted by the senior contact person initially agreed to participate. However, due to a role change and one person leaving the organisation two leaders had to withdraw. The remaining two leaders had a number of virtual reports and connected me with all of them by email. All members were interviewed and each leader was then asked to select two members to discuss in-depth during the interview – one member with whom they had a very strong relationship, and one member with whom they had yet to build a strong relationship. Each leader identified what transpired to be one high-trust and one lower-trust relationship. This was despite all members reporting relatively high trust levels within the relationships. As such, the decision to interview all members proved decisive as I now had a number of extreme cases with insights from both dyad members.

In Organisation C (ORGC) all five leaders contacted by the HR contact agreed to participate. The HR contact also contacted team members directly and asked them to participate. Similar to ORGA, the number of virtual reports in ORGC were small as leaders are generally co-located with the majority of team members, with only a small number based in overseas territories. Two virtual members in each team agreed to participate and an introduction was made by email. The research schedule is provided in figure 5.3.

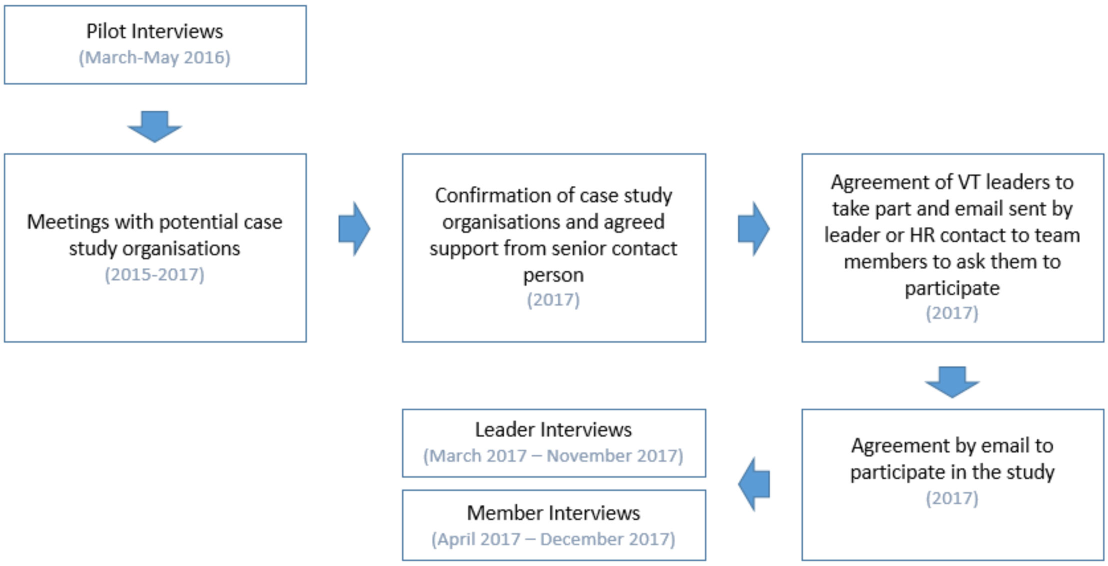

Pilot Interviews
(March-May 2016)
Meetings with potential case study organisations
(2015-2017)
Confirmation of case study organisations and agreed support from senior contact person
(2017)
Agreement of VT leaders to take part and email sent by leader or HR contact to team members to ask them to participate
(2017)
Agreement by email to participate in the study
(2017)
Leader Interviews
(March 2017 – November 2017)
Member Interviews
(April 2017 – December 2017)

Figure 5. 3: Research Schedule

5.7.1 Qualitative Data Collection

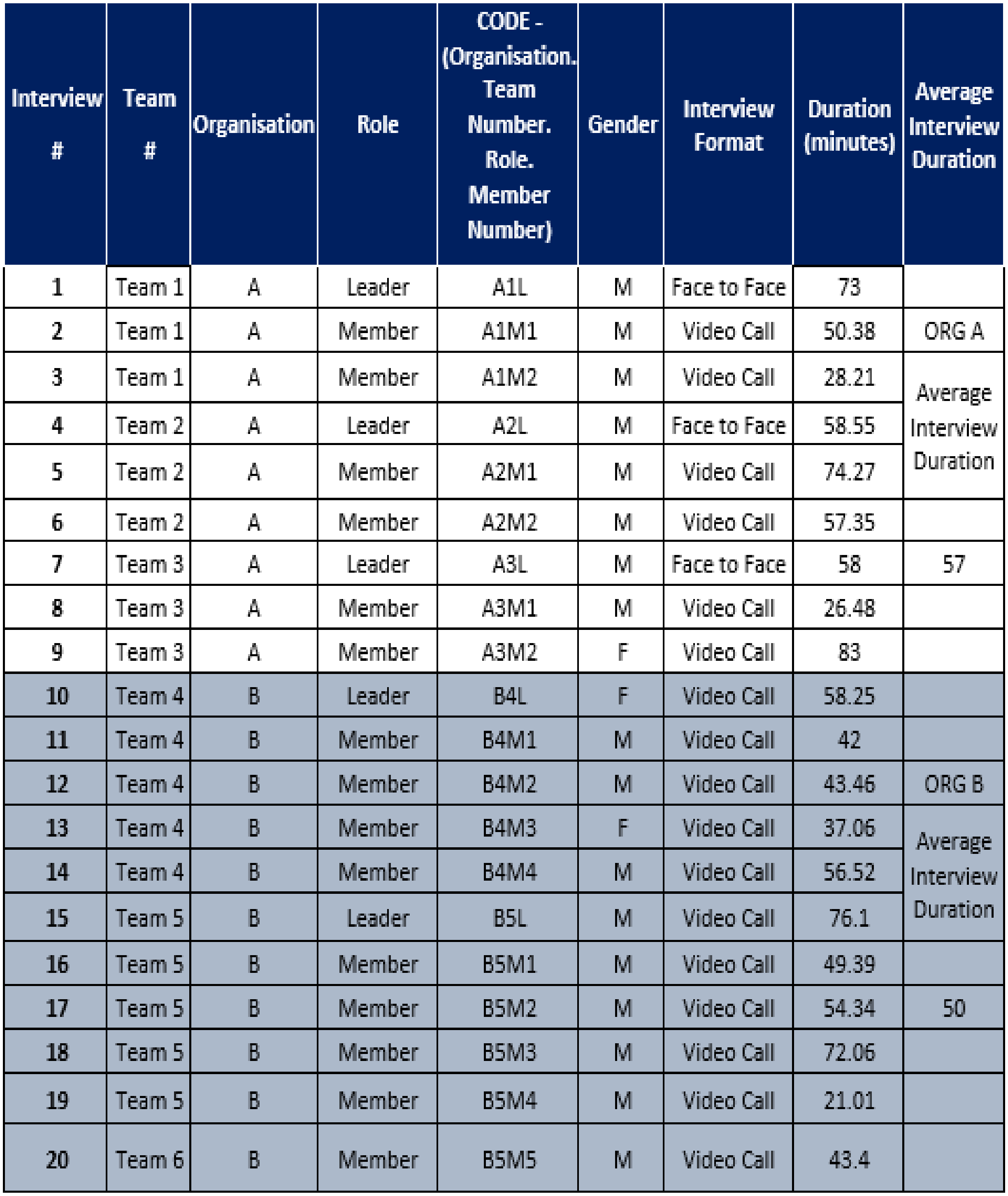
Qualitative methods are more suitable than quantitative methods when seeking to understand a phenomenon (trust) and identify structures and interactions between mechanisms (Sayer, 2000). Semi-structured in-depth interviews were deemed to be the most appropriate method as they allow an interviewer to ask open-ended questions and to include prompts and/or probe answers while also allowing an interviewee to explain or build upon their responses (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Interviews are a commonly used data collection method within case study research (Yin, 2018) and are a highly efficient way to gather rich, empirical data (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

Initial pilot interviews were conducted with two VT members and two VT leaders, one interview with each respondent type was conducted remotely using videoconferencing technology to see if there were any issues or significant differences to conducting the interviews face-to-face. Some connectivity issues were experienced when using one platform so it was decided going forward that each calendar invite would include a google hangouts link and that a skype address would also be included in the email. This ensured no issues during the phase two interviews. No challenges were found in relation to interviewee engagement levels or openness when using video conference technology. This also proved to be the case in phase two, where 25 of the interviews were conducted using video technologies. In fact, some of the most in-depth and open discussions took place via skype and google hangouts.

A number of changes were made to the interview guides as a result of the pilot study. The final interview guides consisted of 21 questions for the employee interview and 24 questions for the manager interview. This is broadly in line with Kelley and Bisel's (2014) 20 question guide. The interview questions are mapped to the research objectives in Appendices C and D. These were used as a guide, the focus was on asking as many open ended questions as possible and to encourage interviewees to discuss topics in their own words. The interview guides were also updated slightly as the research progressed, in line with the approach used by many qualitative researchers (Gioia *et al.,* 2012).

Steps were also taken to ensure reliability, that data collection techniques and analytic procedures would produce consistent findings if repeated on another occasion or by another researcher (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). In order to minimise participant error busy times such as financial year end were avoided, as this can be a stressful time for sales people who are working hard to achieve targets. To reduce the possibility of participant bias, participants were also asked to conduct the interview in a private place so that they would not be overheard and feel like they had to provide falsely positive answers. Every effort was made to eliminate researcher bias and the researcher prepared thoroughly for each interview so as to minimise researcher error.

Table 5.1 provides details of participants and interviews. 33 interviews were conducted, 25 of which were conducted via videoconference. Interviews lasted for just over 50 minutes on average. The final sample consisted of 27 males and 6 females. Two additional female leaders and three female members in ORGB had initially agreed to participate but ultimately did not do so, this partly explains the high male-female ratio and why team 6 includes only one member and no leader. This gender balance may be unsurprising as research has shown that women are under-represented in sales roles (Gartner, 2020) and this is particularly notable in technology sales roles (LinkedIn 2020).



Interview #	Team #	Organisation	Role	CODE - (Organisation. Team Number. Role. Member Number)	Gender	Interview Format	Duration (minutes)	Average Interview Duration
1	Team 1	A	Leader	A1L	M	Face to Face	73	
2	Team 1	A	Member	A1M1	M	Video Call	50.38	ORG A
3	Team 1	A	Member	A1M2	M	Video Call	28.21	Average Interview Duration
4	Team 2	A	Leader	A2L	M	Face to Face	58.55	
5	Team 2	A	Member	A2M1	M	Video Call	74.27	
6	Team 2	A	Member	A2M2	M	Video Call	57.35	
7	Team 3	A	Leader	A3L	M	Face to Face	58	57
8	Team 3	A	Member	A3M1	M	Video Call	26.48	
9	Team 3	A	Member	A3M2	F	Video Call	83	
10	Team 4	B	Leader	B4L	F	Video Call	58.25	
11	Team 4	B	Member	B4M1	M	Video Call	42	
12	Team 4	B	Member	B4M2	M	Video Call	43.46	ORG B
13	Team 4	B	Member	B4M3	F	Video Call	37.06	Average Interview Duration
14	Team 4	B	Member	B4M4	M	Video Call	56.52	
15	Team 5	B	Leader	B5L	M	Video Call	76.1	
16	Team 5	B	Member	B5M1	M	Video Call	49.39	
17	Team 5	B	Member	B5M2	M	Video Call	54.34	50
18	Team 5	B	Member	B5M3	M	Video Call	72.06	
19	Team 5	B	Member	B5M4	M	Video Call	21.01	
20	Team 6	B	Member	B5M5	M	Video Call	43.4	

Ctd

Interview #	Team #	Organisation	Role	CODE - (Organisation. Team Number. Role. Member Number)	Gender	Interview Format	Duration (minutes)	Average Interview Duration
21	Team 7	C	Leader	C7L	M	Video Call	49.53	
22	Team 7	C	Member	C7M1	M	Face to Face	46.57	
23	Team 7	C	Member	C7M2	M	Face to Face	36.32	ORG C
24	Team 8	C	Leader & Member	C8L/C10M1	M	Video Call	50.21	Average Interview Duration
25	Team 8	C	Member	C8M1	M	Video Call	34.35	
26	Team 9	C	Leader	C9L	M	Video Call	74.45	
27	Team 9	C	Member	C9M1	M	Face to Face	37.33	
28	Team 9	C	Member	C9M2	F	Video Call	42.06	47
29	Team 10	C	Leader	C10L	M	Face to Face	53.37	
30	Team 10	C	Member	C10M3	F	Video Call	57.33	
31	Team 11	C	Leader & Member	C11L/ C10M2	M	Video Call	46.54	
32	Team 11	C	Member	C11M1	F	Video Call	44.16	
33	Team 11	C	Member	C11M2	M	Face to Face	41.35	
Face to Face	X8	24%	Organisations	X3	MALE X 27 (82%)	Total Minutes	1676.4	
Video Call	X25	76%	Teams	X11	FEMALE X 6 (18%)	Hours	27.94	
			Dyads	X20		Average Duration	50.8	

Table 5. 1: Details of Participants

5.8 Qualitative Data Analysis

While there is no accepted boilerplate for writing up qualitative methods and determining quality (Pratt, 2009) clarity around process and practice of analytical method is vital in order to evaluate research and to compare across studies (Braun and Clarke, 2006). There are numerous extant analytical methods, some of which are aligned to specific theoretical and epistemological standpoints and some of which are more flexible. Thematic analysis (TA) is a flexible analytical method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data. TA was judged to be a suitable method for this study, not least due to the fact that it is a "contextualist method, sitting between the two poles of essentialism and constructionism and characterised by theories such as critical realism" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 9).

Although analysis is not a linear process but more recursive, involving movement back and forth as needed, Braun and Clarke (2006) outline a number of stages for thematic analysis. These are presented graphically in Figure 5.4 and discussed in parallel with the stages of retroduction discussed in section 5.3.

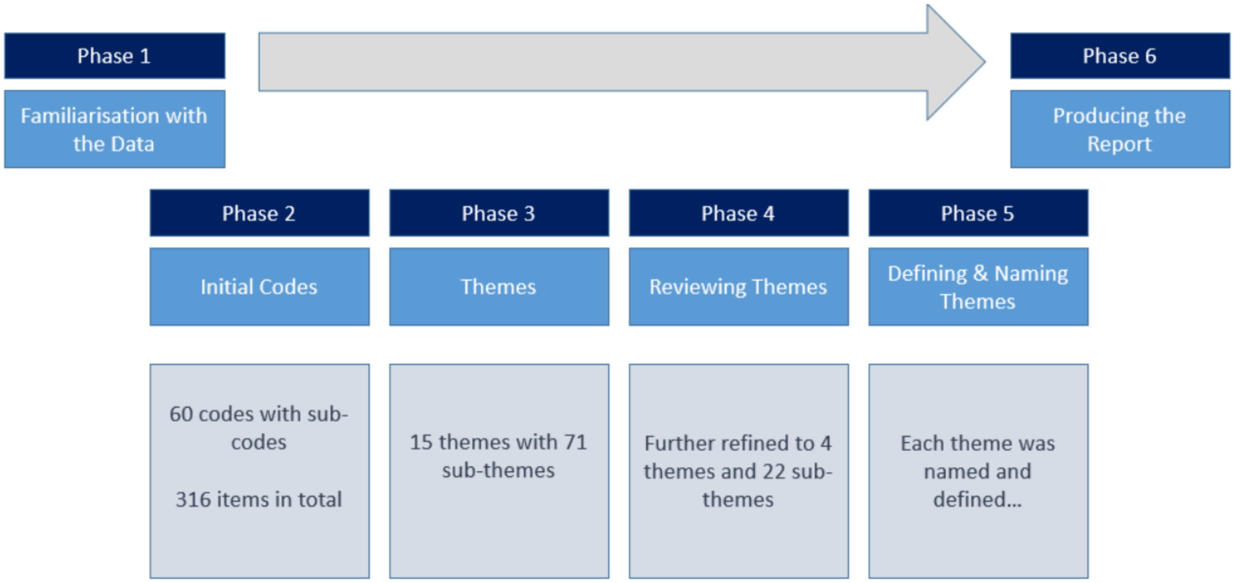

Phase 1
Familiarisation with the Data
Phase 6
Producing the Report
Phase 2
Initial Codes
Phase 3
Themes
Phase 4
Reviewing Themes
Phase 5
Defining & Naming Themes
60 codes with sub-codes
316 items in total
15 themes with 71 sub-themes
Further refined to 4 themes and 22 sub-themes
Each theme was named and defined…

Figure 5. 4: The Phases of Thematic Analysis (adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data

Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that it is vital for a researcher to immerse themselves in the data to ensure familiarity with the depth and breadth of the content. This phase, they note, provides the bedrock for the rest of the analysis. The semi-structured in-depth interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and listened to at least once before transcription. Following the advice offered by authors to collect, analyse and interpret data as each interview is conducted (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012) or to code ‘as soon as possible’ (Bryman, 2008, p.55), data analysis began immediately after the first interview as interview notes were reread and additional notes taken to capture key insights.

The majority of interviews were transcribed by the researcher in order to gain greater familiarity with the data. However, after transcribing 26 interviews a professional transcription service was utilised for the remaining interviews. The interviews transcribed by this service were read a number of times and transcriptions checked for accuracy.

The transcribed interviews were imported into NVivo Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) (Flick, 2009) and then reread. As writing is an integral part of the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), memos were created within NVivo to capture ideas and potential codes. Previous handwritten notes and memos were incorporated into NVivo memos and the hardcopies were shredded in an effort to ensure good data management, as discussed further in section 5.9. Throughout the period of data analysis interviews were listened to repeatedly to ensure increasingly familiarity.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

The transcripts were then read again, this time attaching initial codes to the data. Codes identify features of the data that appear interesting to the analyst and refer to the most basic segment or element of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998, 63). The original transcripts were kept intact and labels were applied, so as to avoid losing the source and context of the data (Bryman, 2008:552).

A semantic approach to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) moves beyond description to interpretation of the thematic map in relation to previous literature. Initial codes were aligned with the aforementioned theoretical framework, with sufficient openness to allow for additional codes not captured within the original framework. Data was coded inclusively, with surrounding data captured for context and numerous segments of data were attached to multiple codes from the outset. Once all of the data had been initially coded there were 60 codes with sub-codes, 316 items in total. Figure 5.5 shows the coding process for Communication which was identified as a sub-theme of the 'Dyadic Mechanisms' theme. A similar process was followed for other themes and sub-themes.

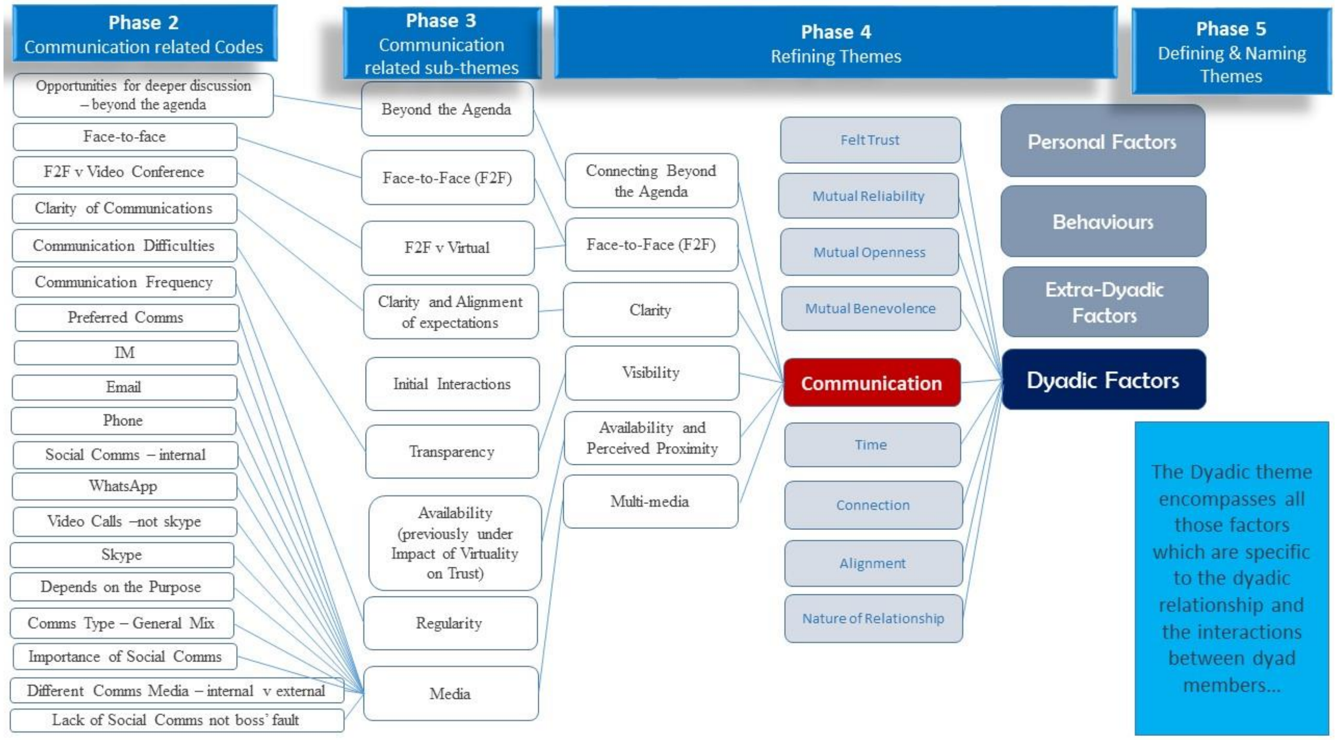

Phase 2
Communication related Codes
Opportunities for deeper discussion – beyond the agenda
Face-to-face
F2F v Video Conference
Clarity of Communications
Communication Difficulties
Communication Frequency
Preferred Comms
IM
Email
Phone
Social Comms – internal
WhatsApp
Video Calls –not skype
Skype
Depends on the Purpose
Comms Type – General Mix
Importance of Social Comms
Different Comms Media – internal v external
Lack of Social Comms not boss' fault
Phase 3
Communication related sub-themes
Beyond the Agenda
Face-to-Face (F2F)
F2F v Virtual
Clarity and Alignment of expectations
Initial Interactions
Transparency
Availability (previously under Impact of Virtuality on Trust)
Regularity
Media
Phase 4
Refining Themes
Connecting Beyond the Agenda
Face-to-Face (F2F)
Clarity
Visibility
Availability and Perceived Proximity
Multi-media
Felt Trust
Mutual Reliability
Mutual Openness
Mutual Benevolence
Communication
Time
Connection
Alignment
Nature of Relationship
Phase 5
Defining & Naming Themes
Personal Factors
Behaviours
Extra-Dyadic Factors
Dyadic Factors
The Dyadic theme encompasses all those factors which are specific to the dyadic relationship and the interactions between dyad members...

Figure 5. 5: A Sample of the Coding Process

Phase 3: Searching for themes

The next phase involved pulling all of the coded segments together under broad themes, again using NVivo. At this stage codes were analysed and thought was given to combining codes to form themes and sub-themes. Mindmaps were used as this stage to help visualise the data. As advised by Braun and Clarke (2006) a miscellaneous theme (called 'spare codes' was created to house the codes which did not appear to belong to a specific theme. Figure 5.6 shows how Communication related codes changed between phases 2 and 3. At the end of this stage, there were 15 themes and 71 sub-themes.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

This phase involved the refinement of themes, to ensure that there was adequate data to support themes and that themes met Patton's (1990) criteria for judging categories – internal homogeneity within themes and external heterogeneity between themes. All transcripts were reread to ensure that no data had been missed in earlier stages of coding and to check to ensure that the thematic map adequately reflected the dataset as a whole (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

A number of sub-themes were combined to create 24 sub-themes and four themes (see figure 5.6).

Retroduction involves a critical assessment of the findings and explanation of possible alternatives. The findings were analysed against the original conceptual framework and efforts were made to identify any negative evidence and rival explanations (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2018). Theory generation in critical realism involves identifying generative mechanisms which are observed in different contexts – empirical generalisations (Danermark *et al.,* 2002). Therefore, the coding process involved moving from the participant level to the level of dyads, virtual teams and organisations. Cross-case analysis was used to identify generative mechanisms which existed in different contexts.

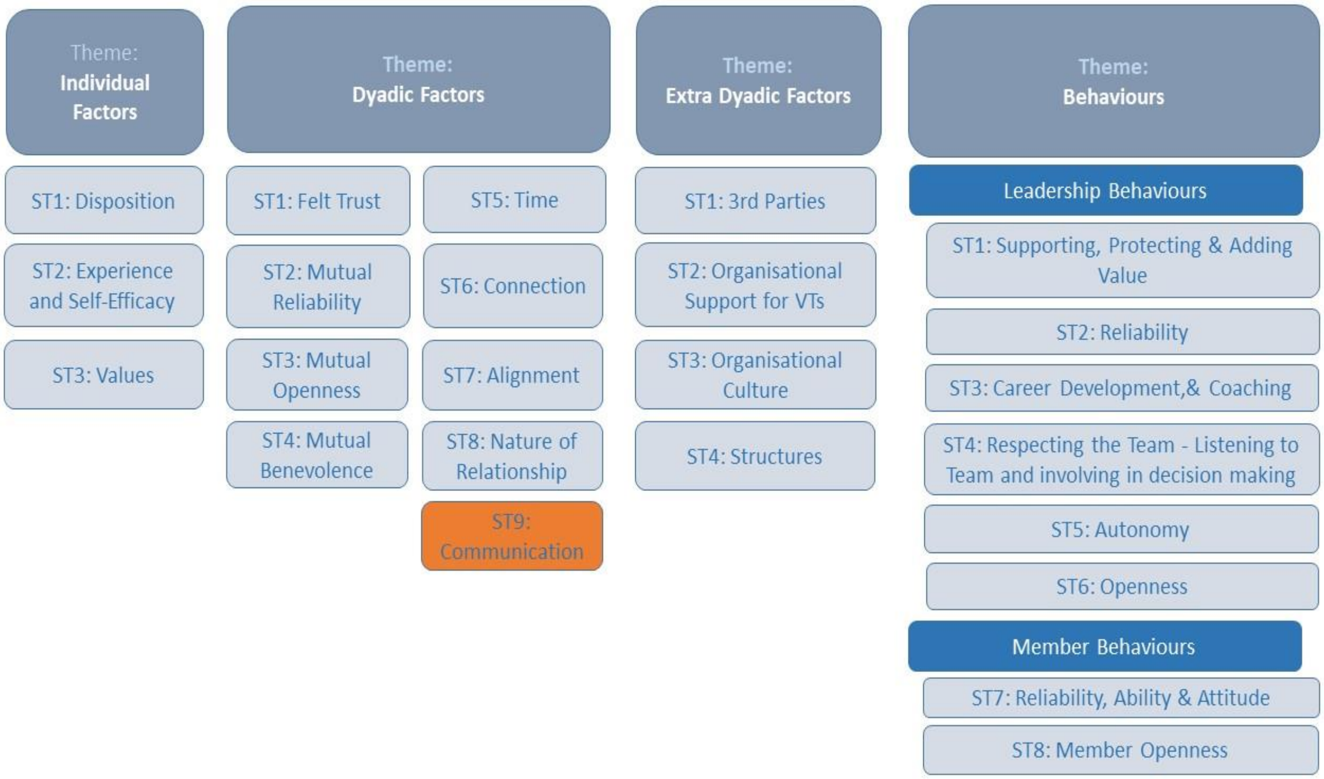

Theme: Individual Factors
ST1: Disposition
ST2: Experience and Self-Efficacy
ST3: Values
Theme: Dyadic Factors
ST1: Felt Trust
ST2: Mutual Reliability
ST3: Mutual Openness
ST4: Mutual Benevolence
ST5: Time
ST6: Connection
ST7: Alignment
ST8: Nature of Relationship
ST9: Communication
Theme: Extra Dyadic Factors
ST1: 3rd Parties
ST2: Organisational Support for VTs
ST3: Organisational Culture
ST4: Structures
Theme: Behaviours
Leadership Behaviours
ST1: Supporting, Protecting & Adding Value
ST2: Reliability
ST3: Career Development,& Coaching
ST4: Respecting the Team - Listening to Team and involving in decision making
ST5: Autonomy
ST6: Openness
Member Behaviours
ST7: Reliability, Ability & Attitude
ST8: Member Openness

Figure 5. 6: Final Themes and Sub-Themes

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Further in-depth analysis was conducted to ensure coherency within each theme and themes were defined and named/renamed as appropriate. A sample definition is provided in figure 5.6 for the dyadic theme which 'encompasses all those mechanisms which are specific to the dyadic relationship and the interactions between dyad members'.

5.9 Ethics

Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) argue that all researchers must be guided by the principle 'first, do no harm'. From the outset it is important that researchers clearly state the voluntary nature of participation and also that respondents are provided, with a detailed but non-technical account of the research (Silverman, 2014) so that they have sufficient information so as to provide informed consent. In the current study, the voluntary nature of participation was clearly stated, and information was provided in the form of an email, an accompanying word document and a short video explaining the research – see appendix B. These allowed participants to make an informed choice. An interview consent form was completed by interviewees (see Appendix E).

Due to the highly sensitive nature of the research topic, issues of confidentiality were particularly important. Flick (2009) highlights the importance of ensuring that readers of your report should not be able to identify organisation or individuals. deVaus (2014) makes an important distinction between anonymity and confidentiality, arguing that the former refers to a situation in which the researcher will not and cannot identify the respondent, whereas the latter refers to the fact that the researcher can match names with responses but will not reveal these links to others. In the current study it was necessary to offer confidentiality rather than anonymity. Participants' names and the names of their managers/direct reports (in whom they were expressing a certain level of trust) were needed so that trust could be examined at a dyadic level. Participants were assured that no participant information would be shared with any other employee or manager.

Interviews were recoded using a digital voice recorder. Each recording was saved into a secure cloud based location (Microsoft OneDrive), using an encrypted laptop, immediately after each interview and deleted from the voice recorder. The voice recorder was stored in a locked cabinet when not in use. Each interview was transcribed using Microsoft Word and in order to safeguard the identity of participants, pseudonyms were used and each file was password protected. Hard copies of all files were kept in a locked cabinet, accessible only by the researcher. Soft copies of transcripts were stored on the University's secure file server in accordance with UK data protection legislation.

NVivo was utilised for data analysis purposes, with each file password protected and only accessible by the researcher. Pseudonyms were used in NVivo and no participants were identifiable. A password protected Microsoft Excel file was used to match participant names with pseudonyms and no hardcopies of this file were created. This file was stored on the University's secure file server in accordance with UK data protection legislation.

Flick (2009) highlights the importance of doing justice to participants when analysing data, grounding interpretations in the data and avoiding personal judgments. The approach to thematic analysis ensured that interpretations and themes were grounded in data and represented the views of participants.

This study was granted ethical approval through the TU Dublin (previously DIT) Research Ethics Committee and received a favourable opinion at the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Committee.

5.10 Ensuring the Trustworthiness of the Data

Silverman (2014) argues that in judging whether qualitative research produces valid knowledge we should ask highly critical questions about such research, questions which are no less probing than those we would ask about a quantitative research study. Therefore, when conducting research it is important to ensure the integrity of one's data, to eliminate bias and to provide transparency to readers about methods. In fact, it is the adoption of suitable methods, the rigor, criticality and objectivity in handling data that makes social science scientific (Silverman, 2014). While qualitative researchers may not aim for replicability in the same way as quantitative researchers might, transparency in methods and approach, discussed throughout this chapter is important in providing assurances about the reliability of the data.

Miles and Huberman caution against elements of bias such as: the holistic fallacy (interpreting events as more patterned and congruent than they really are), elite bias (overweighting data from articulate, high-status informants and underrepresenting data from less articulate, lower status informants) and going native (losing one's perspective or 'bracketing ability', being co-opted into the perceptions and explanation of local informants) (1994:263). Great care was taken to avoid these biases, information was analysed in a balanced and considered manner and the researcher ensured to place equal weight on the data gathered from both employees and managers. Throughout the analysis stage of the research initial findings were presented in a number of Trust workshops to both academic (TU Dublin Staff Leadership Programme) and industry audiences (IBM, Virtual Sales Team Conference, 2019; Institute of Public Administration (IPA) Trust and Governance Seminar, 2019; TU Dublin Seminar, 2020; Great Place to Work, 2020). These presentations and ensuing discussions helped me to gain a deeper level of familiarity with the data.

5.11 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research design chosen to achieve the aim and objectives of the current study. Critical realism was adopted given its suitability for explanatory studies and due to the fact that the tenets of critical realism align with my personal beliefs. The layered ontology – consists of the objective world (actual domain), the world experienced by individuals (empirical domain) and the generative mechanisms which 'can' lead to events (real domain), whether experienced or not. This belief system aligns well with the development of trust, as there are many antecedents (generative mechanisms) of trust and its development is influenced by objective social structures and by the way in which the power of these structures is shaped within social relationships. The focus of the research was qualitative or intensive in nature. A case study strategy (Yin, 2018) was utilised, with 20 dyads chosen from across 11 virtual teams in 3 organisations. The retroductive process (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013) was followed when analysing the qualitative data. Guided by the theoretical framework introduced in figure 4.3, which provided initial categories, a detailed coding strategy was followed accompanied by constant movement between the original theories, data and propositions in order to achieve analytic stability (Zachariadis, Scott and Barrett, 2013). The findings were critically analysed and explanations of possible alternatives were sought. Cross case analysis was used to identify generative mechanisms across virtual teams and across organisations.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 1 (BEHAVIOURS)

6.1 Introduction

This is the first of three chapters which present the findings of this study. The chapter focuses on research objective one, which sought *to determine the specific behaviours which impact upon leader-member trust in a virtual environment.* There are a variety of mechanisms which can impact upon perceptions of trustworthiness, as discussed in chapters two and four and represented in the theoretical framework (figure 4.3). However, it is argued that behaviour has the strongest influence on trust (Dirks, 2006).

This chapter begins with a discussion of findings relating to VT leader behaviours, specifically the behaviours of particular direct line managers. Firstly, those behaviours which demonstrate leaders' trustworthiness, and subsequently those behaviours which signal leaders' trust in members. Findings relating to leader openness, which spans both behaviour types are then discussed in detail. The focus of the chapter then turns to member behaviours, with a similar approach taken to analysing trustworthiness behaviours followed by trusting behaviours.

The quotes provided throughout this chapter are attributed to research participants using the pseudonymised coding system presented in figure 5.4 with the organisation letter (A,B or C) followed by the team number (1-11), along with L or M to signify a Leader or Member and lastly a number to distinguish between team members, where appropriate. For instance, B4M1 refers to ORGB/ Team 4/ Member 1. Findings are discussed from the perspective of leaders, members or participants (which refers to both leaders and members).

6.2 Demonstrating Leader Trustworthiness - a Member-Centric Approach to Leadership

VT leader behaviours can be grouped under five sub-themes (STs), shown in figure 6.1. They can be further grouped into those behaviours which signify trustworthiness (ST1-3) and those which signal trust in the member (ST4-5). As previously mentioned, Openness (ST6) spans both behaviour types.

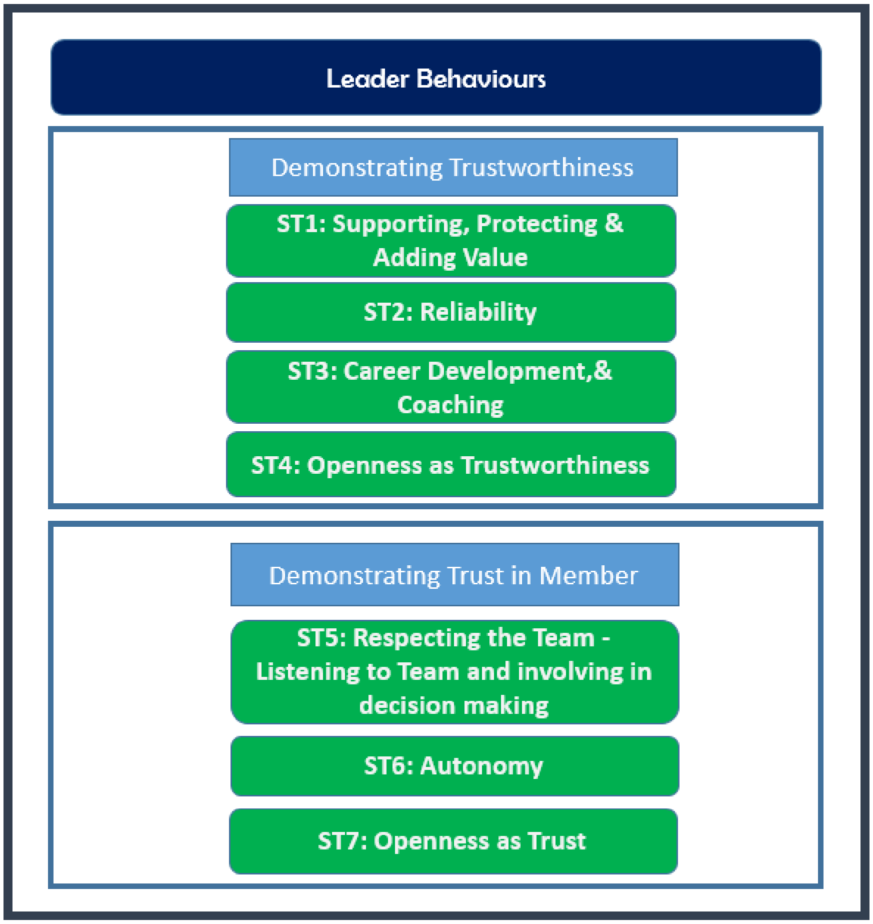

Leader Behaviours
Demonstrating Trustworthiness
ST1: Supporting, Protecting & Adding Value
ST2: Reliability
ST3: Career Development,& Coaching
ST4: Openness as Trustworthiness
Demonstrating Trust in Member
ST5: Respecting the Team - Listening to Team and involving in decision making
ST6: Autonomy
ST7: Openness as Trust

Figure 6. 1: Leaders' Trust Building Behaviours

While views on leader trustworthiness were sought using a variety of questions, one specific question was particularly insightful. When asked how they defined trust in their leader (direct line manager), members most frequently cited behaviours related to 'Support, Protection and Adding Value' along with being able to rely on the leader, often in the context of supporting them. Members also mentioned behaviours relating to supporting their career development (see table 6.1).

Members	Support/Protection and Adding Value	Reliability	Career Development
X 23	14	6	4

Table 6. 1: Categories for answers to question 'When you say you trust your leader what does that mean?'

Members across all three organisations stated they trusted leaders who cared for them as people and who were not solely focused on work tasks or targets. While this was well understood by leaders, the virtual work context made it difficult for them to demonstrate member-centricity. Many leaders cited examples of their efforts to build trust with remote members and one leader summed this conscious effort up by highlighting the need to be more 'intentional':

> *"…when you're onsite … people can trust you because they see you care because of your body language, because eh you are smiling … etcetera. That does not happen virtually. You need to be intentional in showing that you care.'* (C9L)

The focus of the chapter now turns to those leader behaviours which members regarded as evidence of leader trustworthiness.

6.2.1 Sub-Theme 1 (ST1): Supporting, Protecting and Adding Value

Members' trusted leaders who supported them both personally and professionally and protected them in the workplace. Such actions helped members to achieve their goals and as such many referenced the importance of leaders adding value for them. While some of the quotes in this section do not specifically mention the word trust, they are responses to questions about trust in the leader and/ or the relationship.

Support in a Personal Context

Numerous members mentioned support that they had received from their leader on personal issues and how this had shaped their trust in the leader. Such instances included checking on people when they were sick or supporting them during difficult times in their lives. The impact of such benevolence was obvious and clearly linked to trust.

> *"I trust him … he cares about people …"* (C9L)
>
> ***"…**but also on a personal level… I lost my parents a couple of years ago they had cancer … sometimes you just need some advice right… he gave me really good advice … I really trust him and …I know he also would have my back…*" (C11M1).

One example of leader support was spoken about by both the leader and member. The leader stressed the need for virtual leaders to be aware of members' personal contexts and being empathetic towards them. He demonstrated his support for the members on his team by making attempts to increase their pay which was negatively impacted by currency fluctuations. This was seen as a strong demonstration of support by the members involved:

> *"…because of inflation the value of our salaries has decreased like 40…he is trying to do his best …he has told us that he feels for us even though there is nothing happening it's good to make sure that he knows we understand and that we should be appreciated …"* (B5M2).

Such benevolence towards members was seen as a demonstration of the leader's genuine humanity towards others. Humanity was identified as another strong theme and is discussed in the context of personal mechanisms in chapter seven.

Support and Protection in a Professional Context

The need for support and protection was frequently mentioned by members, many of them specifically mentioning that they trusted leaders who 'had their back', for instance:

> *"… I think the trust is, you know when you feel like your boss is going to back you up."* (A2M1)

Members cited numerous instances where leaders supported them in overcoming issues or cleared barriers to their progress. Such support was highly valued by members, who had reached an impasse or who felt vulnerable to the actions of others. Their leader's support allowed members to focus on their job, safe in the knowledge that they were protected:

> *"…we work in a matrix…I feel that there's a kind of protection to protect us against other people in the organisation who have other goals ... ye know I call it protection I don't know if that's the right word… but it gives kind of a safe feeling to us yeah that we can focus on our work…"* (A3M1).

The quote below demonstrates a situation whereby the member, based primarily on supportive and protective behaviours, felt that the leader was trustworthy enough to warrant the member's trust, which was manifest in him opening up his relationships with key stakeholders to the leader and demonstrating a level of vulnerability, which is central to definitions of trust.

> *"… oh yeah 100%... absolutely I fully trust (leader) …on different levels, first of all I think (he) is someone who … really tries to help and protect his team members as well …I also open my personal relations with customers or partners or team members directly to him …"* (A3M1).

While the actions which leaders took to support members were often seen as a reflection of the leader's benevolence towards members that is not to say that all supportive actions benefitted only the member. In the following quote a leader discusses fighting for a member, but mentions how it was also in his interest to do so:

> *"…I did it for me too as it was hitting my number and it was a big deal but … he knows I went to the well ye know ... if they see you going to the well and ye know putting in the time and ye know that stuff, that's human right."* (A3L)

The reality in a sales organisation is that any actions the leader takes to support a member in hitting their sales target will also benefit the leader's team target. However, this point was not raised by members, who viewed supportive behaviours positively and strongly linked them leader trustworthiness.

Workload and work-life balance

Many of the instances of support cited by participants related to workload and work-life balance. Workload was an issue on which personal and professional supports converged. Where participants had too heavy a workload this led to a work-life imbalance and their personal life suffered. Work-life balance appeared particularly challenging for virtual workers as they often had colleagues and/or customers in different time zones and this sometimes resulted in frequent travel and longer working days. Most leaders were very aware of such challenges, with many mentioning their respect for personal time such as the evenings and weekends and demonstrating benevolence towards members relating to their personal lives. Such support was hugely appreciated by members.

> *"…when we (are) travelling a lot he says 'ye know guys I feel the same, I just want you to think about yourself … so make sure you balance work and family'... that's the difference, some people expect regardless, even if they know that it's really tough but … he always says 'if it's not possible just say so guys'… he definitely thinks about the welfare of everybody…"* (A2M1)

In a small number of instances members were struggling with work-life balance, not due to travel commitments but based on their personal approach to work. In such cases leaders addressed the issue with members and demonstrated their benevolence, which was positively received by members, for example:

> ***"…*** *I'm fully dedicated to the work … I won't say 24 hours but almost morning shift, lunch, evening shift … he is looking for me to adjust the balance itself…He's caring about me actually…*" (B5M3)

Workload was a particular issue for some of those members working in a matrix structure. In one particular team a member reported to a number of people and she discussed being able to approach her leader when her workload became too heavy.

> ***"*** *… to work with that person that you trust and you can say 'look I don't have bandwidth so let's have the pros and cons to delay this one day and let's take a decision'… we can come to, we can come to an agreement."* (A3M2).

This member's leader referred to his role in ensuring a balanced and manageable workload for the member, even taking on some of the work himself when required:

> *"…the approach I took was to say 'look let's make sure we take things off (A3M2's) list …I'll take stuff on myself right … ye know I made it clear that (A) I was listening to her and (B) that I was in her camp ye know"* (A3L)

In sum, benevolent leadership behaviours, specifically those behaviours which demonstrated leaders' support for, and protection of, members in both a personal and professional context positively impacted members' perceptions of leader trustworthiness. The next section discusses those leader behaviour which are specific to Sub-Theme 2: Reliability.

6.2.2 Sub-Theme 2 (ST2) – Reliability

Members spoke of two aspects of reliability, which related to integrity and benevolence. From an integrity perspective members spoke of trusting leaders whose actions matched their words, in other words being able to rely on them to keep their promises:

> *"…it's… more or less knowing what to expect from other people and having them … correspond to what they are saying they are doing or will do …"* (A3M2)

One member noted that when he raised issues with his leader, the leader would go away and fix the issue and then simply let the member know once it had been resolved, the member could forget about the problem and focus on other tasks:

> *"…you can trust him to go and do it. You'll know he'll absolutely do it…"* (C7M1)

Such reliance-based trust was highlighted by numerous participants as particularly important in remote relationships where there was less visibility, for example:

> *"… in working remotely… you don't know actually what the others are doing… So you need to trust, you need to trust. You need to eh build a plan. And then you'll execute according that plan and you trust that the other person will accomplish that."* (A3M2)

The examples above relate to integrity, in other words leaders' actions matching their word. However, there was a strong benevolence dimension to leaders' reliability. When members spoke of reliability they almost always referred to the leader supporting them in some manner, helping them with an issue or concern. One member describes this as the leader being reliable and relevant, the latter links to the earlier reference to adding value:

> *"…to keep the promise … help you to find solution to your problem and maybe add the value to you. So I think …the person are reliable, a person relevant for … you…"* (C8M1)

6.2.3 Sub-Theme 3 (ST3) – Career Development and Coaching

Many of the benevolent leader behaviours cited by members coalesced around the theme of career development, specifically leaders' efforts to help members develop themselves and progress in their careers. Across all three organisations members highlighted career development as primarily an individual's responsibility. Furthermore, some members had not yet had formal career-related discussions with leaders due to being in new roles or having another leader who conducted such meetings. Nonetheless, members clearly linked leaders' concern about their success with their trust in leaders:

> **"…***if you trust your manager you know that he will guide you … will let you grow in your career…this is what defines trust to me."* (B4M1)

A small number of members highlighted the need for leaders to balance work tasks with a focus on people, realising that there was a job to be done but that members' career goals were important:

> *"… in terms of trust … I kind of need to know that the person is let's say genuinely concerned about my success … I understand you're still in a corporate environment right we are not a welfare organisation so it is still about driving that business… I want to become a bigger person right where I want to learn where I want to advance… and trust in your manager is that he's also looking after that from your perspective. Right. So he's also there to make you successful. Not only am I making him successful."* (A2M2)

Members frequently highlighted the importance of leader openness (integrity) in highlighting areas in which the member could improve. Such feedback often came in the form of coaching, the importance of which was emphasized by participants across all three organisations. One leader (C9L) stressed that a virtual leader simply had to be a coach and mentor and needed to trust and give more responsibility to members as they were not physically co-located. This view was supported by other leaders who allowed members space to develop and figure out solutions for themselves:

> *"… coach him in those areas … give him the space to come up with his own ideas … we do try to give them a framework and a structure … for them to innovate off I would say".* (A1L)

The majority of members highlighted the positives of coaching in their relationship with their leader as it demonstrated the leader's investment in them and helped to build their trust in the leader. The quotes below show a leader and a member aligning on the importance of coaching, which allowed the leader to demonstrate his benevolence towards the member which in turn enhanced the member's trust in the leader:

> *"… the more we went with the coaching the more it (the relationship) improved… it's really about … showing … that you care about the people … "* (C9L)
>
> *"…it (coaching) made me feel that … this person not only wants a success for his team, but he wants a success for the person in front of him …so that made me feel more relaxed and comfortable to trust his opinion."* (C9M2)

Leaders with less experienced members suggested that coaching and broader support was more important when members were new to virtual roles, one leader noting that "…*you have to really look after people during that period...*" (A3L)[1]. Regardless of the member's experience profile, the limited time for F2F interactions reduced the opportunity for career development discussions. One leader reflected on this during the interview, noting the agenda focused nature of virtual communications was limiting his provision of career support:

---

[1] Some leaders had strong views about the suitability of inexperienced employees for virtual work - these issues are discussed in detail in chapter seven

> *" … I think what is missing … it's on my leadership or maybe his own development plan …he can feel a bit … alone for that … (member) deserves …to grow in ORGC but … I'm not giving him the time to do that….you know for example today I spend three hours with one of my guys in Barcelona in a room working on that. I haven't done that with him because you know it's by phone so everything's been quicker you know with just a call …you're not sitting face to face talking about life or talking about the development plan…. It's much more agenda focused …"* (C7L)

There was also be a temptation for VT leaders to tell members what to do instead of coaching them (C9L). To overcome these issues leaders spoke of their efforts to visit members based in regional offices and provide coaching F2F. Coaching is one of the high value activities which can benefit from F2F contact, as discussed further in chapter eight.

Visibility

The importance of members being seen to go above and beyond their role description was highlighted as important in two of the organisations. However, it was more difficult for remote workers to demonstrate such impact. As such, a number of leaders coached their members on this particular topic and members saw this as the leader supporting them in their career development:

> *"… he always tells us, every time we meet he talks about visibility yeah and we sometimes get frustrated with the word visibility but its true because what they are saying is 'hey you are not visible' … so actually one thing he encourages is … let the world know all the good stuff you do…"* (A2M1)

In a number of teams, leaders helped with this visibility by putting members forward as experts in certain areas and in doing so increased their visibility across the organisation.

> *"…what he knows is that I'm putting him forward as a kind of best practice …on a few different things … that's kind of increasing his exposure and network and stuff like that ..."* (A3L)

In the example below, the member cites his leader's actions in referring him to others in the organisation as a sign of the leader's trust in him. This was based on the belief that the leader was unlikely to put forward someone from their team as an expert unless they trusted them. Therefore, in coaching and encouraging members towards greater visibility leaders enhanced perceptions of their member-centricity and trustworthiness, while also demonstrating their trust in members.

> *"…once (leader) is referring you to other managers once he had a case, a complex one and he's highlighting my name so it's important to me to get in and engage and try to solve that complex case… so this comes from the trust itself."* (B5M3)

Lastly, there were two specific instances of leaders supporting members as they sought to change roles. In one case this was in the form of coaching and advice whereas in the second the leader made introductions to a third party and provided a reference. These actions were viewed by members as member-centric benevolent behaviours as the leaders put the members' needs first despite the fact that the loss of the members would have negatively impacted the leader's team performance:

> *"I'm helping him trying to find his next job … I'd be reluctant to let him go but obviously good people, you've got to find (them their) next jobs… I saw the VP of distribution I brought him out for dinner with me and I just said look … (member) wants a job with you can you sort him out he's got my backing so she said yeah ok."* (A2L)

6.2.4 Sub-Theme 4 (ST4) - Openness as a Signal of a Leader's Trustworthiness

A form of integrity, openness was seen by leaders and members as being crucial in virtual relationships:

> ***"****I think it's way more important (openness in VTs) because when everything is being transparent and you can discuss anything … so it makes it easy for us to understand each other and get through to each other…"* (B5M2)

More specifically, openness related behaviours demonstrated both leader trustworthiness (integrity) discussed in this section and also leaders' trust in members, discussed in sections 6.2.4 and 6.3.3 respectively.

When asked the question ***'When you say you trust your leader what does that mean?'*** over half of the members cited openness, the second most frequently reported answer (after 'supporting, protecting and adding value'). These answers can be further sub-divided into a number of forms of openness. Members stated that they trusted leaders who were generally honest and did not lie to them – noting that they should not hear anything from other colleagues which differed from what their leader told them.

> *"Yes I can say there is a high level of trust … in 6 months I didn't see any … lie or I didn't see any eh problem with any statement that she told me … and I heard from others... if I hear from someone else that he or she is doing something else than what he or she told me then again I would be, I would not be trusting"* (B6M1)

Members also referred to leaders being transparent in sharing their thoughts, including on sensitive issues:

> *"… he told us our team, our group, what he wouldn't tell everyone else publically so again that built the trust…"* (A2M1)

Additionally, members wanted leaders to be open about both positives and negatives, to be direct with them and not afraid to disagree with them or challenge their viewpoints. That way, members knew what leaders were thinking and what they thought of members' performance or ideas, for example:

> *"… I relate trust a lot with two things. Right. That is with openness and integrity right… there's an aspect of his character let's say that attracted me as well that he*

> *was direct. Meaning he says what is on his mind, whether that would be … positive or negative... In a small sense of we're not hiding stuff for each other”* (A2M2)

In essence, as one member put it, members wanted to have open conversations with leaders and to have all of the *‘cards on the table’* (C9M1).

Both leaders and members spoke of the importance of leader openness from the outset and the positive impact of such openness on the relationship. In many dyads, initial leader openness put members at ease and enabled them to also speak openly. Such two-way openness was instrumental in helping dyad members to quickly understand each other’s perspectives on work issues. Given the limited opportunities for F2F communication and the potential for misunderstanding it is perhaps no surprise that the majority of leaders highlighted the added importance of openness in virtual relationships, for example:

> *“I think the transparency should be, should be led by the leader in showing that you are transparent as much as you can … will grow your leadership even more important when you are in a virtual environment…”* (C8L/C10M1)

6.2.5 When Behaviours Do Not Signal Leader Trustworthiness

The discussion thus far has focused on member-centric benevolent behaviours. Within the interviews members reported a strong association between such supportive behaviours and their trust in the leader.

However, two specific members, teammates reporting into the same leader, reported that their leader was solely focused on sales targets with little focus on the member's development. The first member provided examples of actions that the leader had taken which clearly demonstrated a lack of benevolence towards the member and summarised this focus in the quote below.

> *"…it's not really a relationship I would say it's more based on 'so what is your target. When are you going to bring the numbers in … and can it not be higher?' nothing to do with eh personal …'What are your goals in life or what do you want to achieve? Where do you see yourself next', it has nothing to do with that…"* (C11M1)

This task-focused leadership style was echoed by the second member:

> *"…and like everything in revenue or target business there's deals on, (leader) needs an update… gets it and that's really the only communication…(and in terms of leadership style?) the number, the number, the number".* (C11M2)

The findings presented in this section show that leaders who had gained the trust of members had balanced their focus on task achievement with benevolent behaviours towards members. While members recognised that there was a job to be done and targets to be reached, they felt that this could be best supported by a member-centric leadership approach, characterised by high levels of benevolence.

It is evident that leaders on the whole were viewed as trustworthy. While certain members spoke of their leader's ability it was not directly linked to trust. However, behaviours related to benevolence, as discussed in this section, and integrity, as discussed in relation to openness in section 6.2.4, were deemed to be the most important for members.

The behaviours discussed in this section influenced perceptions of leader trustworthiness. Many of these same behaviours, along with some others, demonstrated trust in members. Behaviours which make members feel trusted are important in a trust dyad as previous research has found that when an individual feels trusted, they are likely to extend or reciprocate trust in return. The next section examines those leader behaviours which signalled their trust in members.

6.3 Leadership Behaviours which Demonstrate Trust in Members

Sub-themes four through six in figure 6.1 (hereafter referred to as ST4, ST5 and ST6) capture behaviours seen to demonstrate leaders' trust in members. A number of leaders highlighted the importance of leaders taking the first step in trusting members, for instance:

> *"you need to show the person some evidence early on that you believe in them"* (A3L).

It was also suggested by certain leaders that the nature of virtual work made trusting members a necessity:

> *"So I would say the big difference in being a virtual leader…is you need to trust and you need to give more responsibilities because you are not there."* (C8L/C10M1)

However, in most cases trust was extended based on the leader's belief in the impact of such trust, rather than out of necessity. Both leaders and members mentioned that the very act of trusting could lead people to be more trustworthy and result in reciprocal trust. While some leaders had a high trusting disposition others, despite not believing people to be generally trustworthy, discussed the need to trust people from the outset of relationships (trusting disposition is discussed in detail in chapter seven).

> *"No I think no (people are not trustworthy) … but I think it is very bad if you start with a negative thought because sometimes even if the person is not trustworthy with other people eh your attitude or you can change that…the fact that you trust people will make them maybe more trustworthy that is what I think."* (B4L)

Members provided support for this reciprocity principle, arguing that when they were trusted, they trusted in return:

> ***"****…very high (trust), He's very very supportive … and I trust him because he trusts me to just do the job. So it works both ways."* (C7M2)

and felt an obligation to repay the trust placed in them by the leader:

> *"It immediately made me think well I need to succeed for him. He's trusting me to do this … I need to make sure I'm successful for him because he's putting his faith in me."* (C7M1)

The focus of the discussion now turns to those specific leader behaviours, which demonstrate trust in employees.

6.3.1 Sub-Theme 5 (ST5) – Respecting Team Members

When asked what makes them feel trusted by their leader, members cited leaders' willingness to rely on them based on respect for their expertise. This reliance was demonstrated in two ways. Firstly, leaders accepted the opinions and explanations provided by members and did not question their expertise.

> *"He won't question me at all …he won't ask me to go into it or show him evidence of what's happening as in why we're accepting this…he trusts what you're telling him..."* (C7M1)

Secondly, certain leaders did not take decisions without firstly listening to and consulting individual team members or the wider team. Members firmly linked such consultation and respect for their input as a sign that the leader trusted them.

> *"…I think yes he trusts me… he listens to me, that's important… he takes into consideration my opinion. so if I say 'look for this and that reason I think this and that' he will consider that... and most of the time he will not move forward because we are not in agreement."* (A3M2)

Leaders were quite active in seeking input from members and one leader noted that such input may be more important in a virtual context as leaders do not have the same visibility as they might in a co-located context.

> *"…well I need it (feedback)… the thing is if I don't have (member) who tell(s) me that the policy I put in the place or the direction I'm pushing on is wrong, … I cannot be in Cairo every week … so I need (member) to tell me I'm wrong …I need (member) to feel ok if I tell him that … he needs to change something.."* (C10L)

Aside from respecting members' opinions and relying on their input when making decisions, leaders clearly demonstrated trust by granting autonomy to members, relying on them to take ownership of their role without micro-managing them.

6.3.2 Sub-Theme 6 (ST6) - Autonomy

Leaders noted that their willingness to allow members autonomy, without micromanaging 'how' they achieved the necessary outcomes signalled their trust in them:

> *" … it is about … letting people … take … their own decision and learn from their own decisions… so even if I believe that's not the best decision … I let him go for it. that's a way …to demonstrate trust … so I'm not micromanaging him …I make him accountable … for the result".* (C9L)

The majority of leaders were very clear in expressing their dislike for micro-management and the negative impact that it had on relationships and in damaging trust. While they suggested that granting autonomy was a choice and characteristic of one's leadership style, some leaders also suggested that for practical reasons micromanagement simply was not an option in virtual teams and that leaders who engaged in micromanagement would not be suitable for virtual leadership roles, for example:

> *"It's almost impossible to micromanage … it will not work remotely from my point of view it can't work … because the amount of time you will have to spend on the phone*

> *every day to try to micromanage remotely it will not give you the ROI… micromanagement for remote management almost a no go…"* (B5L)

Members also linked autonomy to trust, noting that they felt trusted when the leader didn't look to know every detail of deals but rather trusted in the member to do their job. Autonomy was demonstrated in a number of ways including, trusting members to deliver to deadlines without asking for progress updates and allowing members to manage situations or deals by themselves with the offer of support if required.

Despite the strong dislike of micromanagement voiced by both members and leaders, there was an acceptance of its necessity at times. Leaders noted situations in which they were required to micromanage due to competency gaps, in some cases due to the members being very inexperienced, for example:

> *"…with very new people they don't know what they don't do they don't know…* and you need to be very directive… you need to micromanage them at the beginning eh because they need it. *"* (C9L)

In several of the dyads the relationship began with micromanagement but this was replaced with autonomy over time. In most of these cases trust was not damaged as the members appreciated the need for micromanagement at the outset and linked the increase in autonomy to a strengthening of the leader's trust in them, for example:

> ***"…*** *now he leaves the choice to me in some things. Before it wasn't like that, before I had to consult him on everything and take his advice before taking any step forward so bit by bit I just started to feel that he is leaving things for me not everything right but bit by bit… Even if I go ask him he'll be like I don't know. You decide…"* (B5M1).

In the vast majority of dyads some form of autonomy was granted from the outset. Such relationships were usually also characterised by high levels of openness (integrity) with leaders expressing their trust in members from the outset. The positive impact of initial autonomy and felt trustworthiness was commented upon by members in relation to trust levels in the relationship, for example:

> *"…from day 1 he gave me full autonomy and trust and allowed me to really do what I felt I had to do managing my team..."* (C8L/C10M1)

However, while autonomy was evident in leader-member dyads, participants noted the responsibility that members had in respecting the trust placed in them by leaders and ensuring that they didn't give the leader a reason to micromanage. This demonstrated the dyadic nature of trust, leaders were willing to take a risk and trust on the basis of positive expectations but if members did not behave in a trustworthy manner then the leader would no longer be willing to engage in trusting behaviours in relying on the member.

> *"…the way (leader) gives you that space to work it's not granted ... there's a risk involved on her side … if I do not deliver or forecast properly or accurately … it will reflect negatively on me eh in terms of those … luxuries that I have I would lose them*

> *and we'll start working on as a micromanagement 101 … back to square one again..."*(B4M4)

While autonomy was evident in the majority of dyads, participants highlighted the need for members to keep leaders updated on their progress and performance. It was clear that some leaders needed this level of updating more than others and members needed to be aware of the expectations in this regard.

> *"There's plenty of times he's come over and said you don't copy me on enough emails I need to know what's going on and I said look I'm just used to dealing with stuff myself, if have an issue I'll tell you… it's not the micromanagement bit he just needs to think that he's in the loop on different things … but he still trusts me to just get on and do it."* (C7M2)

As such there was a responsibility on members to ensure that the leader was receiving the appropriate level of information and visibility of operations. If they didn't keep the leader updated the leader could feel a bit isolated (C9M1). This sharing of information was considered a form of openness, which emerged as a strong theme in this study from the perspective of both members and leaders.

6.3.3 Sub-Theme 7 (ST7) - Openness as a Signal of a Leader's Trust in a Member

Almost two thirds of participants mentioned openness when asked about leader behaviours that make them feel trusted. In most instances participants used the words openness, honesty or transparency without being prompted. Along with citing general openness towards them members specified a number of forms of openness. Leaders were open in relation to their objectives and their thoughts on certain issues along with sharing personal information, all of which introduced vulnerability into the relationship on the part of the leader. One notable example of this was provided by a member, who stressed the importance of being able to trust his leader and feeling trusted. He cited an incident whereby the leader admitted that he couldn't join a call with senior leaders due to a family issue. This is a strong example of a leader demonstrating openness and trust from the outset of the relationship:

> *"… (he) kind of had sufficient confidence in me to say simply go ahead. But … I know a lot of managers who would never have told me that it was actually because of (a personal issue)… But like I said (leader) was very open …so those are like little anecdotes that say okay I mean that confirmed let's say his openness and transparency."* (A2M2)

This quote provides an extreme example of a leader highlighting his trust in the member in week one of the relationship, by relying on him to go on the call with senior people without him present (reliance-based trust) and by divulging personal information (disclosure-related trust).

Leader openness extended beyond leaders telling the member of their plans and their feelings regarding the business, to explicitly telling the member that they trusted or believed in them, or words to that effect. This was reported, unprompted, by almost a quarter of participants, along with almost all of the leaders:

> *"…she says that she trusts me, but without saying I am also feeling trust from her so I think yes."* (B6M1).
>
> *"…because first I am telling him that I trust him."* (C8L/C10M1)

While the virtual context could sometimes present challenges when building close relationships, participants reported that openness helped to overcome such challenges and in fact led to very strong relationships. A number of members highlighted the fact that their relationship with their current virtual leader was stronger than previous relationships with co-located leaders and this was largely down to the openness of the leader.

> *"… I feel that it's not the fact that you are remote or present locally it's much more about the messages and the way you interact with people … for instance we worked one and a half years together and I don't feel like we ever developed a trust relationship and I feel that the relationship I have with (leader) is much more open in spite of him being remote and we not having those many chances to communicate."* (A1M2)

In sum, openness was seen by both leaders and members as central to building trust, with some arguing that it was more important in virtual relationships. Openness played a dual role, influencing members trust in leaders and also conveying leaders' trust in members. While they cited various forms of openness members generally looked for leaders to be honest and transparent with them, including regarding their weaknesses. Openness at the outset, sometimes in the form of leaders simply telling members that they trusted them, allowed relationships to develop quickly, and in some cases become stronger than co-located leader-member relationships.

6.4 Member Behaviours which Demonstrate Trustworthiness and Trust

This focus of the chapter thus far has been on leadership behaviours which signify trustworthiness and trust in members. The discussion now turns to member behaviours, beginning with those behaviours which demonstrated trustworthiness in the eyes of leaders, specifically Reliability, Ability and Attitude, followed by a discussion on openness which, as in the case of leaders signalled both trustworthiness and trust.

6.4.1 Sub-theme 8 (ST8) - Reliability, Ability and Attitude

When asked what trust in their team member meant to them, six of the ten leaders mentioned reliability, four mentioned attitude and four cited ability (table 6.2). Reliability was a key concern for leaders and central to their trust in members. They discussed being able to rely on members to reach work targets and in general terms to keep their promises.

One leader described this as a situation where there are no surprises as everything is as expected:

> *"…I trust him, its eh it's always a matter of trust I think, at least from my perspective, so we have been working together now for almost one year and he's very reliable person… there's no surprises with him…"* (B4L)

Leaders	Reliability	Ability	Attitude	Openness
X 10	6	4	4	9

Table 6. 2: Categories for answers to question 'When you say you trust your team member what does that mean?'

However, reliability was linked to both ability and attitude as leaders had to believe that members had the required ability, along with the right attitude to do what it took to deliver on their work goals and the promises they made. Leaders differentiated between reliable members *"…I trust her to get things done work wise."* (A2L) and those who had demonstrated that they could not be relied upon:

> *"… he kind of got past the Q3 …he came in the middle of it…there wasn't a lot he could do about it and I told him 'look …you kind of cut your losses in this quarter but you got to get Q4 forecast right'…and he didn't and they missed it badly and that was definitely a moment… … that was an important point in the relationship…"* (A3L)

While the examples provided above did not specify the basis of reliability (ability or attitude), other leaders specified that their trust in members to deliver on promises/ targets could be influenced either positively or negatively based on demonstration of ability:

> *"… we have done a great deal together and … with the sales team as well and … (member) drove it very well and I think he … convinced me … on what he was doing and everybody … trusted him after that."* (C7L)

> *"However, if …they keep saying X is going to happen and Y continues to happen on a sustained basis then it becomes a question of maybe capability… and that might trigger a concern on your ability to trust his performance …"* (A1L)

However, reliability concerned more than just ability. Leaders suggested that often circumstances caused a deal not to land (A1L) through no fault of the member. In such circumstances leaders looked to the member's attitude, commitment and drive, which leaders looked for in members when judging their trustworthiness:

> *"..you still have to earn trust and it's a two way street but me as the leader, in a way I go first do I buy the person …do I believe that you really want to…do the job… are people really clear and honest with themselves about what they want to do …"* (A2L)

Such commitment and drive extended to the member's willingness to learn from feedback and to address weaknesses where necessary:

> *"… so personal drive super important, ability to take feedback super important …"* (C10L)

While some leaders provided instances of members demonstrating such willingness to learn and improve, others expressed concerns about members' commitment to improving their performance in the required area and highlighted the negative impact on trust.

> *"…did I lose a bit of trust as to whether or not he was going to be successful? Yes, because I just I didn't know whether ye know he was going to make enough effort to address that deficiency right…* (A3L)

6.4.2 Sub-Theme 9 (ST9) – Member Openness

The discussion in sections 6.2.4 and 6.3.3 highlights the role of openness in signalling both leader trustworthiness and leaders' trust in members. However, openness was also a leading factor in signalling both member trustworthiness and members' trust in leaders.

Openness as a Signal of a Member's Trustworthiness

When asked what influenced their trust in members, almost every leader mentioned openness related behaviours. In fact, leaders regarded similar openness (integrity) related behaviours as evidence of trustworthiness, as identified by members and discussed in section 6.2.4. Leaders trusted members who were truthful with them and had no hidden agenda, and who were willing to challenge ideas and discuss both positives and negatives.

References to a hidden agenda were made by three of the leaders who had members operating in a matrix structure, which suggests that openness was even more important within these structures, for example:

> *"… I trust their motives in other words …are they not just in my camp but ye know are they are they straight up about what they are trying to achieve or is there a kind of ah what's the word…a different agenda going on yeah…Like it is more important in that type of relationship (matrix) …because there is a bigger chance that …they could have another agenda … "* (A3L)

Given the lack of visibility in virtual relationships, leaders had a greater need for feedback from members who were on the ground, so to speak, who had views on, and were willing to challenge, leader decisions. However, along with this willingness to provide feedback, members build trust through their openness to receiving feedback. This signalled to leaders that they were willing to work on areas in which they might need to develop, important given the earlier discussion on reliability based on both ability and attitude.

> ***"…****so ability to take feedback is important because if I have …someone who … isn't able to take feedback …it's going to be impossible to grow that person."* (C10L)

Such openness to admit weaknesses signified vulnerability which members also showed by being open about issues that they might be facing so that the leader could provide the necessary supports. Such openness built trust:

> *"… I would define … trust in terms of so if (member) is keeping me clear on his situation … if he is not again …bullshitting me and he is being transparent about where he's got issues and things that are going well and where things are not going well …"* (A1L)

Such openness helped to surface and resolve issues. However, members differed on their level of openness, even within the same teams. For instance, one leader discussed two members who differed significantly on their level of openness, with the first member's lack of openness inhibiting trust and support in contrast to the second member.

> ***"…*** *we have some big challenges, some big improvements to be done and the fact that I am not able to impact … because of the lack of trust and the fact that he is not open …I am not able to help him…"* (B4L)

> *"…we have some issues of the business …but we have always have been able to fix that very easily …the fact that eh he's honest about things, he will tell you exactly what he is feeling about and I make him comfortable to do that so everything is clear, everything, there is no hidden issues, there are no hidden … feelings ye know …"* (B4L)

Members need to lead with openness

While a number of leaders felt that they should lead with openness in order to build trust, it was evident that members had a role to play in this regard. Given the nature of virtual work, members needed to be conscious of the potential lack of visibility and leaders' need for information on their activities and progress – which varied depending on the individual leader. In some cases leaders bemoaned the lack of visibility:

> *"…they need to share with you what they are doing. Otherwise you don't know anything …so it can happen that sometimes I'm calling the sales manager in Dublin to know if (member) has done something you know…because I don't have this feedback because they are not really good at communications as in telling people what they are doing"* (C7L)

One example of a member taking the lead at the outset to develop an open relationship is provided below. This member was quite an experienced individual and felt comfortable to have such a conversation, this might not have been the case with less experienced members. The relationship was described as high trust by both the member and the leader.

> **"…***so I remember the first interview after the first meeting I said look I've been in the industry long enough and I understand sometimes that there's corporate decisions to be made, all I expect from my boss is honest feedback … if things are going well or not going well …as long as I know I can trust my boss ye know let me know what's happening and be open with me and I will be open as well so ye know I think that was the kind of agreement we had from day one ..."* (A2M1)

Openness as a Signal of a Member's Trust in the Leader

When asked which member behaviours made them feel trusted, leaders were united in their responses. Aside from one leader simply responding that the member told him outright that he trusted him (A2L), leaders spoke of information sharing and the willingness of the member to approach leaders for help, often divulging sensitive and potentially damaging information in the process.

> *"… so I do believe he trusts me because ye know he was telling me stuff that could have seriously compromised him"* (A3L)

For their part, members cited their willingness to share information in a very open manner when they trusted a leader, sharing concerns, discussing their thoughts and providing opinions, for example.

> *"I try to open it and give him access to a different view and make his own interpretation because I trust him…we talk about the same things its quite open, its consistent and … there's no hidden things in that so yeah, absolutely."* (A3M1).

While members' willingness to be vulnerable towards the leader sent a clear signal to the leader that they were trusted, a lack of openness and an unwillingness to share thoughts and perceptions about topics made leaders question whether they were trusted.

> *"…and also they (open people) share feedback… there's lots of people who will hold, who will have perceptions or things about you but they won't share it, in that sense that you don't know where you fit, you don't know where you stand and I'm like going "do you really trust me?"* (A2L).

6.5 Conclusion

The chapter presented findings in relation to research objective one, which sought *to determine the specific behaviours which impact upon leader-member trust in a virtual environment.* Virtual team members were found to trust leaders who adopted a ‘member-centric’ leadership style, demonstrating care and concern (benevolence) for members on both a personal and professional level. The study also found that benevolence, along with integrity (openness) were highly valued by members, while ability was not identified as central to trust.

While the virtual environment could make it difficult for leaders to demonstrate member-centricity, due to the limitations of virtual communication, leaders were aware of their need to support and protect members and to help them regarding career development. Coaching was identified by both leaders and members as a key mechanism for supporting members in their development, with leaders actively coaching members to be more visible in the organisation in order to boost their own career potential.

While most dyads had relatively high trust levels, the only dyads which had lower levels featured a leader who did not adopt a member-centric leadership style, instead being solely focused on performance. This finding was clear from the positive and negative comments made by members during interviews, which highlighted the importance of virtual leaders adopting a member-centric leadership style.

In considering member trustworthiness, leaders looked for reliability, ability and attitude, which were not mutually exclusive. Ability was not a common concern for leaders, but integrity was, specifically members' openness to feedback and commitment to addressing weaknesses. Leaders demonstrated trust in members by respecting their expertise, consulting them when making decisions (which may be more important in a virtual setting due to reduced visibility of regional operations) and granting autonomy instead of micro-managing. Such actions led members to feel trusted and the granting of higher levels of autonomy over time signalled an increase in trust which was noticed by members.

Openness was a defining feature of high trust dyads. A form of integrity, it was cited by a significant number of participants, and was clearly linked to both trustworthiness and trust from both dyad member perspectives. Members valued leader honesty and transparency and full disclosure about both positives and negatives of performance. Similarly, leaders trusted members who were truthful, had no hidden agenda and were willing to not only challenge them but to discuss the positives and negatives of situations and performance. Such was its importance for virtual relationships, a number of members highlighted the role of openness in creating relationships which were stronger than relationships with co-located leaders. The next chapter presents findings relating to other mechanisms which influenced leader-member trust.

CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 2 (INFLUENCING MECHANISMS)

7.1 Introduction

While behaviour is argued to be the strongest influence on dyadic trust development, a variety of other mechanisms play an influencing role, as discussed throughout chapters two and four. This chapter presents the findings relating to the second research objective which sought *to establish the personal, relational, extra-relational and contextual mechanisms which affect leader-member trust in a virtual environment.* The range of influencing mechanisms identified in this study, are presented in figure 7.1 under a number of themes and sub-themes.

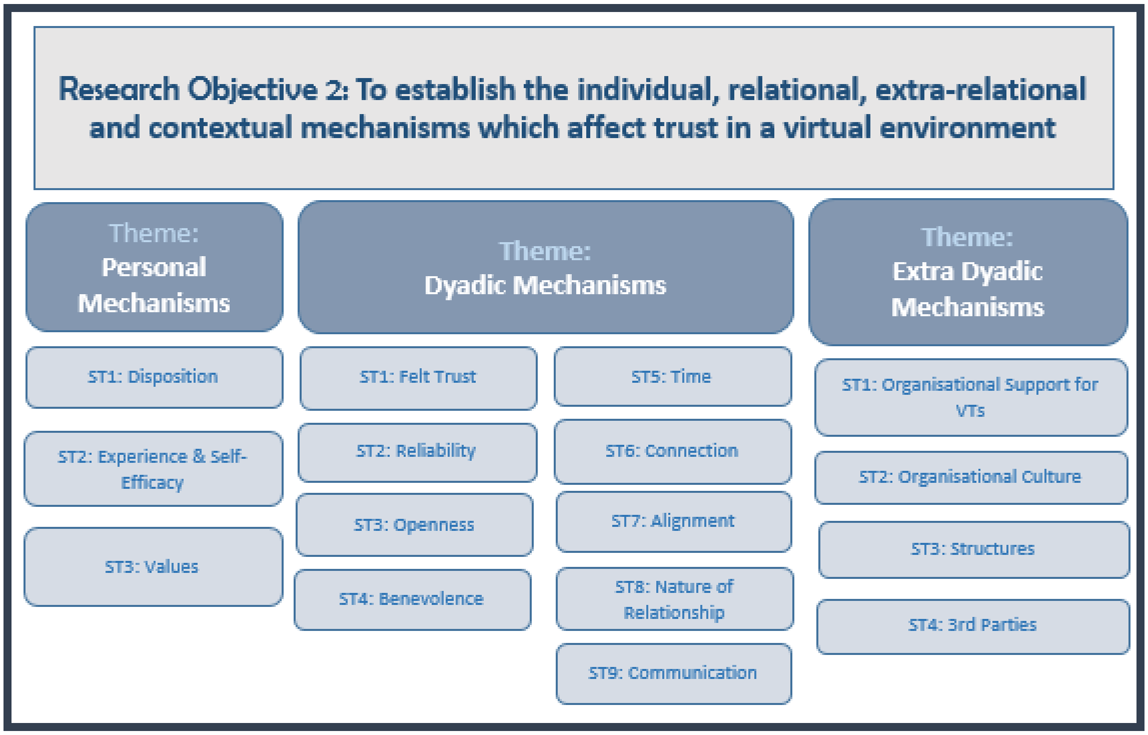

Research Objective 2: To establish the individual, relational, extra-relational and contextual mechanisms which affect trust in a virtual environment
Theme: Personal Mechanisms
ST1: Disposition
ST2: Experience & Self-Efficacy
ST3: Values
Theme: Dyadic Mechanisms
ST1: Felt Trust
ST2: Reliability
ST3: Openness
ST4: Benevolence
ST5: Time
ST6: Connection
ST7: Alignment
ST8: Nature of Relationship
ST9: Communication
Theme: Extra Dyadic Mechanisms
ST1: Organisational Support for VTs
ST2: Organisational Culture
ST3: Structures
ST4: 3rd Parties

Figure 7. 1: Mechanisms which affect trust in the virtual leader-member dyad

7.2 Personal Mechanisms

Three categories of personal mechanisms were identified as influencing perceptions of trustworthiness and/or decision to trust: disposition, experience and self-efficacy, and values. Each is now discussed in detail.

7.2.1 Disposition to Trust (Sub-theme 1)

Each participant was asked two questions at the end of the interview relating to disposition to trust. Firstly they were asked how they reacted when they first met someone, whether they (A) Remained wary; (B) Gave the benefit of the doubt and trusted straight away or (C) Waited to see.

A (Wary)	-
B (Trust)	46.9%
C (Wait)	40.6%
B/C	12.5%

Table 7. 1: Disposition to Trust

A slight majority noted that they trusted people immediately. This was often based on individual preference and a belief in the positive impact of trust on relationships, for example:

> **(B)“…***I'd say more in the B bucket, trusting to the point where sometimes you could get burned… it comes from my background, my work history and things like*

> *that…someone walks up in front of me, never met them before… I'm going to trust them straight away because I don't know any different and I prefer to be that way instead of pessimistic straight off the bat, 'watch out for this guy'…"* (C7M2)

Nearly as many participants mentioned that they didn't trust from the outset, preferring to wait to make a judgment on the trustworthiness of the other person, for example:

> **(C)** *"…I'm C…. I'm quite neutral on wait and see…so it's the behaviours, it's … the way this person is interacting with people, treating people and so on"* (C8L/C10M1)

A small number noted that they were somewhere between B and C, taking a partial risk and monitoring the situation, for example:

> **(B/C)** *"…I think I'm a mixture of B and C as I don't spill the beans as in say something 100% I just give like 50 or 60 percent … to gain the trust of the person in front of me and if that person is willing to share. OK then I will start sharing the rest."* (B4M4)

The fact that no participants stated that they remained wary, suggests that no participants were distrusting by their nature, they either trusted or stayed neutral.

The majority of participants (78%) answered a second question about whether they felt people in general were trustworthy (see table 7.2). 42 percent of these respondents answered no, 27 percent believed people to be trustworthy and a further 15 percent specified that they believed people in their organisation to be trustworthy (rather than commenting on the general public), signalling this to be the most pertinent consideration for them. The same number said that they preferred not to generalize as every person was different.

NO	42.3%
YES	26.9%
YES BUT ONLY IN MY ORGANISATION	15.4%
CANNOT GENERALISE	15.4%
TOTAL (=100%)	26

Table 7. 2: Are people in general trustworthy?

These findings show that participants were divided on their views of general trustworthiness (table 7.2) and on the actions they took when they met someone for the first time (table 7.1). While it appears that participants are almost equally divided, when the answers for both of the disposition questions are analysed together, three disposition profiles emerge, as displayed in table 7.3. Profile one individuals believed people were generally trustworthy and they trusted straight away. Profile two individuals did not believe people to be generally untrustworthy and waited for more information before making up their mind. These two profiles make intuitive sense. However, a further 24% of participants, categorized as profile three, believed that people were generally untrustworthy but they were still willing to trust straight away.

Profile 1	28%	People generally trustworthy so trust	"I'm always positive so… I always trust people until they do something which removes the trust" (A1M1)
Profile 2	24%	People not trustworthy so wait	"…so I have to stay neutral just to build the trust as I told you I built the trust with (leader) after different sessions video conference sessions… I have to wait and see by myself" (B5M3)
Profile 3	24%	People not generally trustworthy but trust anyway	"I always give the benefit of the doubt at the beginning… (are people generally trustworthy?)… not necessarily no (laugh) but I don't like to judge the mass when I meet somebody for the first time I will always think that this should be a nice guy or a nice girl until they do something to prove me otherwise". (B5M2)
TOTAL (=100%)	19		

Table 7. 3: Disposition Profiles

While those with a profile one disposition were consistent in stating that they simply trusted others from the outset, three examples highlight the strong influence of disposition on those categorised as profile two or three. Firstly, the second quote in table 7.3 (profile two) was from a person who believed that people were not generally trustworthy so he waited to make up his mind. Despite his leader displaying what he felt was trustworthy behaviour from the very beginning it took him approximately six months to trust the leader.

> *"…actually the first impression was positive because she was direct but …I wouldn't say I … trusted immediately …I give time again to understand her more … you know spend time together that's why I wanted to see her in Istanbul to spend more time and …if I can trust her or not, understand the situation…*" (B6M1)

A second member (also profile two), despite having positive initial interactions with a leader along with receiving multiple recommendations from third parties, refused to trust the leader as they had not faced a situation in which the leader was able to demonstrate their trustworthiness and as such did not having enough information to make up their mind.

> *"… so I … believe that he's a good person and everyone speaks that he is a good … everyone who works with him or even the other managers say how…he is good and supporting for his team...So this is really there but in the end I didn't face with him serious things that will tell me that this person is getting my back hundred percent. That's why I can't give him hundred percent. Because I still didn't experience something that will prove that this person is a trustworthy person..."* (C9M2)

Regarding those with a profile three disposition, one member didn't believe that people were trustworthy in general and also felt that some people in sales roles were untrustworthy, but despite this he trusted people from the outset.

> *"…people are more out for themselves these days … and when you come into a sales environment like this people are here to make money and that's fine and some people will stab you in the back to make their money …"* (C7M2)

These three examples highlight the importance of disposition, the first two examples highlight how a low trusting disposition prevented trust from emerging, in spite of positive behaviours and reports from third parties, whereas the third example shows how someone with a profile three disposition trusted despite not believing that people were generally trustworthy. So why did profile three participants trust others? Some trusted based on their belief in the positive impact of trust in terms of reciprocation (B4L) while others highlighted the crucial role that the workplace context played in influencing trust, for example:

> *"…maybe that's even really a tech thing … you really don't have the luxury not to trust people because it's so inefficient…if you start like for example withholding information or not sharing the presentation … it simply doesn't work... the only thing you can function here is …to take that position ..everybody …wants to do the right thing right. So yep you're open. Yep. You trust people."* (A2M2)

A number of leaders also suggested that trusting a virtual member may be a necessity given the lack of visibility in virtual teams, for example:

> *"So I would say the big difference in being a virtual leader… is you need to trust and you need to give more responsibilities because you are not there."* (C8L/C10M1)

Decisions to trust were also affected by the efficacy of the recruitment practices to hire the right types of people, suggesting trust in the organisation's systems and processes and/or perhaps perceived trustworthiness of individuals by nature of the role they occupy (role-based trust). This was commented on by participants in ORGA and ORGC – two sample quotes are provided below.

> *"It is somewhere between … neutral and … give them … the benefit of the doubt … depends on …the company environment… if you meet somebody at ORGC for the first time I think it's … very easy … to give them the benefit of … the doubt." (C9L)*

> *"…honestly in my 10 years career at ORGA I must say the number of occasions where I said oh wow ok this guy or this person did not deserve my trust…I think I can count them on one hand…it would be very hard for non-trustworthy people to survive."* (A2M2)

In sum, disposition impacted trust by positively and negatively. Despite their belief that people were generally untrustworthy, those with a profile three disposition chose to trust anyway. This choice was based on either their belief in the power of trust or due to extra-dyadic mechanisms, which were deemed to be important in an environment where it took longer to gain first-hand knowledge of other people. However, a low disposition to trust sometimes outweighed initial trustworthy behaviours, with some people simply taking longer to trust, partly due to the virtual nature of the relationship which made it more difficult to gather sufficient first-hand information.

7.2.2 Experience and Self-Efficacy (Sub-theme 2)

Experience levels of dyad members had the potential to influence leader-member trust. Leaders were for the most part very experienced and confident in their leadership capability and such experience was seen by members as a sign of leader ability. However, leaders also benefitted from specific experience of both being a virtual leader and having a virtual leader, as they reflected upon such experience and adopted their virtual leadership style to further support members, which enhanced trust.

Both members and leaders cited difficulties with leading inexperienced people virtually. These difficulties largely focused on inexperienced members' need for support and the leader's inability to offer such support at a distance. This was a concern given the centrality of support to leader-member trust, as discussed in chapter six. The quotes below are indicative of members' views on the need for support and the potential issue with virtual leadership, others reported members feeling forgotten when being led at a distance.

> *"…I can't maybe recommend virtual management for new hires. It would be a disaster…" (B5M3)*

> *"…if you're a newer employee here you're going to be reaching out to your manager like twenty thirty times a day with queries … in a multinational company… so many things can go wrong… you don't know where to go to sometimes to get an answer… So you will need the manager there."* (C7M1)

Similarly, leaders reported the inability to coach and grow inexperienced members at a distance.

> *"… you can struggle when you need to onboard one direct report that's too young and you don't have the proximity to coach to mentor and to grow that people that person to reach more autonomous way of working…" (C8L/ C10M1)*

While this was not as much of an issue with more experienced employees, leaders did say that virtual coaching was generally more challenging. Again this presented a potential issue as coaching and career support were identified as central to trust, as discussed in chapter six.

7.2.3 Values (Sub-theme 3)

The centrality of integrity related values (honesty and openness) and benevolence to leader-member trust was discussed in detail in chapter six. However, this discussion was largely focused on behaviours between dyad members. Leaders and members also raised the importance of members behaving with general integrity and humanity (benevolence) towards others.

Firstly, in relation to integrity, the most senior leader in ORGC (C10L) highlighted the importance of building a culture in which both leaders and members behaved in the correct manner, noting that it was not just about hitting sales targets but behaving in an ethical manner when doing so. At a dyad level leaders highlighted the importance of being able to trust members to not only reach sales targets but to do it with integrity. Numerous leaders mentioned this, for example:

> *"I need to trust them that they are going to deliver on their KPIs they are going to deliver for me …so not only that they do it but the right outcome so they do it in … the right way…"* (B5L)

In relation to humanity a number of leaders noted the importance of knowing that members were good people before working hard to support them. They needed to trust them on a human level first:

> *"…for me, with everybody you still have to earn trust and it's a two way street but me as the leader, in a way I go first do I buy the person?" (A2L)*

Leaders made this determination by viewing how the person interacted with, and treated others (C8L/C10M1), such as their team mates, as outlined by the leader below:

> *"…I need to know that the person is a good person you know … (if) I'm going to tackle that other manager from the neighbouring team … I need the person to be a good person, ye know having a good empathy with the team with the people and see something that from the beginning and then I realise that it's a good heart…*(B5L)

This same leader provided insights into a critical incident which shaped his trust in a member. He noted how this individual was due to be appointed to a management position and deservedly so. However, there was only headcount for one manager on the team and there was already a manager in place in another location. This other management position was due to be terminated the year before and was now long overdue. The leader had two choices, to terminate that position immediately, ceasing the other manager's employment, or to wait until the next fiscal year until such time that a case could be made for a second management post. When he put these options to the member, the member chose to wait:

> *"…of course his reaction was the one that I hoped, he said 'no that's fine I understand we will wait'…even when he didn't know much about the other manager even when there were some negative things about the other manager that people had discussed ..."* (B5L)

This example showed the leader that the member was generally a good person, which was important to this leader and helped to build trust. For many of the leaders, this type of humanity seemed to be important as it aligned to their own values. This was made explicit by one particular leader:

> ***"…****I just think that ye know we should always have the well-being of the people we work with foremost on our minds … I think that (member) … is passionate about the people she works with … wants them to be successful… that would be my sense and they are the kind of people I like …" (A2L)*

The importance of a leader demonstrating benevolence towards individual members was discussed in chapter six and numerous examples of supportive and protective behaviour were cited. However, both leaders and members stressed the need for VT leaders to genuinely care for employees as this was something that couldn't be faked in a virtual setting.

> *"…if you don't really care about the individual they feel it the sincerity, the drive the openness…and virtual management if you don't care about that it sticks out like a sore thumb…".* (A2L)

This genuine benevolence towards people was cited by numerous members. Many cited the leader's benevolent behaviours towards the wider team, as opposed to just the individual member and this signalled to them that the leader was a genuinely nice person, for example:

> *"Well I seen lots of example(s) I see him fighting for his people eh I see his sense of humanity and … I see how he supports …" (B5M1)*

Other members spoke about their leader's genuine care for people and how they could feel the leader's humanity when interacting with them:

> *"(leader) care(s) about people …his thing is people. So it is really something that you perceive immediately. When he's asking you how are you at the beginning of the call is not just asking because you know he…has to do it… he's really care about how are you…" (C10M3)*

Some participants mentioned the heightened importance of humanity in virtual relationships, from members behaving ethically without leader oversight to virtual leaders genuinely caring for people and working hard to show that they care. The member who provided the last quote above captured the specific importance of communicating one's humanity when working virtually, as communication was often not as warm as in co-located teams:

> *"…humanity… because when … you are communicating … in a virtual way … somehow the communication is much more … it is not so warm...so if you can feel that the person in front of you is human… I mean this could help from my point of view… (C10M3)"*

7.3: Dyadic Mechanisms

The Dyadic Mechanisms theme (figure 7.2), represents those mechanisms internal to the dyad which influenced leader-member trust. Sub-themes one through four were introduced in chapter six. This section briefly revisits sub-themes two through four to focus on the issue of mutuality, before discussing the remaining sub-themes (ST5 – ST8) in detail. The final sub-theme, communication (ST9), is discussed in chapter eight.

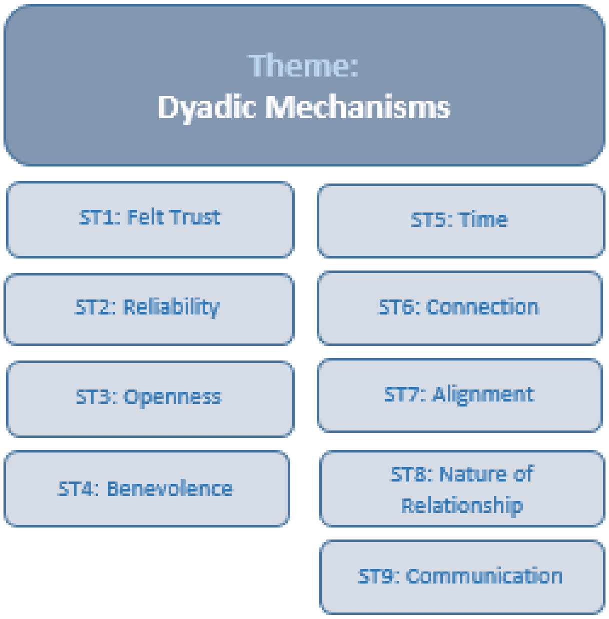

Theme:
Dyadic Mechanisms
ST1: Felt Trust
ST5: Time
ST2: Reliability
ST6: Connection
ST3: Openness
ST7: Alignment
ST4: Benevolence
ST8: Nature of Relationship
ST9: Communication

Figure 7. 2: Dyadic Mechanisms

7.3.1 Dyadic Trust and Mutuality (Sub-themes 1-4)

The first four sub-themes in figure 7.2 (STs1-4) were discussed in chapter six, where member and leader perspectives were presented separately. However, in high trust relationships these four mechanisms were mutual in nature, for example both parties felt trusted by the other, were able to rely on the other and believed that the other was both open and benevolent towards them. Conversely, there were examples of dyads where trust was not mutual because one member had doubts about one of these four mechanisms. While the mutuality and reciprocal impact of felt trust was discussed in chapter six, the other three mechanisms are now discussed in detail.

While leaders and members judged each other’s trustworthiness partly based on reliability, a number of participants mentioned mutual reliance as being central to a high trust relationship. Participants discussed how they could rely on, or count on, each other to do their job and to fulfil their obligations towards the other and how neither party had to monitor the other. The following quote captures many of the issues raised by participants:

> *“…we trust each other so the minute he says ‘OK let's do that’ I don't think about that anymore because I know that... when time comes that will be done … he will speak with the person or we will address my concern you know and so that's trust because when you don't trust … you'll ping the person every day every hour saying ‘where are you in that thing’… 'is there progress?' because you don't trust…” (A3M2)*

As discussed in chapter six, openness was one of the major themes of this research and was identified as signalling both trustworthiness and trust in another. However, in order for bi-directional dyadic trust to develop openness also needed to be mutual. When mutual openness was present this led to greater levels of information sharing and collaboration which further strengthened trust, as captured in the quote below:

> ***“**…brainstorming…for me that happens when you trust as well because you are in an open and trustful relationship you can bring ideas and the other person will build on top of your ideas or will that will help you to have other perspectives on your idea…. to build ideas together. …so this is the 3rd pillar of trust for me…” (A3M2)*

Participants also highlighted the role of mutual openness in helping to surface issues related to business and/or related to the relationship. A critical example of this was provided by two dyad members who discussed the role of initial mutual openness in trust repair. In this instance, the leader was appointed to a new role and the member, he himself a senior manager, did not believe that the leader was the right person for the role. The member in question (C8L/10M1) specified that this reluctance to work with the leader was due to his perception that the leader was "not collaborative, not working in a team…" and his view that the leader had "…a lack of leadership (experience) to manage a big organisation like ours". Essentially, the member did not trust that the leader had the requisite ability or leadership style to fulfil the role. However, in their first interaction the two dyad members were very open about their feelings and their plans for the future. While the member voiced his concerns about working for the leader, the leader demonstrated his respect for the member and shared his vision for the future. According to the leader, the relationship began to recover due to "respect and inclusiveness" and shared values.

> *"…when you have you have the same value(s) it's easy to build respect…if you build respect it's easy to build a common goal, a common vision… so frankly I think eh it didn't take us … a long time to understand that..." (C10L)*

However, the initial level of openness set the tone for the relationship and such openness continued. As a result they agreed to give the relationship a try and it improved immensely thereafter, with high levels of identification-based trust emerging.

> *"…very solid relationship we trust each other and … if tomorrow I decide to leave the business or something else I know that he will continue eh to develop the business the way we have been building it in the last four years… I would say that the relationship is very strong" (C10L)*

The fourth sub-theme related to mutuality is benevolence. While both members and leaders spoke about leader benevolence towards members, the issue of member benevolence did not arise unprompted. However, when prompted, participants mentioned member benevolence towards leaders. It was evident that mutual benevolence was a feature of high trust relationships, with both dyad members demonstrating their care and concern for the other person. While there were many examples cited, the example below taken from one specific high trust dyad is typical of mutual benevolence.

> *"…I trust him, he's got my back… he will share feedback if he hears it from other people, keeps me in the loop lets me know about potential issues that are coming up… he's definitely got my back big time…" (A2L)*

> **"…**I can trust him, he will back me up in terms of when I'm fighting against a corporate guy…*"(A2M1)*

7.3.2 Time (Sub-theme 5)

When asked how long it took to make a decision to trust their leader numerous members said that they had made a decision almost instantly, based on a feeling that they had or a sense of chemistry. Others cited the impact of initial openness on their decision to trust, for example:

> *"…(leader) is very open there was immediate trust in the relationship… "(A1M1)*

However, while some participants came to a decision rather quickly others needed time to develop a deeper level of knowledge-based trust, in other words to get to know the other person and *'to see them in action'* (C10L). For some, it was about building up a picture over time with information from behaviours and interactions and extending trust over time, for example:

> *"… I wouldn't trust immediately … I would be neutral to understand the person better, ye know to spend time with him or her to say that I trust him or her or suspicious of her or him…you have a timeline and you see something and you add something to the trust level or you are just reducing the trust level or increasing you know after some time then I can conclude that I trust her or not…"* (B6M1)

This decision to trust was influenced by a range of mechanisms such as ability and reliance (both discussed in chapter six), knowledge and understanding of the other and alignment of thinking (discussed further in section 7.3.4). In each of the sample quotes below the participants speak of the emergence of trust over time.

> ***[Ability]****" it's (trust) definitely going progressively up… do I think he is the finished article? No... but I think he is probably got to kind of an acceptable level on the sales management side and he's done a good job I think on the people side…" (A3L)*

> ***[Reliance]*** *"... no I would say that trust is built over time and eh it's really about both parties can really* ***rely on each other*** *…" (C8L/C10M1)*

> ***[Knowledge and Understanding of the Other]*** *"…we were having many conversations that were not going very well at the beginning … but **after 2-3 months he started to know me, I knew him also** as well and things are perfect from that time until now but I think trust for me is a key eh with (member) I really trust him …" (B4L)*

> ***[Alignment of Thinking]*** *"…I would say giving it time …as time passes by it gets stronger and stronger due to the fact that we actually deal with each other on a daily basis **we start to understand…how he functions how he thinks … what he likes what he doesn't like**. So yeah it's still I mean it's getting stronger eh day by day. So of course it will take some time to reach a point where there's nothing more to be done." (B5M1)*

While the aforementioned mechanisms are specific to the dyad and its members, one participant suggested that while trust takes time a positive referral from a trusted third party can help to speed up this process, thus signalling the impact of extra-dyadic mechanisms. The impact of third parties on trust is discussed in further detail in section 7.4.1.

> *"I cannot build the trust with someone in one day or two days or one week. I need to have like 3, six months - how to minimize that duration is by getting introduced by your manager is having the manager onsite to support." (B5M3)*

7.3.3: Connection (Sub-theme 6)

Personal connection emerged as a common characteristic of high trust dyads, cited by both leaders and members. Some highlighted the importance of connection on a personal level, having fun together, or enjoying each other's company. This, they noted, was not necessarily linked to similarity regarding either personal interests or work-related views. Instead, connection was formed on the basis of spending time together and enjoying each other's company, regardless of different interests or stages of life. It was about connecting as individuals (A2M2). The quote below captures the points made by numerous participants:

> *"…now he's a good bit younger that I am but it's still fine there's still that good relationship there…I don't know if we share the same sort of things he's more into his football, I am more into rugby that kind of difference but you can go out and just talk about anything you know you sit there for hours and not mention work at all. " (C7M2)*

While some identified the importance of having fun to build connection others spoke of connection based on sharing personal information and understanding the other person's expectations and aspirations. This connection was very important to leaders, with one highlighting it as '*critical'* to the relationship *(C11L/ C10M2)* and therefore they made an effort to form a connection at an early stage of the relationship.

While some dyad members connected quite quickly, for others it took more time. Participants highlighted the role of personality in this regard. Most of the references to personality were positive in terms of building connection. However, participants also mentioned the fact that certain personality types delayed connections, as evidenced in the sample quotes below.

> *"…some people you connect with straight away and others who might be more introverted take a bit more time" (A2L)*
>
> *"…this one guy within the team …he socialises but he finds it very difficult to eh network with people so if we go out for dinner in the evening he'll be the first to go to*

> *bed… he'll be the first to leave ye know the group… and that's his personality and we all expect that but he's missing that kind of connection you have with those people, building that personal connection, getting to know him is becoming more of a challenge than anything else…"* (A2M1)

7.3.4 Alignment (Sub-theme 7)

Both members and leaders discussed the importance of alignment of expectations and of views regarding business objectives and vision. From a member perspective, it was important to align to leaders' performance expectations in order to build reliance-based trust (discussed in section 6.4.1). Numerous members spoke of the benefit of understanding expectations from the very outset of the relationship. Included below is a sample quote from a member who spoke about how such alignment helped him to understand his leader's expectations and gave him an opportunity to demonstrate that he understood the leader's concerns which resulted in a positive start to the relationship.

> *"… that session … was very good …early in the relationship with (A1L) … helped us a lot in understanding what we need to do and what need to focus on, I was also able to align my message to (leader) giving him the messages focused on the things that I thought and I knew were his biggest concerns and with that I think that we both evolved positively" (A1M2)*

Alignment was clearly linked to trust with one member identifying alignment as the key reason for a high trust relationship with his current leader, in comparison to his relationship with another leader where the alignment is not as strong:

> *"…I think that is probably the big difference why there is a bigger or a big trust relationship between me and (leader) (rather than other matrix manager) …and that's probably because my goals are much more aligned to the goals of (leader) than to the goals of my manager" (A1M1)*

From a leader perspective early alignment was important and they spent time at the outset of the relationship clarifying expectations and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). In many cases the leaders mentioned how they preferred to ensure clarity from the outset and then allow members autonomy to deliver on their expectations.

> *"…just have to really tell them what to do …up front …I tell them what are the KPIs what particular style I have of …servicing our internal stakeholders and they have to take care of that …proactiveness is definitely paramount for me …anyone waiting for me to give them the day to day work is going to fail … (B5L)*

While autonomy was linked to trust (section 6.3.2) it was not possible unless there was alignment within the dyad. It was suggested by leaders that alignment was much more important in a virtual setting and therefore leaders had to be very explicit in their communication in order to ensure clarity. Over half of all leaders provided specific examples of their efforts to ensure clarity. In some cases they simply repeated things over and over again, but in others they took a lot of time to prepare communications to ensure that there was absolute clarity, as in the example below:

> *"…there is a lot more thinking time in these types of jobs where you don't sit beside people… so you're kind of constantly giving people pieces of information …it's actually*

> *a good and a bad thing because you actually get a lot done because you have to be very explicit " (A2L)*

Alignment influenced trust as it allowed parties to rely on each other and for leaders to grant autonomy. In one previously cited dyad the leader discussed the fact that a strong level of alignment with one member was central to the high levels of trust in that relationship. This relationship began slowly with low levels of trust, but progressed to a situation where there was absolute alignment in terms of how the business should be run. This leader's willingness to allow the other person to represent them is a sign of high level, identification-based trust.

> *"I think we share the same … vision … where we want to drive the organisation, the same ambition … to grow the business and … to grow the people at the same … time…(it's a) very solid relationship we trust each other and …if tomorrow I decide to leave the business … I know that he will continue …to develop the business the way we have been building it in the last four years…" (C10L)*

Conversely, the same leader had struggled to build trust with another one of his members (also a people manager) and this was partly down to a lack of alignment regarding leadership style and approach. He noted that this member did not behave in a manner consistent with his view of building a culture in which the right behaviours would benefit the organisation in the longer term, instead he focused on short term profits – a view which was supported by both of this individual's team members.

> *"…we haven't been able to develop the same level of trust …so we have a good relationship but it's not as strong as with other people... I think probably one of the*

> *reason is he … comes from a strong French management viewpoint so while we have the same passport… I don't think we have the same DNA when it comes to management style…"* (C10L)

In many of the dyads a F2F meeting was used to clarify expectations. In fact, there were two notable examples of leaders and members reaching alignment in an intense period of F2F communication. While one involved a long car journey, the example below discusses how a flight allowed the dyad members time to discuss and reach an understanding regarding expectations. The importance of F2F communication is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

> *"…and so we spend like three hours speaking on you know the things that we wanted to build together in the areas that he was championing… we took the opportunity that we were together flying to a country and eh we just you know eh aligned our minds." (A3M2*)

7.3.5 Nature of Relationship (Sub-theme 8)

It was clear from speaking with leaders that they had different requirements for trust depending on the nature of each relationship. The most common relationship was one in which a leader had sales people, or individual contributors, reporting to them, whom they needed to trust to meet their team sales targets, a form of reliance-based trust:

> *"I don't have to be friends with everyone and build the super trust but I need to trust them that they are going to deliver on their KPIs, they are going to deliver for me … for me (this) is the trust that I need to have for most individual contributors." (B5L)*

However, leaders spoke of needing a deeper level of trust in the people managers reporting to them. For instance, the leader quoted above had a hybrid team, he was based in Dubai with half of the team but the other team members were based in Cairo. Therefore, he had appointed a local manager in Cairo and noted that this specific relationship *"…has to be special because he's my right hand here …"* (B5L). The quote below highlight the importance of this relationship to him, with his emphasis on trust underlined.

> "*…you need to have someone onsite you really really trust …to give you that … kind of feedback, how are people feeling are they feeling motivated or how's the mood this week or if there are some general problems for whatever reason in the company or in the region or the commissions were not as good as we were expecting then I cannot just fly over and see how people are reacting to that I can see how people are reacting to that in Dubai but I cannot see that in Cairo so I need someone to tell me so …I need to have someone that I really trust and is this case it is of course (member)…"(B5L)*

A third category of relationship also required a deep level of trust. Two of the teams had people in sales excellence/ sales operations roles. In one of these teams the senior leader spoke of the importance of this specific relationship and how the trust was different to the trust in other relationships. He described it as similar to a marriage and extremely important given the sensitive nature of some of the information that he had to share with the member (referred to below as member 1), which was different to his relationship with member 2 who was in a sales role:

> *"No the trust is different… he doesn't carry a number, my trust relationship with him is on a human level because let's be honest he reports into a 3rd party, works for me, that could be a problem… I need to trust (member 1) with everything I say and I can't sit in an environment and talk about something that I can't trust him on right so he's hearing an awful lot more dialogue on different things formally informally that (member 2) would never be exposed to… and that trust …it's kind of like your marriage type of moment …ye know it's in a safe environment…if he has something to say, if I have something to say and even if it is about someone else over there it stays… it stays there and if that trust even, if there was even a chip on the … windscreen of that trust, it's game over…"*

Relationships within Matrix Structures

Although the word loyalty was not used in the quote above, this leader highlighted the importance of loyalty to him over other leaders within a matrix structure. The trust levels required in this relationship were so high that the leader consulted widely with third parties in advance of the hire and spent a long time ensuing he got the right person for the role:

> *"…he hit a lot of the characteristics I wanted which was heavily trust based ye know you have a more complex structure in that he works with me but reports into somebody else and as a consequence I needed to establish where his trust was going to be… and that alignment with me versus his actual quote unquote manager… always the risk of that going the other way and eh I needed to know that he*

> *understood that he was working for me even if he reported into somebody else and that is something that he, I think he understands right…" (A1L)*

A second leader also highlighted (unprompted) the increased risks inherent in a matrix structure and the need for leaders to be able to trust members:

> *"…this isn't to sound territorial about it but ye know …that I trust their motives in other words ye know …are they not just in my camp but ye know are they are they straight up about what they are trying to achieve or is there a kind of ah what's the word…a different agenda going on yeah … there is a bigger chance that they ye know that they could have another agenda like if someone's working for you right …ye know directly working for you and reporting to you ye know they can really only have an agenda to progress …but while, in a dotted line there's other possibilities…"(*A3L)

Many members were reporting to two or more leaders and some commented on the fact that they had stronger relationships with certain leaders than others. The reason behind this varied from openness (or lack thereof), and leaders simply spending more time with members and focusing on their development and growth, which provides further support for the importance of 'member-centric' leadership, as discussed in chapter six. One member compared two leaders, the first was a direct line manager who the member described as being overly focused on the number with little focus on the person:

> "… on a personal level we can …get along but it's just (not) my type of manager ok in terms of management style and is that ... I really really enjoy spending time with him but on a management level no…" (C11M1)

The second, in comparison was very member-centric:

> *"… a very good relationship … the reason why I came in it was because of him because I thought I could learn a lot from him … we go for regular lunches and we have meetings... also he also has this one to one and it's your time so you can discuss whatever you want … it can be anything, it's your time. Sure so you set the agenda kind of well a loose agenda. Yeah but it's also more like coaching sessions. I like to be coached…" (C11M1)*

This example, like the previous examples, shows that the level of trust can vary widely from dyad to dyad. In the first two examples cited above members' actions determined trust levels, with leaders expecting loyalty and non-disclosure of sensitive information (integrity), while in the latter example it was the actions of the leaders (benevolence) that determined the level of trust in the relationship. As such, the nature of trust varied and both parties played a role, further support for the dyadic nature of trust.

7.4: Extra-dyadic Mechanisms

The discussion thus far has focused on the impact of behaviours, personal mechanisms and dyadic mechanisms on leader-member trust development. While these influences related to the individual dyad members and their interactions, a range of external mechanisms were also found to influence trust development. In fact, extra-dyadic mechanisms, regarded here as any influences external to the dyad or to those individuals within the dyad, played a role even before dyad members met for the first time, and continued to influence trust over time.

7.4.1 Third Parties (Sub-theme 1)

The impact of third parties was strong in virtual dyads. In fact, third parties had some form of influence on almost all of the dyads featured in the study. This impact, was usually strongest during the recruitment phase, at which time third parties were involved in one of three ways, represented in figure 7.3.

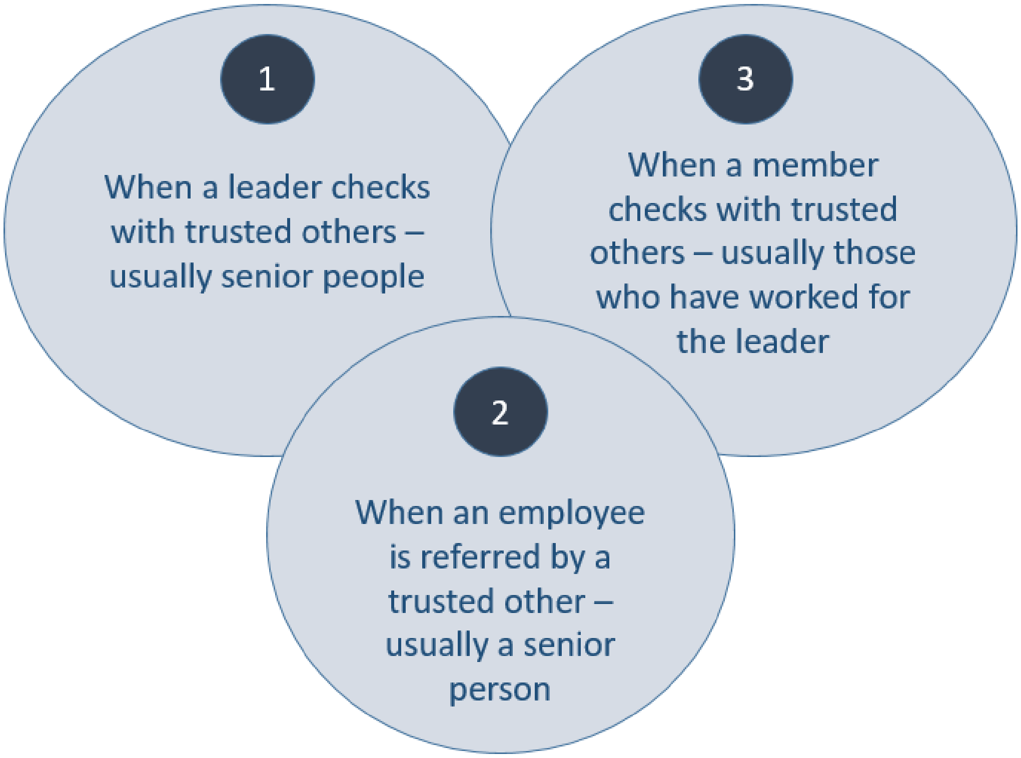

1
When a leader checks with trusted others – usually senior people
3
When a member checks with trusted others – usually those who have worked for the leader
2
When an employee is referred by a trusted other – usually a senior person

Figure 7. 3: The impact of Third Parties

1. **When a leader checks with trusted others – usually senior people**

Across all three organisations leaders had varying levels of involvement in the recruitment of members. In some cases members were already in place before the leader took up their position or the Human Resources (HR) department managed the recruitment process with limited input from the leader. However, in other cases leaders were heavily involved and there were five instances of leaders checking with trusted senior leaders within the business before making an appointment – two samples are provided below.

> *"…I knew her boss so he could share a lot with me … we know each other very well so he wasn't going to refer someone he didn't believe in…" (A2L)*
>
> *"Yeah I did a good bit of checking on him … from the local sales director in Portugal who was obviously supportive of his hire …I checked him out through another couple of contacts I would have who are Portuguese, senior people now in the area, would have known (member) and would have given me you know a clear view on his strengths and weaknesses and so on…" (A1L)*

There was a number of reasons that these leaders chose to consult with third parties. One of the leaders (A1L) noted that the member he was recruiting needed to work closely with the Portuguese team so it was important to know what the Portuguese leadership thought of him. The same leader also noted the benefits of third party input beyond a resume:

> *"…his performance and his numbers may or may not tell you the full truth about an individual so I tend to not look, I assume that tick box - that isn't a criteria for hiring…" (A1L)*

The same leader hired a second member to fulfil a sales excellence role within a matrix reporting structure and the leader knew he would require a higher level of trust in this relationship (as discussed in section 7.3.5). Therefore, he perceived the risk to be higher and similar to when hiring the first member, he needed to know more than the resume:

> *"…he hit a lot of the characteristics I wanted which was heavily trust based ye know you have a more complex structure in that he works with me but reports into somebody else and as a consequence I needed to establish where his trust was going to be… the human side was important so I did check him out, what was he like as a person, what was he like to travel with, those kind of things were important to me" (A1L)*

2. When an employees is referred by a trusted other – usually a senior person

There were two instances where employees were proactively referred to their leader by another leader. In the first instance the leader's line manager was the common third party whereas in the second example the member's line manager at the time referred the member to the leader's line manager.

> ***"…*** *my previous manager was the one who was in the board of hiring (leader) … `so so that helped me …he has referred me to (leader)…" (B5M3)*
>
> *"…so I was actually referred by someone who … sent an email with my CV to his (the leader's) boss…and from there he forwarded it to (leader) and said ye know I know you are looking for someone here's a person who has that skillset and that's when I got the HR people call me…" (A2M1)*

3. When an employee checks with trusted others who know the manager

While third parties influenced some leaders during the interview process, almost all of the members interviewed checked on their leader in advance of applying for a position or during the hiring process. In the first example below, the member was looking for two characteristics of leader trustworthy behaviours discussed in chapter six: openness and coaching:

> *"…yeah of course (he consulted third parties)… so how he was described to me was that actually eh I would translate it as being like a straight arrow right, a guy with a lot of energy, a lot of passion for the business …he says what is on his mind, whether that would be …positive or negative… I spoke actually to people who have worked with him directly before… so basically they confirmed he … was quite a good manager in terms of in terms of coaching right and getting people to the next level. So those three elements right… Good business knowledge. Pretty direct right in the way he works and communicates. And three good coach ..." (A2M2)*

While some members checked in advance of the first interview, others consulted third parties during the recruitment process, having engaged in one meeting or interview with the leader. In the first quote below the member was told about the supportive nature of the leader and her focus on career development – again two leader trustworthy behaviours discussed in chapter six.

> *"… I knew that she previously worked at ORGA so I ask a bit about her… she was actually their manager or their dotted manager like two years ago … they all agreed that she was one of the best managers they ever had and they told me she was very*

> *helpful and she was always keen to help and she was really focusing on people's careers so it kind of gives me motivation to join ORGB…" (B4M3)*

Other members focused on what the leader was like as a person. This combined with the quotes above, highlight the centrality of the leader being someone who would support the member in their current role and help them to progress in their career along with them being a good person. This again supports the findings presented in chapter six relating to member-centric leadership and the findings on values discussed in section 7.2.3.

> *"… I talked to one of my friends who happened to work with ORGB in Dubai, I gave him a call after the first call with (leader) and I asked him how is he dealing with people and he gave me of course the feedback and gave me a good indication as to how to move on the offer that he gave me …" (B5M2)*
>
> *"…everyone gave me positive feedback and 'she's that good of a person, she's an amazing manager, you're lucky to be in her team…" (B4M4)*

In sum third parties had a strong influence on early stage relationships. However, there was little evidence of third parties influencing mature relationships, where parties had first-hand knowledge of each other, except in one case where the leader relied on a third party to report on the activities of his members.

7.4.2 Organisational Support for VTs (Sub-theme 2)

Third parties are only one extra-dyadic influence on leader-member trust. The remaining extra-dyadic mechanisms identified in this study were related to the organisations and in many ways within the control of the organisations.

Communication Tools

Communication had a strong impact on dyadic trust. While the nature of this impact is discussed in chapter eight, this section discusses the role of organisational supports relating to communication. When asked about the adequacy of communication technologies for virtual working, participants from ORGA and ORGC were overwhelmingly positive and mentioned how the consistent use of Skype for Business allowed easy access to leaders for support, which was linked to trust in chapter six:

> *"…we don't need the formal …agenda…it's easy to get him and to just have one minute conversation during many times of day as we need it and so that's very important because you don't get stuck in your ideas…" (A3M2)*

The use of effective communication technologies therefore facilitated trust development as it enabled leaders to support members. Visibility and availability were also cited as important in this regard. A number of members cited the usefulness of shared diaries in choosing slots for virtual meetings and enabling access to leaders when needed, for example:

> *“**…**our diaries are shared so … I do have access remotely to see all his 1-1s with others …what meeting he’s got …and I can see he’s available lunchtime and I go yeah that’s the time I’m actually going to put something in the diary…so he’s physical on my screen on my laptop all the time …” (A2M1)*

However, in ORGB neither members nor leaders were required to log into a specific communication platform and there was therefore less visibility on both sides. This was cited as an issue by ORGB participants with one leader (B4L) mentioning that she had concerns about the work ethic of one member as he was not very visible or available.

Participants from ORGB were quite mixed in their views of the technology available to them. While some were quite positive, the majority were quite critical and referred to the technologies used by other organisations as superior. One member referred to the availability of communication tools as *“…the worst thing in the company...”* (B4M3), noting how the lack of an integrated communication platform meant that she could not reach out to the wider network of colleagues for support.

While ORGA and ORGC both use Skype for Business as a fully integrated communication system, participants in all three organisations mentioned the growth in usage of WhatsApp as a communication tool. Participants mentioned how this tool allowed for a greater sense of team connection, as people shared updates and also communicated jokes and informal messages even outside of work hours. A senior leader in ORGC summed up the power of good communication tools, including WhatsApp:

> *"…I think you should not underestimate …the power of the tools that are available. Simple things like …WhatsApp groups can do a lot in the virtual…environment…" (C10L)*

In sum, the communication platforms adopted by participant organisation impacted upon support levels, perceptions of integrity (work ethic) and connection, all of which were linked to trust, as discussed earlier in this chapter and in chapter six. However, there were other organisational decisions which impacted upon trust levels, such as investment in training.

Training

Members in all three organisations noted the availability of ample training for employees. However, this training largely focused on sales effectiveness or personal effectiveness/ time management, there was a lack of training specific to virtual working in all three organisations. This may also be common to other organisations, as one participant with experience of working in numerous tech organisations noted:

> *"…I believe there's a gap in terms of virtual working, the only training I ever had I'd say in the last 10 years in big corporations …they only show you how to do the best presentation … but that doesn't really teach you how to virtually work…" (A2M1)*

When asked if training specific to working effectively with colleagues in a virtual setting would be useful, the majority of members said that such specific training would be very useful. The quote below captures the general view of employees.

> *"I think this is a must … in the office... you can knock on the door... in the virtual world you will always have this fear, am I doing this right … you need to have an extensive course at the beginning to help them read the signs and how to communicate…" (B5M2)*

Leaders from each organisation also noted the lack of training on virtual leadership. One leader (B4L) had worked in both ORGB and ORGA and mentioned that there was no training for remote leaders in either organisation. Again, all but a small number of leaders cited a need for customized training, as represented in the sample quote below:

> *"…there is indeed nothing that really points to … managers of virtual teams…what does it take? how is it different? What you should be wary about? "… I do think …it is worthwhile developing such … a thing. Because I can imagine that there are people who are maybe less see less naturally inclined to do the right things. So a bit of help or coaching or insight could help. Definitely…" (A2M2 – also a leader)*

This quote captures the views of many participants who noted that training for virtual workers would be useful in helping both leaders and members to work effectively. Without customised training leaders and members were not provided with guidance on how to build trust in relationships.

7.4.3 Culture (Sub-theme 3)

Participants were generally neutral or positive when discussing organisational culture and its influence on trust. The culture is ORGA was described in negative terms as hard-working, controlling and bureaucratic but also in positive terms as open and entrepreneurial with strong supports and trustworthy employees. Any negative impacts of the culture were largely mitigated by experienced leaders and members who knew how to effectively navigate obstacles. As such, the culture did not appear to impact upon leader-member relationships. While members in ORGA noted the consistency of the culture across multiple international locations, the culture in ORGB was more localised in nature. The two participating teams had team members in both Dubai and Cairo. Members who participated were largely based in Cairo and spoke about the differences in the local office culture in comparison to Dubai or the EMEA headquarters. Members in Cairo mentioned a lack of support in Cairo and cited feelings of isolation.

The most senior leader interviewed from ORGC noted how they were working to build a more people-centric culture.

> *…"more and more … on these values trust, autonomy and developing leadership, take care of people and help them to grow internally and its....the way we are going …" (C8L/C10M1)*

This was largely supported by ORG C participants who spoke about the supportive culture and the developmental opportunities available to employees. However, one member expressed a different view of the organisational culture to the majority of his colleagues:

> *"…I would say there is a lot less attention on the individual and more on the number…" (C1M2)*

This member's leader was viewed by both of his members and his own leader as being focused on numbers over people, at odds with the vision of culture expressed by his own leader. As discussed in section 6.2, member-centricity was identified as integral to trust.

7.4.4 Structures (Sub-theme 4)

The importance of 'member-centric' leader behaviours was discussed in chapter six. However, the structure of many virtual teams made it more difficult for leaders to demonstrate to members they were cared for and treated equally. Five of the leaders who participated were responsible for leading 'hybrid' teams, where they had some team members co-located in the same office as them, and others based in remote hubs. Members of three such teams participated in the research and they cited the lack of opportunities for informal communication with leaders, which hampered relationship development, and their ability to get to know the leader as a person. They cited the lack of opportunities for social engagements, either taking lunch together, socializing as a team or even with family. Such social interaction provided opportunities for people to connect on a human level.

Furthermore, members based in remote hubs felt that they received reduced levels of leader support and training compared to members based in the same office as the leader. The quote below captures many of the aforementioned issues noted by members:

> *"… we have some other colleagues …locally based with (leader) in Dubai same level for my position and they have a good relation …what we are going to do after work … we can have some discussion during lunch break. but not for the remote manager … it will be difficult because I'm not having one hour from my day daily to have a video conference with someone just to have a chat… this does not make sense…maybe you can have like five minutes saying hi… five minutes or half an hour in a lunch break so … of course, of course we are not treated the same. Why? Because everything related for the Dubai hub…. so the most training or the big chunk of the team are located over there so the trainings is much more for them than for us. Maybe we have some session onsite session for the Dubai team and we are attending remotely so this is makes some unfairness…" (B5M3)*

This perceived lack of support had the potential to damage trust in leaders. Some remote members felt that they did not receive timely support, for example:

> *"… if I can imagine he's just sitting in the hub in Barcelona so everyone there can just run to him anytime. But for me I'm always like waiting for the reply or trying to send over a WhatsApp or call in his mobile and stuff like this to get replies…" (C9M2)*

Furthermore, another member linked this lack of support directly to team performance. This is an important consideration as leaders depended on members to achieve certain outcomes (reliance-based trust) as discussed in section 6.4.1.

> *"…I think definitely the people in Dubai are getting more support than us, it's a fact. Their numbers are even better than any of us so it can't be a coincidence. (B4M3)*

This last point was supported by the leader in question who was clearly frustrated with the difficulties associated with leading a hybrid team and the inability to form a connection and strong team culture:

> *"…I think also that a big difference between the people here and the people that I manage remotely I was able to make a connection between them here, so I feel the team here is more strong as a team than the team there it's eh (sounds of frustration)… they are not able to connect, when the manager is not there the connection is very difficult between the team members they don't feel this (team culture)..." (B4L)*

This leader was not alone in expressing his frustration with the challenges involved in leading hybrid teams. Such challenges were more pronounced in ORGB and ORGC where hybrid teams were more common and the member experience profile was lower. Leaders were aware that remote members could feel less supported and they cited the efforts that they made to try to show their support:

> *"…I'm conscious of well that you probably need to make a bigger effort with those two in Barcelona to make them feel basically part of the same team and getting the same as that they get the same level of attention …" (C9M1)*

Specifically, these efforts related to how they ran Skype meetings, their availability to remote members on various communications platforms and visiting remote members in person. The importance of such F2F meetings was a common theme with participants citing a wide array of benefits over and above video conferencing. Both leaders and members cited the importance of F2F when seeking to go ‘beyond the agenda’, developing a deeper level of knowledge of the other, but also providing a greater level of support, including the provision of coaching and career advice, all of which they linked to trust (see section6.2)[2].

While leaders across all three organisations made efforts to support remote members of hybrid teams, organisations differed in their approach. In ORGC two of the leaders of hybrid teams cited that their virtual members had local management support. This was also the case in ORGA but it seemed to be less effective or slower to happen in ORGB. Participants suggested that such local management support went some way to reducing the issues of support cited above. It is worth noting that members from ORGB were far more vocal about the issues of hybrid teams. This may be explained by the fact that these members were in general far less experienced than virtual workers in ORGA and ORGC and perhaps in need of greater support, as discussed in section 7.2.2**.**

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[2] F2F communication is only referred to in this chapter in the context of structures. As F2F communication is a major theme of the research it is covered in further detail under a separate research objective in chapter eight.

Matrix Structures

While the aforementioned hybrid teams presented difficulties for both leaders and members in developing trust, matrix structures where members were reporting to more than one leader presented additional challenges where members were faced with juggling multiple priorities and their loyalty was sometimes questioned. However, this situation also provided an opportunity for leaders to demonstrate support and protection (benevolence) towards members. This was highlighted in three separate dyads, where leaders helped members to balance conflicting priorities and expectations of other leaders and protected them where there was conflict. The quote below is from a member who had high trust in her leader. She stated that her leader was very supportive and helped her to navigate the complexities of matrix reporting:

> *"…(leader) supports me a lot in terms of prioritizing… sometimes things are not black and white… so he supports me on the way that 'let me know when you want me to step in'. so he leaves it up to me… and we have done that."* (A3M2)

In this quote the member highlights how the leader had offered to step in when needed. However, this leader, along with others, gave specific examples of times when they had actually stepped in to support and protect a member, for example:

> *"… he was giving (member) a bit of a hard time about all the travel and I'm like 'hang on a second' …he's sensitive to the fact that (member) works for me, sometimes you have to tell (him), …'this is the way it needs to be done, back off' and he does eventually".* (A1L)

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented findings in relation to research objective two which sought *to establish the personal, relational, extra-relational and contextual mechanisms which affect leader-member trust in a virtual environment.* Three major themes influenced virtual leader-member trust, aside from behaviours, namely: personal mechanisms, dyadic mechanisms and extra-dyadic mechanisms. Disposition played a role in shaping leader-member trust, with three unique dispositional profiles identified. Findings relating to experience and self-efficacy show that individuals with experience of virtual leadership could be more adept at building trust with members and that inexperienced members often required higher levels of support than the virtual leader could offer, therefore potentially impacting trust levels on the benevolence factor. Both leaders and members looked for evidence of values, including genuine humanity towards others, and suggested that these might be more important in virtual environments.

High trust relationships were characterized by a number of mechanisms which were mutual between parties, specifically: felt trust, reliance, openness and benevolence. The importance of connection and alignment for dyadic trust was also cited by many participants. While trust was high in many the dyads, it was clear that trust developed at a different pace in different dyads. Furthermore, the nature and level of trust was found to vary across dyads. While this was a study of sales dyads members occupied different roles and these required different levels of trust. While leaders sought to build strong relationships with all members, they required a much higher level of trust in people managers who reported to them, along with members in sales operation/excellence roles. In some cases this influenced the recruitment process and their reliance on third parties before making a hiring decision.

Aside from a small number of cases leaders did not actively seek third party insights during the hiring process. However, in a number of cases someone was referred to them by a senior third party. Members, on the other hand actively engaged with contacts to find information on the leader at the early stages of the recruitment process. Across the dyads who participated in this study third parties played a significant role, impacting almost every dyad in some way.

A range of organisational mechanisms were identified as having the potential to impact leader-member trust in virtual teams. While there were variations in terms of the communication platforms and the efficacy of same, the lack of specific training for virtual members and leaders, which could help them to develop relationships, was consistent across all three organisations. Lastly, the choice of team structures influenced trust levels, with particular challenges relating to matrix structures and hybrid teams. One such challenge is the lack of F2F contact with remote team members, in comparison to co-located colleagues who could feel disadvantaged and unsupported. Leaders of such teams highlighted the efforts they went to in order to build trust and many of these efforts related to communication, which is the final sub-theme of the Dyadic Mechanisms theme and the focus of the third and final findings chapter.

CHAPTER 8: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 3 (COMMUNICATION)

8.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings relating to the study's third research objective which was *to explore the effect of communication on VT leader-member trust.* Communication was identified as a sub-theme of the dyadic mechanisms theme (see figure 7.1), its role in dyadic trust development being emphasised by both leaders and members throughout all three organisations. While mutual openness was discussed in section 7.3.1, this chapter focuses on communication skills, mode and frequency. The chapter begins with a discussion on the communication skills required to build trust; findings in relation to virtual communication channels are then analysed before a detailed examination of face to face (F2F) communication and its role in influencing trust in virtual dyads.

8.2. Communication Skills Required of Virtual Leaders

The impact of both reliance and expectation alignment on leader-member trust was discussed in the previous two chapters. Leaders were reliant on members to help them achieve goals but members needed clarity around leader expectations if they were to demonstrate their reliability and trustworthiness. Leaders spoke of their efforts to drive clarity from the outset of, and throughout, relationships, aware of the added complications of communicating in a virtual context where there was more room for misinterpretation (A1M2). As such, the ability to communicate clearly was identified as a key skill for virtual leaders and a strong influence on trust within the virtual leader-member dyad, for example:

> *"… if your communication isn't very clear … in a virtual environment it will kill you…your employees just won't really understand what you are trying to get at …you can be very quickly into that vicious circle where you think you've told them something and they think you've told them something different or ye know you expect them on the call, they are making excuses and suddenly you go into a distrust type of relationship…" (A3L)*

The link between supportive leader behaviours and trust in the leader was discussed in section 6.2.1. However, members noted that in order to provide strong levels of support virtually, leaders needed to be available to them when needed. As such, leader availability had an important impact on trust and was cited widely by members, including the member below who highlighted the importance of feeling their leader's proximity (perceived proximity) and availability for support as needed:

> *"I think you have to be more connected…availability is the most important thing but the next thing is that they understand that you are there for them it's not about physical presence, it's about me managing you and you have all my support so if an employee knows that his manager has his back whether he is in an office or the virtual world that will be a huge benefit so it's about the openness, it's about the availability, the trust … how you make sure that your employee sees you as if you are sitting next to them."* (B5M2)

Other members suggested that they needed access to their leaders *'many times of day, like 1 minute - five minutes'* (A3M2) or for *'very short 2-3 minute questions 2-3 times per day'* (B5L). It is worth noting that the importance of leader availability to support members was mentioned by the majority of participants including experienced members, one senior leader noting:

> *"…what's important is not … that I spend an hour with him every week… for me what's important is… when I send him a message or I call him that he call(s) me back within a few hours… just a minute … I need your brain… on this thing. (Clicking fingers)…" (C10L)*

In order to provide such support, leaders used a wide variety of communication channels, including telephone, teleconferencing/videoconferencing, instant messaging (IM), email, WhatsApp and F2F meetings. While participants noted that the choice of communication channel differed depending on the situation and type of support required, with IM for quick support and video conference to discuss issues in greater detail**,** it was important that the channel was appropriate for the purpose at hand. Leaders therefore needed to utilise multiple channels effectively to support members adequately:

> *"… we use … intensively … WhatsApp, … instant messenger…email …I'm in a con(ference) call … I have (member 1) who send me an IM, at the same time I have (member 2) who send me a WhatsApp, it's how you manage that…because people want …to consume your leader time more and more in an instant … way… It's not anymore about spending…. days with them… even hours. It's about being able to… serve the employee and to … guide the employee …" (C10L)*

This leader's effectiveness in leveraging multiple communication tools to support members and to create a sense of proximity was highlighted by one of his team members who noted that he was a stronger communicator than a previous co-located leader:

> *"…in Italy … I was able to work with people face to face every day… but my boss was not able to communicate … as good as (C10L) is doing. So even if I was about to meet her every single day …my communication is … really much more better with (C10L) …" (C10M3)*

Similarly, examples were mentioned in section 6.2.4 of members who had higher trust in their virtual leader than in co-located leaders due to the level of openness in the relationship. Together these findings indicate that leaders can be as effective, or indeed more effective at communicating their trustworthiness virtually.

This section has discussed the importance of virtual leaders being able to communicate clearly and to leverage communication channels effectively in order to make themselves available to support members. A third communication related skill identified as important for virtual leaders was the ability to create a connection with members, this is discussed in further detail in section 8.6.

8.3: Communication Skills Required of Members

Section 6.2.3 highlighted instances in which leaders coached members on visibility. Leaders and members across all three organisations noted the importance of VT members making additional efforts when it came to visibility, specifically in communicating their ability, work ethic and impact, for example:

> *"…I was always more appreciated when my manager was with me, in remote cases I found it difficult and manager was often like "ok you did what you did but … I don't see anything special or anything so how were you exceeding the expectation and how were you doing that good job"……that's the challenge… I have to work extra hard to make sure that people know the good stuff that I'm doing it wasn't the case before… if you are not good at marketing yourself and do a bit of ye know eh beating your own trumpet it becomes challenging… " (B5M4)*

While examples were provided of members who were good at ensuring visibility, this was a challenge for many members and had a negative impact on trust in certain leader-member relationships. In some cases a lack of visibility might have been due to a member not working hard enough, as suggested by one specific leader (B4L). However, in other cases the lack of visibility might have been due to poor communication skills. In one particular ORGC team the leader expressed his frustration with the lack of communication from two remote members and noted how he sometimes had to seek updates on these members from other leaders who shared an office with the members:

> *"…they need to share with you what they are doing. Otherwise you don't know anything… So it can happen that sometimes I'm calling the sales manager in (Location X) to know if (member) has done something you know… because I don't have this feedback because they are not really good at communications as in telling people what they are doing …" (C7L)*

One of the members was very experienced and did not feel the need to provide updates:

> *"…there's plenty of times he's come over and said you don't copy me on enough emails I need to know what's going on and I said look I'm just used to dealing with stuff myself, if I have an issue I'll tell you.." (C7M2)*

Taken together, these findings show that members' communication behaviour was impacted by three factors: communication skills (ability), a conscious decision to/not to communicate (attitude) and clarity/lack of clarity regarding expectations (alignment). Regardless of the reason, poor communication and visibility on behalf of members led to leader frustration and engagement in monitoring activities**.** While there was no evidence that the members were aware of such monitoring, the findings relating to autonomy in section 6.3.2 suggest that where members felt trusted they trusted in return and conversely monitoring could signal a lack of trust in the member and consequently damage trust in the leader. Therefore, virtual members needed to ensure that they were fulfilling the expectations of their leaders in relation to visibility and that they were highlighting their ability and achievements to others across the organisation.

8.4 Virtual Communications and the Impact on Trust

Many of the dyads had daily, weekly or monthly videoconference (VC) calls, either as a dyad or as part of a wider team. Email was used to communicate with people outside of the team, to share files or convey a message to a large group, it was used infrequently between leaders and members. Outside of scheduled calls, dyad members in all three organisations would largely communicate through phone, VC or instant messaging (IM) when they needed advice or an update. IMs, in particular seemed to be an important support platform for members in ORGA and ORGB where they were built into the communication platform.

When a more detailed discussion was required, a call or VC was usually preferable. The majority of participants appeared to be comfortable with VCs and this was evident during the research interviews which were largely conducted virtually:

> **"…**and so when you are in a 1 on 1 mode its perfect so you can have a conversation like we are having and it works… I mean if you have a good connection it's perfect. I can see you I can see your body language… I can see you are following my thoughts or not …so that's important… (A3M2)

However, participants highlighted some shortcomings of VCs, one of the biggest issues being the 'agenda' focused and time bound nature of VCs which was mentioned by a quarter of all participants, for example:

> *"…when you have your conversations through Skype … most of the time you pretty much stick to the agenda … you don't want to drift off too much and that's what you have in F2F environment is that you can elaborate more on other things besides the agenda you have for the meeting…" (A2M1)*

This focus on the agenda limited the type of discussions that usually happened when communicating F2F. For instance, participants mentioned the fact that strategic topics didn't always appear on a VC agenda (A1M1) or that the nature of VCs didn't always allow for more general discussions or discussions around the member’s development. While these issues were raised by numerous participants, the quote below captures the lack of general discussion and specifically the lack of focus on the member’s development:

> *“… (member) deserves to … grow in ORGC but … I’m not giving him the time to do that. … for example today I spend three hours with one of them my guy in Barcelona in a room working on that… I haven’t done that with (member) because you know it’s by phone so everything’s been quicker you know with just a call you’re speaking so you don’t you know you’re not sitting face to face talking about life or talking about the development plan.” (C7L)*

Such a focus on the agenda also left little time to connect. The importance of ‘connection’ in building dyadic trust was discussed in section 7.3.3, where people connect on a personal level. However, over a third or all participants mentioned connection related issues without being prompted. That is not to say that personal chat and efforts to engage ‘beyond the agenda’ does not happen in videoconferences, there were numerous examples of this happening, but it required conscious effort on the part of both leaders and members, as highlighted in the quote below:

> *“….I think people make an effort to chat and I think that ice break that you need also in a meeting. It happens also virtually you know…I'll give you an example today I had my team meeting… I got to know that it was snowing in Finland….that… some of my colleagues went you know from some place at the weekend so we spent …three or four minutes like sharing, chatting about whatever… so that happens …but it doesn't happen as naturally though…” (A3M2)*

This more personal communication was often driven by leaders and the leader of the member quoted above (A3L) noted that he always made time for that personal connection at the beginning of a call. The general need for greater effort when leading virtually was discussed in section 6.1 and leaders seemed to be very aware of the specific need to create and maintain connection. The ability to develop a connection with virtual members was a key communication skill required of virtual leaders who were seeking to build trust, with one leader highlighting this as a central aspect of virtual leadership:

> *”…managing virtual teams means for me at least it’s being able to establish virtual connection with your team and to get connected despite the fact that you are not always in the office … (C8L/C10M1)*

Leveraging VC Features to Create a Connection - Camera Usage

While connection might be more difficult to build virtually, participants noted that the camera feature on VC tools helped in this regard. The member quoted below, who previously led a virtual team, noted the fact that video allowed for more of a connection which helped to overcome the ‘cold’ nature of phone calls. It also allowed the leader to recognise when help was needed, which allowed for the provision of support, support being clearly linked to trust as discussed in chapter six.

> *“… if I could see them they could see me there's a bit more of a connection there is a bit more personable than just the phone call* .. you get a better feel if the person is struggling or you know they are having a bad day or something… So as a manager you can jump in and kind of help…” (C7M2)

Two leaders in ORGC reinforced this need to create a connection virtually and the fact that using the camera allowed for that. By insisting that their team members used the camera they helped to encourage this as a behaviour, for example:

> "… I think you need to be more intentionally showing that … you are supportive …creating the connection… I always ask my people to …put … the camera on… at least to see each other and that you must have …in my one to ones or in my team meeting… and I think … it's more structured … from …my perspective…" (C9L)

However, the use of the camera varied from leader to leader and from team to team. One member suggested that its use in ORGC was *"not really common… no one does it"* but goes on to *say "… we should do it more often I think it would be nice to see people more…"* (C11M1). This sentiment was echoed by participants across all three organisations, who valued the added sense of connection the camera could offer.

While the camera was deemed preferable for more personal discussions and to build connection, some participants deemed it unnecessary for business discussions (C10M3) or where there was an established relationship (A2L)**.** Furthermore, three individuals expressed their dislike of cameras, for example:

> ***"…*** *I don't like to use the video… because I am a shy … I use it sometime…If I not in a good shape as today in general I'm not using it. You know. I woke up at five o'clock I went to bed late really late last night so I mean might be …" (C10M3)*

In one dyad, the leader believed in the benefits of the camera to build connection and bemoaned the fact that the member would not use the camera.

> *"…when I'm doing a team meeting I'm asking them to put on the video and we are all around the same table and … I don't know … why but for example (member) doesn't want to turn on his video…" (C7L)*

The member in question noted that he simply didn't like the camera but didn't seem to have clearly communicated this to his leader. This is a further example of a lack of clarity impacting upon a relationship, as discussed in sections 7.3.4 and 8.2.

> *"… I dodge mirrors… So I'm not happy going on to a video camera...It is just a personal preference with myself, I'm not comfortable on camera at all…" (C7M1)*

A small number of participants suggested that preference for the camera may be culturally linked with certain cultures simply not liking the camera:

> *"…culturally, Americans like using the video… but a lot of Europeans don't like using the video…" (A2L)*

> *"…I tried to develop the whole video part of it - some people hated it like the French guys hated it the Germans loved it…" (C7M2)*

8.5 The Value of Face to Face (F2F) Communication

Almost three quarters of all respondents argued for the importance of F2F communications. Described as 'high value communication' (A1L) and as irreplaceable by virtual tools (B5M4), one leader (C8L/C10M1) went so far as saying that he simply would not be able to do his job without F2F communication.

> *"...I would say if I was not able at least to travel and have some F2F I will not be able to do what I am doing ..."* (C8L/C10M1)

So aside from the agenda focused nature of calls/ videoconferences (VCs) what is so different about F2F communication, when videoconferencing allows people to physically see each other, often on large screens? While some participants suggested that VCs were fine for one to one meetings, participants across all three organisations stated that it was harder to see reactions and emotions, with one participant suggesting that VCs only capture about 30% of body language (C10L). A number of participants mentioned specific physical benefits of being able to look another person in the eye (C11M1, B5M4, A2M1, B5M2) or being able to pick up on other aspects of body language:

> *"Yeah, I mean I think you can read someone's face you know when you are sitting in front of them you can look into their eyes I mean you can look into their eyes through a video camera as well but you don't have the 3D version of the things ... when someone is talking through his facial expression not only facial expression ..." (B5M4)*

8.5.1 F2F, Connection and Trust

While VCs were seen to be very agenda focused, informal communications over coffee or lunch allowed for a greater level of connection…

> *“…you can have informal meetings and you can nurture better connections and that's the big challenge in virtual teams to create this connection and to manage this connection with your team…” (C8L/C10M1)*

…without the feeling of having limited time.

> *“…you don’t have the sensation of … having a limited time. You know … if we would have also three hours between me and you to talk… We would have always the feeling that the three hours will finish and then we will need to I don’t know reschedule another three hours… when you are in person …the reality is the same because … you have your agenda, you plan three hours and then when the three hours are finished are finish, but the feeling that you have is different...” (C10M3)*

This last participant (C10M3) noted how F2F communication was more emotional in nature and simply felt different. This point was reinforced by participants across all three organisations, who also mentioned that there was something inherently human about F2F communication, for example:

> *“ …it (F2F) of course has an added value I mean …it's actually something... related to humans when you meet someone face to face it definitely feels different than meeting virtually…”* (B5M1)

This point was captured by one member who cited the example of communicating with a close friend F2F versus communicating with them virtually:

> *"…people love to communicate with each other physically and love to see each other. So imagine that for example you are you have … your best friend who … is sitting elsewhere than the country you're in. Even if you talk everyday it's not always the same as when you see him every day…"* (C9M2)

Central to that sense of connection is a personal knowledge of the other person and participants across all three organisations argued that F2F made it easier to get to know others, learning about their private lives and building up a deep knowledge of the other which could lead to trust. In the sample quote below the leader refers to this deep knowledge as a form of intimacy, which he positions as central to trust:

> *"…to really get trust you do need intimacy you only get intimacy when you spend time with people … face to face … so even in a regional virtual environment you always have to strive for some point where you can get intimate …" (A3L)*

8.5.2 The Timing of F2F Communication

Participants argued that while virtual communications were fine for most day to day tasks, F2F really mattered more for connection, alignment and accelerating the way in which they worked with others (A3M2). Given such benefits, participants stressed the need for F2F at an early stage of the relationship noting that it could be difficult to establish a relationship virtually:

> *"I must say hitting off … a relationship is much more difficult through skype calls …I also learned that … once you met the people … physically it helps a lot for the relationship … further on…" (A1M1)*

In fact one participant argued that in order to *"…have a constructive virtual relationship… you need to first construct one physically…"* (A2M2). Early F2F was considered by numerous participants to be crucial as it allowed people to form a connection from the outset and to really get to know the other dyad member, their stage or life, their expectations and career aspirations, so that the relationship could then develop from there. The leader quoted below was particularly insistent on meeting new hires F2F at an early stage and connecting with them:

> *"… you make some time for that personal connection right so that's very important… it's just simple things, I always will try … at the beginning to spend some face to face time … and I will generally … ye know very deliberately when I do that, say "ye know look before we get into all of this let's actually just say who we are, say who are and what stage we are at life … and career …ye know what's important to us and where are we coming from generally ye know …" (A3L)*

Furthermore, the participant quoted below cautioned about leaving the initial F2F meeting too long as barriers to trust might develop:

> *"…I would suggest that any virtual team or any virtual person … as soon as possible to have that get together … whether you do that immediately within a few weeks of*

> *someone starting actually having that connection ye know …that kind of f2f that's really crucial if you leave that for a long time the trust and the barriers will be strong I'd say so…" (A2M1)*

While referring above to his relationship with a leader, the same member went on to discuss the positive role F2F communication had in transforming a second relationship with one of his reports:

> *"… we did go for a few months having calls still ye know she was still very shy, very reserved but by the time we had a visit to country spent one evening with her sort of socially personally at an event, next call I spoke to a different person ye know she was more confident, talking and actually articulating … over a period of time actually now it's a good conversation…" (A2M1)*

In this example the member was reluctant to share information and have open conversations where she voiced her opinions, which suggested an unwillingness to be vulnerable to the leader in disclosing information, in other words an unwillingness to trust. This example is only one of many provided across all three organisations of F2F having a transformational impact on relationships, suggesting that a F2F meeting at an early stage of relationships helped to set expectations and provide a platform for the relationship to develop.

However, participants also suggested that established relationships could be further strengthened as a result of ongoing F2F communication. The quote below captures this positive impact on existing relationships. Similar situations were mentioned by participants in each of the three organisations.

> *"… sometimes I don't meet somebody for a quite a while and after a while we meet each other in the subsidiary or face to face and that always gives an extra dimension to the relationship … It's very strange, because I see you now (over VC) and you say ok this is ok but I always experience that once you met somebody face to face its always beneficial for the relationship…" (A1M1)*

Furthermore, a number of leaders mentioned that impact of visits to regional hubs on trust, as members appreciated the efforts that leaders went to in demonstrating benevolence towards them, for example:

> *"…I get the impression that the effort is appreciated on their side, that okay you're flying over…You're spending time away from your family and you're spending time with them. You know and I think that that probably goes back to that trust you know that kind of bond there as well that it enhances that you know when you when you are willing to kind of go the extra mile just to make sure that they are happy and they're okay…" (C9M1)*

Frequency of F2F to build and maintain trust

While participants were largely aligned on the importance of initial F2F communication, they differed in their views on the required frequency of subsequent F2F meetings. Even participants within the same team differed widely with one member suggesting a monthly F2F (B5M3) and another suggesting 1 F2F per year (B5M1). Certain experienced participants argued that regular F2F was beneficial but not essential once the relationship and a level of trust had developed:

> *"…I think the start of the relationship it's very important … Once the initial f2f has happened and like I said it's quite important I don't think that a regular f2f is necessary anymore, it's beneficial but it's not that necessary anymore…" (A1M1)*

One member (also a leader) noted that once a relationship had developed his focus would then turn to nurturing the relationship:

> *" …if I hired somebody else or took somebody else on in Barcelona eh a natural thing to do would be to again spend …probably … once every … five or six weeks you know for a period of time again... but for now I think … we have a good relationship …there is trust.. they know what they're doing as well… for me it's more a case of nurturing that now rather than you know… " (C9M1)*

However, leaders did acknowledge that more regular F2F meetings may be required in certain circumstances. Aside from demonstrating support for members, as highlighted above, visiting regional offices was deemed to be important for leaders seeking to understand a unique local culture or of increasing their visibility of local operations. The need for F2F could also depend on the member's experience levels and need for support (see section 7.2.2) and also the team structures within the organisation (see section 7.4.4).

8.5.3 Nature of F2F Communication

While being co-located allowed for more informal conversations, the value of socialising F2F and of spending intense periods of time together to brainstorm was raised by leaders and members alike. In some cases periods of travel allowed for the deepening of relationships, specifically the social aspects of such travel with dyad members eating meals and having drinks together and spending time to get to know each other, for example:

> "… ye know after full days of meeting with partners and customers we actually ye know have a quick drink or even ye know sit in the hotel lobby and get to know each other, actually breaks the ice and makes the relationship a lot stronger and which means you can continue better virtually …" (A2M1)

While travelling together was mentioned by participants in the majority of the ORGA dyads, more general social interaction was mentioned by members across all three organisations. For many, it was periods of social interaction that usually occurred when the leader visited regional offices that really helped people to bring relationships to the next level, for instance:

> *"… so we spend like three hours speaking on you know the things that we wanted to build together in the areas that he was championing. …we just you know … aligned our minds…" (A3M2)*

Members highlighted the importance of this time for the leader and member to get to know each other on a personal level, for instance:

> *“..... you talk about business as usual (on calls) but there be no chance (to get to know the other person)... and that happens when that manager comes to the deal and has face to face and we go out for a social event and 'oh you like that book, you like that pie, even though we have been working together for years but he didn’t know that aspect of my life or his life … and you don't call each other just to have a chat to catch up. Whereas if you're in the office together you might bump into each other and talk no business but just talk about football last weekend or this afternoon…” (B5M2)*

In fact, about a fifth of members described how such F2F communication with leaders led to a feeling of friendship, such was its impact, for example:

> *“…I won't say we can't be really friends if we talk just on the phone everyday or on instant messaging, but when you see the person, I don't know you go out for one day during the week that you're visiting Dubai it creates a sort of friendship or even if it’s not going to go on to friendship you like the person in front of you, you laugh, you talk about stuff other than work, so after that it tends to collaborate with them inside work…” (B4M3)*

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings relating to the study’s third research objective which was *to explore the effect of communication on VT leader-member trust.* Dyadic trust was strongly influenced by the ability of leaders and members to communicate effectively. Specifically, participants highlighted the need for leaders to be able to effectively manage a range of communication tools for two purposes: firstly to communicate with clarity which helps to ensure alignment and secondly to provide timely support to members and create a feeling of proximity. Such support, and availability to provide same, was strongly linked to trust. For their part, members needed to be adept at showing their visibility, ability, work ethic and impact. While this was not required to the same extent in co-located relationships, virtual leaders were operating with much less visibility. Members' unwillingness to maintain visibility caused issues and had the potential to damage trust in relationships.

While the majority of participants seemed to be very comfortable with virtual communication tools, many bemoaned the 'agenda-focused' nature of phone calls and videoconferences, in comparison to F2F meetings where they were far less conscious of time and where the conversation could segue into different areas. While the use of the camera on VCs helped to create a sense of connection, it was by no means adopted consistently. Furthermore, participants argued that despite the camera, VCs could not replicate F2F communication when it came to reading body language and emotions.

F2F communication was regarded by many as high value communication, which was more human in nature and allowed people to connect and to get to know each other. There were many instances of F2F communication having a transformational impact on virtual relationships. While most agreed that F2F communication was required at the outset of a relationship, there were differing views on the frequency of F2F communication thereafter. These differences in opinions seem to reflect the fact that people differed in their experience levels and their need for support. Lastly, the specific nature of F2F communication was cited as important, both leaders and members highlighted the value of social communication over food or drinks, either when travelling together or when the leader visited a virtual member for a period of time. Such communication provided an opportunity for people to connect on a personal level to align their thinking, both of which were linked to trust.

The findings presented in this chapter build on the previous findings relating to mutual openness and together these findings highlight the various ways in which communication can impact upon trust in leader-member dyads. While behaviours such as openness help to demonstrate trustworthiness and trust, mutual trust is only realised when both parties communicate in a positive manner. In many instances positive communication behaviours taken by leaders at the outset of relationships, such as openness, led to reciprocation. Therefore, it is not just the behaviours of one dyad member that creates trust, but the interaction of behaviours within a relationship that lead to high levels of mutual trust. The findings also suggest that effectiveness of communication in building trust can be impacted by a number of mechanisms including ability, values (willingness to make an extra effort to bridge the virtual communication divide), attitude (towards camera usage), alignment of expectations (regarding communication frequency and visibility) and communication mode (which can influence both topics of communication and how communication is perceived).

The next chapter discusses the findings in relation to the extant literature.

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study in the context of the extant literature. The findings discussed in chapters six through eight are presented in a new framework for VT leader-member trust (figure 9.1). Informed by field research which captures both leader and member perspectives, this study makes a unique contribution to the trust and virtual teams literatures and comes at an important time as countless organisations around the world have moved to virtual working at short notice due to the outbreak of Covid19.

The chapter begins with a discussion on trust development in a virtual environment, the level of trust identified in the participating dyads and the importance of f2f communication in to trust building. The focus then turns to the time dimension of trust development and the personal mechanisms which influence trust at the early stages of a relationship, and as a relationship matures. The behaviours which signal both trustworthiness and trust are then discussed followed by the virtual leadership style best suited to trust building. Following recommendations for organisational actors seeking to influence trust development in VT leader-member dyads, the chapter concludes by addressing the limitations of the study and outlining areas for future research. Throughout the discussion, when each factor is initially mentioned, the reader will be directed to the corresponding categories in figure 9.1 using a numbering system, for example **(1)** refers to dyadic mechanisms. Concluding comments are provided in section 9.11.

9.2 Building Trust Virtually

There has been considerable debate in the literature about whether it is possible to develop trust at a distance. Numerous authors have stressed the importance of F2F encounters for both building trust and repairing shattered trust (Jackson, 1999; Jarvenpaa and Leidner 1999, Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005; Wheeler, 2018). Some researchers have pointed to the need for physical proximity in order to facilitate quality communication and engagement between leaders and members (Bass, 1990) arguing that leader-member trust is more likely in F2F relationships (Howell and Hall-Merenda, 1999). Other research has identified trust levels in virtual teams, similar to those identified in co-located teams (Walther, 1995; Kirkman *et al.*, 2002). However, much of the extant research has been conducted within member-member dyads and simulated laboratory settings, with limited empirical studies examining leader-member trust and still fewer taking a bi-directional focus or focusing on leader-member trust in virtual sales teams. This study, along with providing a detailed framework for virtual leader-member trust, specifies behaviours and actions which build trust in the virtual leader-member dyad.

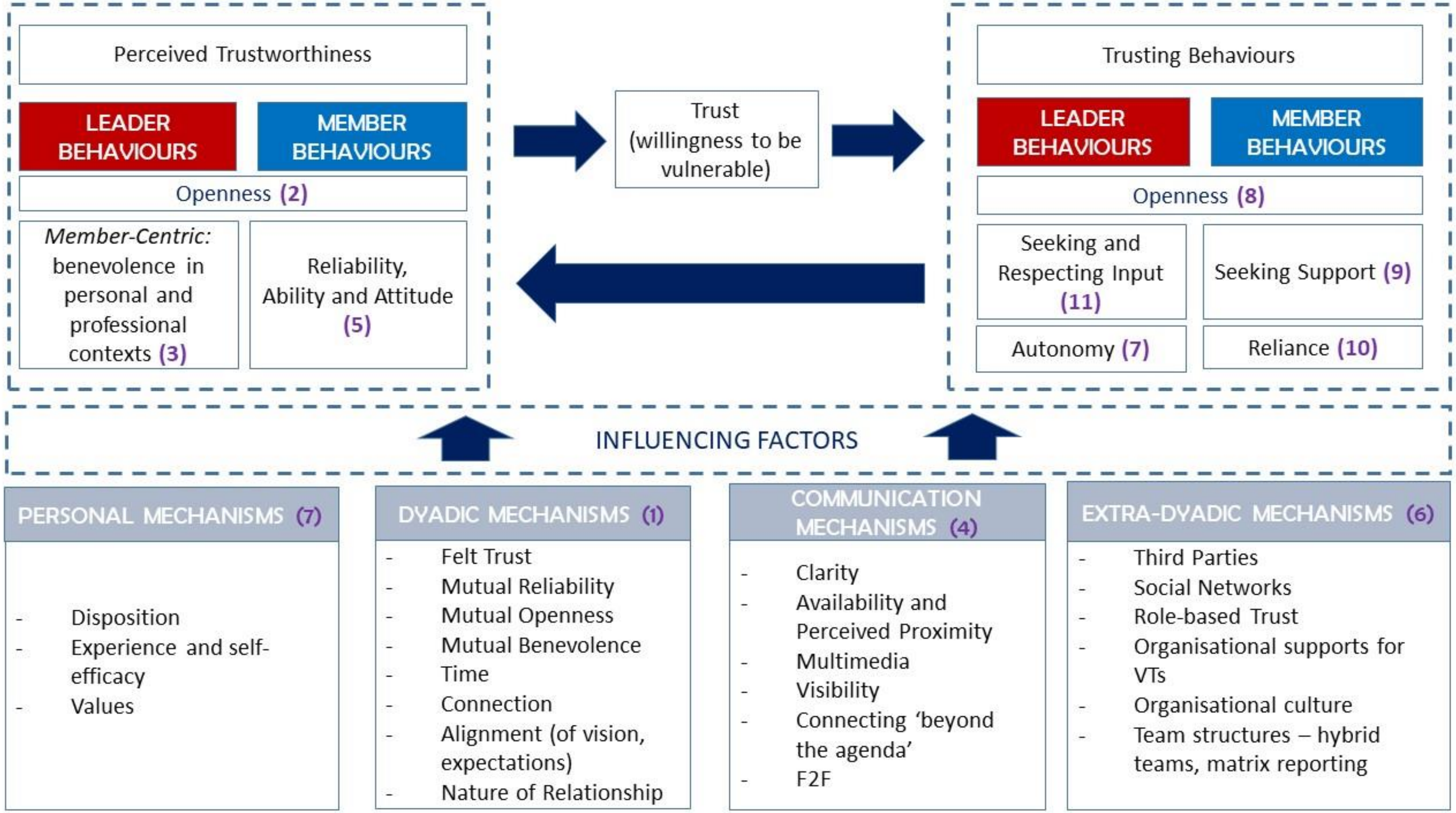
Perceived Trustworthiness
LEADER BEHAVIOURS
MEMBER BEHAVIOURS
Openness (2)
Member-Centric: benevolence in personal and professional contexts (3)
Reliability, Ability and Attitude (5)
Trust (willingness to be vulnerable)
Trusting Behaviours
LEADER BEHAVIOURS
MEMBER BEHAVIOURS
Openness (8)
Seeking and Respecting Input (11)
Seeking Support (9)
Autonomy (7)
Reliance (10)
INFLUENCING FACTORS
PERSONAL MECHANISMS (7)
- Disposition
- Experience and self-efficacy
- Values
DYADIC MECHANISMS (1)
- Felt Trust
- Mutual Reliability
- Mutual Openness
- Mutual Benevolence
- Time
- Connection
- Alignment (of vision, expectations)
- Nature of Relationship
COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS (4)
- Clarity
- Availability and Perceived Proximity
- Multimedia
- Visibility
- Connecting 'beyond the agenda'
- F2F
EXTRA-DYADIC MECHANISMS (6)
- Third Parties
- Social Networks
- Role-based Trust
- Organisational supports for VTs
- Organisational culture
- Team structures – hybrid teams, matrix reporting

Figure 9. 1: A Framework for VT Leader-Member Trust

This study revealed high levels of bi-directional trust in the majority of virtual dyads, despite varying levels of F2F contact. These high trust relationships were characterized by mutual benevolence and openness, felt trust (strongly influenced by openness, respect and autonomy), a sense of connection with the other, alignment of expectations and mutual reliability **(1)**. In fact, a number of members mentioned that their level of trust in their leader was higher than in other co-located leaders. Several reasons were given for this, including leader openness **(2)**, the leader's member-centricity **(3)** and the leader's effective use of communication tools to ensure availability and perceived proximity **(4)**. Therefore, trust is not only possible in virtual leader-member dyads, it can actually be stronger than in co-located relationships.

Previous research has distinguished between cognitive trust, influenced by our beliefs about the trustworthiness of another, and affective trust which is more emotional in nature and influenced by feelings of reciprocal care and concern (Lewis & Wiegert, 1985; Cummings and Bromiley, 1996, McAllister, 1995; Lewicki et al., 2006). While this study finds support for cognitive forms of trust, such as openness and reliability, it is clear that benevolence is central to high trust leader-member dyads and the most important basis of leader trustworthiness – virtual members were united in expressing their desire for member-centric leaders. The importance of connection or chemistry **(1)**, which is more affective in nature, was also clearly highlighted. McAllister (1995) proposed that cognition-based trust was a necessary pre-cursor of affect-based trust, given a person's need to be confident in the reliability and dependability of another before investing emotionally in the relationship. While some of the relationships began with a more cognitive assessment of the other dyad member's openness and ability **(5)**, some participants reported feeling a sense of chemistry and emotional connection from the very beginning of the relationship.

High levels of relational-based trust (Rousseau *et al.,* 1998) were evident in a number of dyads and identification-based trust (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996) was evident where dyad members stated their alignment regarding vision and ability to act on behalf of the other. In one specific dyad, such high trust developed despite extremely low trust being expressed by one dyad member at the outset of the relationship. This dyad, along with other dyads where trust breaches were repaired, shows that trust repair is possible in virtual environments, despite previous research pointing to challenges in this regard (Bierly, Stark and Kessler, 2009).

Previous studies have highlighted challenges relating to virtual leadership (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002; Malhotra, Majchrzak and Rosen, 2007; Savolainen, 2014; Zuofa and Ochieng, 2017). Leaders in this study were uniform in their view that virtual leadership is different and that greater effort is required. Leaders who are not genuinely benevolent and who do not reflect on the needs of members may find it very difficult to build trust with remote team members. In this study remote members on hybrid teams **(6)** often felt at a disadvantage to those members co-located with the leader. This aligns with previous research which identified problems in semi-virtual teams (Webster and Wong, 2008; Malhotra, Carman and Lott, 2001). However, leaders in this study were very aware of such issues and worked hard to bridge the physical divide. This was noticed, and appreciated by members, and prevented potential damage to trust levels.

9.3 How Virtual is Virtual – The Role of Face-to-Face (F2F)

It has been argued that most virtual teams have some level of F2F communication (Breuer *et al.,* 2020) and this was the case for all teams within this study. Research has also identified F2F communication as critical to trust building (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Andres, 2002; Schaubroeck and Yu, 2017) with studies highlighting the importance of such F2F communication at an early stage of the relationship (Clark, Clark and Crossley, 2010). While the frequency of F2F communication varied between dyads such communication was highlighted as critical by both leaders and members **(4)**, with some leaders claiming that they could not do their job without it. Among participants, there was general consensus that F2F communication should happen at the outset of the relationship and then on an as needed basis. F2F contact, especially of a social nature, helped to develop strong connections, with participants reporting a step change in relationships following a period of F2F communication. This finding supports previous research (Powell *et al.,* 1996) which found a link between social relationships and related emotional closeness and trust within team member relationships, and show that social relationships are also important to leader-member relationships. This transformational effect also provides some support for previous research which found that trust is difficult to develop virtually even with frequent communication (Chen *et al.,* 2011; Aubert and Kelsey, 2003) – sometimes F2F is needed at the outset, as suggested by some participants, a physical relationship is sometimes needed before a relationship can develop virtually.

Numerous authors stress the importance of the nature and quality of communication (Iacono and Weisband, 1997; Holton, 2001; Hunsaker and Hunsaker, 2008) for building and maintaining trust. While participants were comfortable with virtual communication they regarded F2F communication as ‘high value’ communication which allowed for deeper levels of discussion beyond the ‘agenda-focused’ nature of VCs and facilitated the building and strengthening of connections. As such, these meetings, in line with the advice given by Handy (1995), were largely about getting to know each other. However, F2F meetings also allowed leaders to offer a deeper level of support, especially coaching and mentoring around career development (which often didn’t happen virtually). As such the level of F2F required may vary depending on the needs of individual members. While certain leaders felt that the need for F2F reduced once there was an established connection and trust in the relationship, members differed on their views about the required frequency of F2F communication. These findings suggest that VT leaders should make an effort to understand the exact needs of members, which may not be evident without speaking with them, so that they can tailor an approach to each individual member. Such an approach would help to ensure heightened levels of support and alignment of expectations.

Research suggests that virtual workers (both leaders and members) should strike a balance between task-related and personal information, including social and emotional information, if they wish to build trust (Zigurs, 2003; Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005; Monalisa *et al.,* 2008; Jawadi, Daassi and Kalika, 2013). While participants were generally very comfortable with virtual communication, some members or leaders were better than others at taking time to discuss non-agenda items during calls or to simply catch up without an agenda to build some personal connection. Members reported on the importance of this connection and on leaders showing that they cared about them as people. Also, the use of the camera, while largely seen as beneficial in helping with connection, was inconsistent. However, when the leader led the way by turning on their camera, or insisted on its usage, this heled to build connection and ultimately trust. These findings suggest that leaders have the power to influence certain aspects of dyadic communication with members which can lead to trust.

While there was some level of F2F communication in every dyad, communication was predominantly virtual in nature. Research has highlighted the need for frequent, clear communication in order to ensure clarity in virtual relationships (Avolio and Kahai, 2003) and to create a feeling of perceived proximity (O'Leary, Wilson and Metiu, 2014). This study provides support for the aforementioned studies, pointing to the need for virtual leaders to be able to utilise a variety of communication tools (Lengel and Daft, 1988) to drive clarity and to make themselves available to support members and in doing so create a sense of perceived proximity and support which enhances their perceived trustworthiness. However, members must also be proficient communicators to ensure that their performance and impact is visible. Such communication skills have a direct impact on trust levels in the virtual leader-member dyad.

9.4 Dyadic Trust Development - A Question of Time

Traditional trust models posit that trust in relationships develops slowly over time (Blau, 1964; Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Burt and Knez, 1996; Lewicki and Bunker, 1996)**.** However, support has also been found for the emergence of swift trust (Meyerson, 1996) including in VTs (Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner, 1998; Jarvenpaa and

Leidner, 1999). Trust models highlight many antecedents to trust and the role of disposition has been well documented (see figure 4.1) including in a number of studies which link disposition to swift trust (Robert, Dennis and Hung, 2009).

The influence of disposition on leader-member trust was evident in this study and three dispositional profiles were identified **(7)**. Those with a low trusting disposition (profile 2) took longer to trust, even when there was evidence of trustworthy behaviours and despite the presence of multiple positive third party recommendations **(6)**. This suggests that disposition can sometimes dominate at the outset of VT leader-member relationships and dyad members may have to be patient with certain colleagues who may simply take time to trust. Those with a high trusting profile (profile 1) believed in the general trustworthiness of others and tended to trust people from the outset of relationships. However, those categorized as profile three, while not believing people to be generally trustworthy, trusted for one of three reasons: out of necessity; because they believed in the reciprocal nature of trust; or due to their trust in the recruitment processes and general trustworthiness of colleagues. This last reason suggests the presence of category-based trust (Shapiro *et al.,* 1992) or in-group categorisation (McKnight *et al.,* 1998) whereby people are willing to trust those with whom they have a shared membership and perceive themselves in a common positive light (Duffy and Ferrier, 2003). However, this belief is also based on positive experiences dealing with colleagues**.** This finding supports views that trusting behaviour/ risk taking may be influenced by mechanisms other than one's general trusting disposition and separate to perceptions of another's trustworthiness (Whitener *et al.,* 1998). Furthermore, it highlights the impact of a strong culture (situational strength) **(6)** on disposition (Gill *et* *al.,* 2005). As someone with this third dispositional profile may or may not trust depending on the context, organisations have an imperative to create the type of environment which fosters trust.

Knoll and Gill (2011) found that disposition was related to trust in supervisor and trust in peers but not trust in subordinate. However, in this study both leaders and members were represented in each of the three dispositional profiles and there was evidence of certain leaders demonstrating trusting behaviours towards members from the outset of relationships, with others allowing little autonomy **(7)** at the outset but increasing such autonomy as trust developed. As such, this study finds that disposition can impact leader-member relationships both positively and negatively, can dominate other antecedents or can be outweighed by contextual mechanisms. Disposition can therefore play an important role in VT leader-member trust development.

In making an initial decision to trust, in the absence of first-hand knowledge of the other, individuals can also be influenced by substitutes such as role-based trust and third parties (Shapiro *et al.,* 1992; Kramer, 1990; Burt and Knez, 1996). The bi-directional nature of this study yields important information from both dyad members' perspectives. Members frequently consulted LinkedIn during the recruitment phase and this often led to positive perceptions regarding work experience, and in some cases influenced role-based trust **(6)**. Schoorman *et al.* (2007) argued that hierarchical power differences and asymmetry of information can influence initial risk taking as leaders have more information than members. However, the use of social networks **(6)** might be playing a role in rebalancing this situation. Not only did members consult LinkedIn but they actively consulted with third parties during the recruitment process to uncover information about potential leaders - the extent of modern social networks and interconnectivity is making such consultations easier and individuals need to be mindful of the influence on reputation on trusting decisions. In comparison, apart from receiving unsolicited referrals, leaders only actively looked for third party insights for specific roles that they deemed to be higher risk. These findings provide some support for Schoorman *et al.'s* (2007) observation that a leader is perhaps more likely to take a risk due to power differentials. These findings also highlight the significant role that third parties play in positively influencing leader-member trust and the nature of this influence, an important finding given the dearth of research into the impact of third parties on trust in this type of dyad.

Aside from dispositional and third-party influences, initial interactions helped to shape the nature of the relationship. More specifically, openness played a key role in trust development from the outset of the relationship and F2F communication was effective in allowing people to create a connection and a platform for trust. As previously mentioned, where F2F communication was missing from the outset of the relationship it sometimes took longer for relationships to develop. However, there was also evidence of trust development being negatively impacted by early critical incidents or leadership styles, which called into question the trustworthiness of individuals. While most challenges were eventually overcome, allowing trust to develop, the continued adoption of a task-focused (as opposed to member-centric) leadership style by one leader prevented the development of trust in at least three separate dyads (two direct reports and one senior leader). This was not down to the virtual nature of the relationships as there was ample opportunity for F2F communication within these dyads and the members in question had high levels of trust in other virtual leaders. The individuals concerned simply felt either a lack of benevolence towards them or a misalignment of values.

The aforementioned mechanisms largely impacted the early stages of relationships in this study. Once the relationships began in earnest (i.e. after the initial meeting) a range of other mechanisms became relevant. These are now discussed in the context of the extant literature.

9.4.1 Similarity

Research suggests that individuals are more inclined to trust people based on perceived similarity (Ferris *et al*., 1994; Tsui and O'Reilly, 1989) and that subordinates report higher levels of trust in leaders who they perceive as similar to themselves (Turban and Jones, 1988). Bauer and Green (1996) also found a link between personality similarity and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). This research finds that similarity in terms of personality can help dyad members to form a sense of connection **(1)** and in some cases this leads to higher levels of LMX. However, LMX was also evident in other relationships where personalities were extremely different. Furthermore, some dyad members enjoyed spending time with each other and socialising, which lends some support to previous findings that team members trust those with whom they laugh (Breuer *et al.,* 2020). Leader-member trust did not require shared personal interests, what mattered most to participants, particularly leaders, was that there was alignment regarding work goals and expectations **(1)**. Such alignment regarding objectives is one feature of identification-based trust (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996) which was evident in a number of dyads.

In support of previous research conducted at a team-member level (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Johnson and Cullen, 2002) this research found no link between national cultural differences and trust. Furthermore, there were no diversity related issues identified which is consistent with some previous studies (Krebs, Hobman and Bordia, 2006). The sample had a high male-female ratio so it is not known whether differences actually exist between genders but were not uncovered in this study. However, it was evident that dissimilarity and diversity of thinking and approach were identified as beneficial to many dyads, as they created unique perspectives and complementarity.

9.5 Leader Trustworthiness

Mayer *et al.*'s (1995) ABI model of trust has been supported in a plethora of studies both in co-located work settings (Colquitt *et al.*, 2007; Knoll and Gill, 2011) and in virtual teams (Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998). Previous research findings suggest that an employee's perceptions of a leader's trustworthiness may be based primarily on that leader's ability to satisfy their need for personal growth and advancement (Sue-Chan, Au and Hackett, 2012) or perceptions of benevolence (Meyerson *et al.,* 1996; Knoll and Gill, 2011). This study supports the aforementioned findings, identifying leader benevolence as the dominant influence on members' perceptions of leader trustworthiness. VT members want 'member-centric' **(3)** leaders who support them both personally and professionally.

Choi, Dixon and Jung (2004) found that by focusing on a sales person's development, rather than just performance, a manager may seem to have less interest in personal gain. In this study members noted their appreciation for sales leaders who focused their efforts on supporting team members above their own needs. Only one leader was seen to be focused on sales targets above members' development and members' trust in this leader was low as a result.

The importance of coaching was raised by both members and leaders across all three organisations with one leader believing strongly that virtual leaders must be coaches and mentors given the lack of physical co-location. One of the areas in which leaders coached their members was visibility, as they believed that virtual members needed to be visible across the organisation. Leaders sometimes helped with this by providing a platform for such visibility through their own network, referring their members to other senior colleagues as experts in specific areas. This was hugely appreciated by colleagues and positively influenced trust.

Members placed significance importance on leader openness, identified in previous studies as a form of integrity and clearly linked to trust (Gabarro, 1978; Jarvenpaa *et al.,* 1998; Henttonen and Blomqvist, 2005; Alsharo *et al.,* 2017). However, it is perhaps noteworthy that members emphasise the benefits of leader openness in assisting them in identifying their strengths and weaknesses so that they can improve their performance and career prospects, which again can be linked to benevolence. Furthermore, references to reliability, another integrity basis of trustworthiness (Mayer *et al.,* 1995) were largely related to the member's trust in the leader to support and protect them, again linked to benevolence. Therefore, the findings of this study clearly point to benevolence or a ‘member-centric’ approach to leadership, above all else, being central to members’ perceptions of virtual leader trustworthiness. In fact, numerous participants argued that leaders’ care and concern for members is more important in virtual environments and that this has to be genuine as members can feel a sense of humanity. As one leader noted, VT leaders who do not care ‘stick out like a sore thumb’ (A2L). The findings suggest that virtual leaders might have to make more of a conscious effort to demonstrate their benevolence or ‘member-centricity’ with one leader (C9L) arguing for such leaders to be more ‘intentional’ in showing care and concern for members.

Members rarely mentioned the ability basis of trustworthiness but leaders in this study were, for the most part, very experienced and in roles of significant responsibility in three of the world’s largest organisations. Therefore, the efficacy of the internal recruitment processes in appointing competent leaders could explain this finding in that members took for granted their leader’s ability to support and protect them due to their experience and seniority within the organisation. As previously mentioned, reputation and third parties played a role in influencing perceptions of ability, as well as benevolence, with members almost always referring to LinkedIn profiles and/or seeking insights from third parties during the recruitment process.

9.6 Member Trustworthiness

Previous studies found that leaders' trust in employees was primarily influenced by employees' ability and performance (Kramer, 1996; Wells and Kipnis, 2001; Knoll and Gill, 2011; Sue-Chan, Au and Hackett, 2012). This study found that perceptions of member trustworthiness were influenced by a combination of reliability, ability and attitude **(5)**. Ability was not cited as a serious concern, leaders were more interested in members' reliability to perform, their commitment and drive and their attitudes toward working on weaknesses where required. While ability was not mentioned as a core consideration, there was evidence of robust recruitment processes and as many of the members were internal hires, the leaders often had the opportunity to consult third parties where required.

Openness-related behaviours **(2)** play a key role in regard to members' attitudes and willingness to address performance gaps. The findings of this study build on the extant literature by taking a leadership view to explore different facets of openness. In general terms, leaders and members both regard similar openness-related behaviours as evidence of trustworthiness. However, leaders place a larger value on members who are open to both giving and receiving feedback. As well as linking to member performance, this can be important to VT leaders who have less visibility of the local conditions and need feedback on their ideas and plans for the team.

The frequent mention of openness by both members and leaders is notable given the fact that there was no specific mention of the term in any of the questions posed to participants. Openness could simply be more important in virtual relationships than co-located relationships, as alluded to by a number of participants. As previously mentioned, participants also mentioned that openness had allowed for the development of levels of trust higher than in certain co-located relationships.

Along with leaders needing to make a greater effort to build trust in virtual relationships, members can also play a role in this regard. For instance, members can ensure that they are behaving in an open manner, as defined above, and keeping the leader updated on their activity so that leaders feel they have some visibility of operations in remote locations. A lack of visibility or availability was identified as problematic for leaders and in some cases damaging to trust, as the leader questioned the member's work ethic or had to contact third parties to receive an update on a member's activity.

9.7 Trusting Behaviours and Felt Trust

Research suggests that leaders' reliance- and disclosure-related behaviours signify trust in members (Gillespie, 2003) and that such behaviours can influence members' felt trustworthiness (Brower *et al.,* 2009) which in turn can influence their trust in the leader. Support was found for both behaviours in this study. Openness (disclosure) plays a key role in signalling to a leader that a member trusts them **(8)**, with members willing to approach leaders for help **(9)**, often divulging sensitive and potentially damaging information in the process. Members also mentioned that they were willing to rely on leaders (reliance) **(10)** to support them and to take certain actions on their behalf, without having to remind them or check for progress. This might be made easier in dyads in which the leader is seen as highly benevolent and therefore likely to support the member when asked to do so.

In response to questions around felt trust, members clearly linked trust to openness and information sharing (disclosure). Regarding reliance-related behaviours, autonomy was a recurring theme with members noting that they felt trusted when the leader didn't look to know every detail of deals instead trusting them do their job and where leaders respected the views and expertise of members and consulted them when making decisions **(11)**. This last point supports previous research which suggested that leaders could enhance trust levels by involving members in decision making (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; Gillespie and Mann, 2004).

However, while in some situations autonomy might be given quite quickly, supporting the theory of Swift Trust (Meyerson *et al.,* 2006), in other cases autonomy replaced a more hands-on approach to leadership over time as the member developed or demonstrated their ability and trust emerged. Numerous leaders suggested that micromanagement wasn't an option for virtual leaders with some expressing their distinct dislike for this approach. Leaders who micro-manage and refuse to grant autonomy to members risk being viewed as task focused rather than member-focused. Such leaders will find it difficult to build trust with members and therefore may simply be unsuited to virtual leadership roles.

9.8 The Virtual Leadership Style Best Suited to Building Trust in Virtual Teams

Previous research has highlighted links between various leadership styles and trust. For instance, transactional leaders might be seen as trustworthy due to their perceived fairness, dependability and integrity (MacKenzie *et al.,* 2001; Dirks and Ferrin, 2002), while some of the same characteristics which influence who we trust – honesty, integrity, truthfulness – are the same values espoused by transformational leaders (Kouzes and Posner, 1987; Carlson and Perrewe, 1995; Bauman, 2013). It has been argued that transformational leadership is more closely related to trust (Dirks and Ferrin; 2002) and numerous studies have found links between transformational leadership and trust (Gillespie, 2004; Holtz and Harold, 2008), including studies of sales teams (Schwepker and Good, 2010). It is also argued that transformational leadership (rather than transactional leadership) might be required in order to build the type of trust needed for employees to reach their full potential (Jung and Avolio, 2000). Transformational leaders focus more on the relationship and on ensuring care and concern are present, along with making deliberate efforts to gain the trust of their followers.

A key feature of transformational leaders is their focus on developing strong relationships with employees. It is argued that such leaders (1) set out a clear and compelling vision and arouse a strong individual and team spirit (Bass and Avolio, 1995; Bass *et al.,* 2003), (2) put followers' needs before their own; (3) encourage followers to question traditional ways of doing things, encouraging innovation and creativity and (4) treat all followers individually but equitably and support their development (Bass and Avolio, 1995; Bass *et al.,* 2003).

The findings of this research suggest that highly trusted virtual leaders demonstrate many of the features of transformational leaders. (1) There was evidence of leaders working hard to outline their vision for the team and to set clear expectations, often going to great efforts to ensure that communication was clear. Once there was alignment of expectations within dyads, virtual working was a lot more effective. Efforts to build a team culture were cited by members and this was helped by leaders arranging for remote team members to spend time together in person, often in social settings, and setting up WhatsApp groups to foster a sense of team spirit.

(2) Members reported trusting leaders who prioritized their needs above their own, spending time supporting and protecting them and generally adding value for them, as highlighted in the aforementioned references to ‘member-centric’ leadership.

(3) Leaders highlighted the importance of seeking feedback from VT members where there is less visibility of operations on the ground in various locations. Furthermore, numerous examples were provided of VT leaders consulting members before making decisions or taking actions, evidence of respecting the views of members. As such, leaders were encouraging members to question operational tactics or strategies or the way in which they worked. However, there were no specific references to innovation or creativity.

(4) Treating all followers equally was particularly challenging in ‘hybrid’ virtual teams, where some members were co-located with the leader and others were in another location. Leaders were conscious of this issue and worked hard to try to treat everyone equally but this required additional effort and F2F interaction in order to go beyond the agenda focused nature of videoconferencing.

Pauleen (2003) suggests that leaders of VTs may require a different skillset than leaders of collocated teams. While the findings suggest that virtual leaders often have to work harder than co-located managers, if a leader is genuinely a member-centric and open person and they are willing to make a conscious effort to build trust through engaging in open conversations with members, granting them autonomy along with balancing daily availability (for quick queries from members) with F2F visits that should go a long way towards building high-trust, effective virtual working relationships. Furthermore, given the variation in terms of member requirements for F2F communication and support levels and the experience of remote hybrid team members, leaders would be advised to reflect on the needs of individual members.

9.9 Implications for Practice - What Organisations Can Do to Encourage Leader-Member Trust

This research identifies a number of areas in which organisations, or organisational actors other than the leader or member, can influence trust levels in this dyad. This section discusses such mechanisms and in doing so presents recommendations for organisations.

Research suggests that HR policies and procedures can impact upon trust levels within leader-member dyads (Whitener *et al.,* 1998). Numerous studies have focused on the equity of HR policies such as reward structures and performance management and the need for clarity (Pauleen, 2003; Clark, Clark and Crossley, 2010; Greenberg, Greenberg and Antonucci, 2007). Given the focus on 'member-centric' leadership, organisations should consider the efficacy of current performance management systems in driving appropriate behaviours in this regard.

The current study also highlights the role that recruitment practices can have in helping leaders and members trust others within the organisation. While organisations might be advised to consider dispositional profiles when hiring virtual workers (Clark, Clark and Crossley, 2010), this study highlights other important considerations for organisations looking to recruit VT leaders and members who will build trust in their relationships with colleagues. For instance, previous research has highlighted the importance of leader self-efficacy (Whitener *et al.,* 1998; Mishra, 1996) for trust and leaders in this study were on the whole very experienced and appeared to have high levels of self-efficacy. This was manifest in their willingness to engage in participative decision-making and to loosen controls (Whitener *et al.,* 1998), granting autonomy which positively impacted trust. As self-efficacy likely develops over time, and given the evidence of VT leaders reflecting on, and being willing to make additional efforts to improve their virtual leadership style - experience, conscientiousness and tendency towards reflection are important considerations when hiring VT leaders.

This study also highlights the importance of experience for VT members, as identified in previous research (DeRosa *et al.,* 2004). Both members and leaders pointed to difficulties in supporting and coaching inexperienced members with some leaders arguing that leading very inexperienced VT members would be almost impossible. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of hiring members with the right level of professionalism and drive to work independently without a co-located leader, similar to previous research which highlighted the need for a performance orientation (Townsend *et al.,* 1998). Therefore, careful consideration must be given when hiring people for virtual roles. The appropriateness of hiring inexperienced VT members may vary depending on the specific nature of the role and the management structures within the organisation, specifically whether there are local managers or supervisors in place to support (and if necessary monitor) inexperienced VT members.

Lastly, when it comes to assessing suitability for VT roles, organisations might consider individuals' values. This study finds support for previous research linking value congruence to trust (Jones and George, 1998), with participants highlighting the importance of humanity. Support is also found for previous research which linked values to several dimensions of trustworthy behaviour (Schwartz, 1992; Whitener *et al.,* 1998) – specifically the need for VT leaders to genuinely care about members and to place an emphasis on the development of members over themselves, along with demonstrating openness and honesty (integrity).

A second consideration for organisations relates to the learning and development (L&D) support provided to virtual team members and leaders. This study identified a lack of

L&D interventions tailored to those working in virtual dyads and that such initiatives could help to build trust levels and performance levels within leader-member dyads. While there was a lot of training for members, it tended to centre on productivity and sales skills, with little emphasis on communication or relationship development. Leadership initiatives, while plentiful, focused on general leadership skills and theories. While this content was no doubt relevant as leaders often had co-located reports, the current study highlights a range of areas unique to virtual leadership and the areas which require greater effort. It is important that virtual leaders reflect on such insights and learn from experienced colleagues as they seek to develop their virtual leadership skills. One area identified as crucial for VT leaders is coaching. However, participants mentioned the difficulties in providing coaching at a distance. Greater support for leaders in this regard would be beneficial.

A second area identified as important is communication. Organisations should ensure that virtual leaders are provided with the necessary L&D supports to develop their communication skills to a level where they can ensure clarity of expectations, availability and perceived proximity. Such training could inform leaders about ways in which they can make best use of communication modes to build trust and highlight the varying communication needs of members depending on their career stage. Members should be trained on the importance of openness, visibility (of the value they create and their achievements) and availability and how to create connection when communicating virtually.

However, this raises a third consideration for organisations – the need to provide additional supports such as communication platforms and travel budgets. Communication in one of the participant organisations was very disjointed with varying levels of adoption and a fair amount of confusion. It is essential that organisations make communication as seamless as possible. Furthermore, as F2F communication was identified as crucial to developing high trust relationships organisations need to support leaders in travelling to remote hubs/offices in order to build connection and trust at the outset of relationships, and periodically as required. With the advent of Covid19 travel will be reduced in the short to medium term (and maybe the longer term). As such, leaders will have to make effective use of limited opportunities for F2F communication with members in order to build and maintain trust, rather than focusing on activities which can be completed virtually.

The complex nature of global organisations with multiple products offerings and markets often necessitates the use of matrix reporting structures in which employees report to more than one leader. This study highlights that such structures can lead to conflicting priorities for VT members and to leaders having concerns about their loyalty. However, such situations can also provide an opportunity for leaders to demonstrate their benevolence towards members, with instances cited in this study of leaders stepping in to protect members and to help them to prioritise conflicting demands and heavy workloads. Organisations should consider the efficacy of matrix structures and hybrid teams, discussed throughout this chapter, and the potential impact of such team structures on trust.

9.10 Limitations and directions for future research

This study contributes to the trust and virtual team literatures, providing a number of fresh insights into VT leader-member trust and proposing a detailed framework. However, the study is not without its limitations and many of these limitations provide a basis for future research.

This study was focused on sales teams within three global organisations operating in the technology sector. While the study focused on dyadic relationships and questions were largely based on human interaction, it is difficult to know the impact of contextual mechanisms on the findings. Studies of dyads in different team types, within different organisational contexts, including different sizes of organisations in different sectors, are needed to test the generalisability of the findings. Furthermore, while the focus of this research was on internal institutional-based trust mechanisms, such as policies and procedures, future research could examine the possible impact of system- or institutional-based trust mechanisms which are external to the organisation. Such mechanisms may have a varying influence on leader-member trust depending on the nature of the team, organisation, industry sector or country.

Despite being identified as influential to trust development between members of VTs (Kayworth and Leidner, 2000; Maznevski and Chodoba, 2000; Monalisa *et al.,* 2008) national culture was not identified as an antecedent to leader-member trust. While participants came from a wide variety of different national cultures and commented on cultural issues between colleagues, there was no evidence that such differences influenced trust development. One explanation for this, is the fact that culture is broader than just national culture (Chao and Moon, 2005) and different cultural tiles may dominate the trust development process.

The sampling approach utilised in this study meant that the contact people within the organisations had an influence over the final team selection. While this could be coincidental the study did not identify many critical cases where low trust or distrust was present. As such, the research didn’t allow for a deeper investigation of the mechanisms which inhibit trust or lead to distrust. Further research into dyads where low trust or distrust are present would provide rich insights to supplement the findings of this study.

While not a key focus of this study, trust repair is an increasingly topical issue in the trust literature (e.g. Kim et al., 2009; Bachmann, Gillespie and Priem, 2015) and studies highlight the possible difficulties associated with trust repair in virtual contexts (Bierly, Stark and Kessler, 2009). A small number of instances of trust damage and repair were identified in this study and as such the findings provide support for the possibility of trust repair within virtual dyads. However, a more in-depth study of critical trust incidents within dyads would provide further information on trust repair against different types of trust breaches in different dyadic contexts.

Although an invite to participate was issued to both male and female participants the final sample had a much higher male representation, especially within the leader cohort. While, this is unsurprising given the gender gap within the sales discipline (Gartner, 2020) and the under-representation of females in leadership roles, the research on gender and trust suggest that there may be gender related differences in terms of trusting disposition or trustworthiness (Zeffane, 2018). As such, future studies should seek to ensure greater gender balance and to test for gender related influences on leader-member trust.

While this was a cross-sectional study the researcher sought to trace the development of trust over time. However, such an approach is dependent on the accuracy of participants' memory and their unbiased recollection of events. Longitudinal research into virtual leader-member trust development could provide further detail on each stage of the relationship and examine the impact of critical incidents in more depth. A variety of research methods utilised elsewhere in the trust literature, such as the critical incident technique (Munscher and Kuhlmann, 2012) or the diary method (Searle, 2012) might be particularly effective in this regard.

Varying levels of trust and LMX were identified within teams. However, the study did not focus on the impact of varying levels of LMX relationships on the wider team and on trust in the leader. Future studies could examine the impact of a member's trust in a leader when that member is not in the in-circle. Such research could also examine whether those on the 'outside' realise their position and whether that impacts upon Team-member exchange (TMX) (Wang and Hollenbeck, 2019) and trust with fellow team members who are perceived to be in the 'in-circle'.

This study identified a third unique dispositional profiles. Further research could examine the prevalence of this third dispositional profile utilising quantitative methods and seek to understand the trust-related decision making of individuals with this profile, perhaps through in-depth qualitative research.

Lastly, participants in this study highlighted the benefits of F2F communication over VCs, mentioning that F2F simply feels different and makes it easier to read facial features, body language etc. However, this research did not focus on these issues in depth. While the usage of VTs had been steadily increasing in recent years, Covid19 has led to widespread adoption and usage levels are likely to remain high at least in the short to medium term. Therefore, further research into how virtual communication can best achieve the trust building benefits associated with F2F communication would make a valuable contribution to the literature. The recent application of neuroscience (Zak, 2017) and physiognomy (Dean, 2017) to trust research open up interesting possibilities for novel approaches to researching trust building in a virtual context.

9.11 Concluding Comments

This study focuses on an area of increasing importance within organisations. As virtual work becomes more prevalent, especially with the advent of Covid19, organisations need to understand the various mechanisms which lead to higher levels of performance, balanced against their duty of care to employees. Trust has been identified as central to the success of virtual teams and the leader-member relationship is central in this regard. There is a growing body of literature which examines the effectiveness of virtual leadership or e-leadership and this study makes a valuable contribution in highlighting the leadership style which can contribute to high trust leader-member dyads. However, previous studies have been mostly unidirectional in nature, usually neglecting to seek leaders' insights into the trust building behaviours of members. As a result of the bi-directional focus, this study can provide empirically grounded guidance to leaders and members seeking to build high trust relationships with leaders and for organisational actors who may wish to support them.

The study finds that leaders, members and organisations all have a role to play in ensuring high-trust leader-member dyads. In short, virtual leaders need to be genuinely benevolent or 'member-centric', reflecting on members' needs and willing to make additional efforts to demonstrate their benevolence. They need to be open and willing to grant autonomy to members and respect their expertise. Lastly they need to be competent communicators so that members feel their proximity and know that they are available to support them.

For their part, members need to be open in their communication with leaders and open to improving where necessary so that leaders can rely on them. Both dyad members need to spend the time necessary to build a connection and to ensure alignment regarding expectations. They must also realise that some people simply take longer to trust and that they are often influenced by third parties. Organisations can play a key role in leader-member trust through their hiring practices, by supporting effective communication (tools and travel) and by offering L&D interventions tailored for virtual colleagues.

The framework for virtual leader-member trust (figure 9.1), along with the recommendations for organisations and researchers detailed in this chapter, provide a platform for further work in this important area. It has previously been claimed that virtual work has expanded at such a pace that management and leadership research and knowledge has struggled to keep pace. This issue is crucial as Covi19 has forced the ubiquitous adoption of virtual working and the need for organisations to reorganise and rethink workplace practices. Continued research involving organisational actors will help both academics and employers to bridge the knowledge gap and ensure high trust, highly effective leader-member dyads.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Number of new Codes

Participant	Number of new Codes
A1L	76
A2L	17
A3L	9
A2M1	12
A1M1	7
A1M2	2
A3M1	9
A3M2	22
B4M1	7
B4M2	10
B4M3	10
B5M1	10
B5M2	4
B6M1	3
B4M4	9
B5M3	4
B5M4	3
B4L	18
B5L	0
C7L	3
C8L/C10M1	2
C9L	5
C11M1	0
C8M1	2
C10L	0
C11m2	0
C7M1	0
C7M2	1
C11L/C10M2	0
C9M1	2
C9M2	0
C10M3	0

Appendix B: Video

This video was used to introduce the research and build rapport with participants in advance of the interviews

YouTube IE
Search
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
D·I·T
COLIN HUGHES
SENIOR LECTURER / PHD STUDENT
0:09 / 2:09

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qMwaey-el0

Appendix C: Member Interview Guide

Research Objective 1:	**To determine the specific behaviours which impact upon leader-member trust in a virtual environment**
Research Objective 2:	**To establish the personal, relational, extra-relational and contextual mechanisms which affect leader-member trust in a virtual environment**
Research Objective 3:	**To explore the effect of communication on VT leader-member trust.**

NAME: **VT EXP:** **TIME IN**
ORG: **TRUST:**
MANAGER: **LOCATION OF MGR:**
TIME WITH MGR:

#	**QUESTION WORDING**	**OBJECTIVE TOPIC**	**#**
	Tell me a little about your role		
1	How would you describe your relationship with your manager?	Relational mechanisms	2B
2	When did you first communicate? First impressions? 3rd party discussions/ reputation – did you speak with any colleagues, know anyone that had worked with your manager previously? LinkedIn? What impression did that give you of them as a person **AND** a manager? (Credentials/ role-base trust?) When you first began working together did you meet face-to-face straight away or after a time? Tell me about that first F2F meeting (what did you talk about?) 1st impression from F2F meeting – versus initial impressions pre- F2F – CHANGE?	Initial Interactions Extra-Relational mechanisms	2A 2C
3	How has your relationship developed over time? Tell me of any **crucial** moments in the relationship, either good or bad. **Was there a particular event or behaviour that made you say, I can trust this person?**	Relational mechanisms Behaviours – integrity	2B 1

	Tell me about their **Management/ Leadership** Style. How clear is their vison/ expectations? To what extent do they focus on the needs of employees? Do you think employees on the team are treated equally? How consistent are they in their behaviours? Would you say your manager usually keeps promises? Give examples. Encouraged to question how things are done? EXAMPLES?		
4	What is your level of trust in your manager? Why so? How do you define trust?		
5	Would you say your manager is similar or dissimilar to you? How so? **POSSIBLE PROBES:** Personal interests? Approach to work? Values?	Personal mechanisms Relational	2A 2B
6	How does your manager support you personally and professionally? **POSSIBLE PROBES** Concern for your needs… welfare/ job satisfaction? Give examples. Concern for your career success? Give examples. Would you describe them as a mentor figure?	Behaviours (Benevolence)	1
7	Tell me about how your performance is managed. What impact if any does this have on your relationship? Does your manager monitor your work? How does it make you feel? Is the level of monitoring driven by the organisation or by individual managers?	Behaviours (Monitoring and Control)	1
8	To what extent do you think your manager trusts you? **POSSIBLE PROBES** Tell me how they demonstrate/ have demonstrated this?	Felt trustworthiness/ Relational mechanisms	2B
		Behaviours	1
9	I am interested in understanding how you usually communicate with your manager?	Communication	3

	When was it good/ bad? Do you feel that your manager communicates openly and honestly? How so? How much F2F is nb? At what stage of the relationship is it nb? What is it about F2F comms that is unique? Does VC not replace F2F? **POSSIBLE PROBES** *How often do you communicate? Is frequent communication important?* *What is the primary medium of communication?* *How much face-to-face contact do you have? Weekly/ Monthly/ Annually.* *When is the last time you met face-to-face* *How do you prefer to communicate with your manager?* *Does it depend on the purpose?*	Behaviours – integrity	1
10	How available is your manager?		
11	How adequate are the technologies for virtual working? Does this impact upon your relationship with your manager?	Contextual mechanisms	2D
12	Have you ever been located in the same office as a previous manager? How do you think this impacted upon your relationship, compared to your relationship with your current manager?	Contextual mechanisms – impact of virtual working on relationship.	2D
13	How close do you feel to your current manager? Versus previous managers? If different why do you think this is? Do you have a social relationship with your current manager/ did you have one with your previous manager? Does distance make this more difficult?	Contextual mechanisms – impact of virtual working on relationship.	2D
14	What makes an effective VT manager in your opinion? How does this differ from a manager of a co-located or traditional team? Any cultural considerations? POSSIBLE PROBES A, B, I	Behaviours - Ability	1
15	What makes an effective VT employee in your opinion and how does this differ from a manager of a co-located or traditional team? POSSIBLE PROBES A, B, I	Behaviours - Ability	1

16	ORGANISATIONAL AND TEAM CULTURE How would you describe the culture in your organisation? i.e. what kind of place is it to work? Does the culture impact on your relationship with your manager in any way? Policies, 3rd parties etc What specific supports, if any, are in place for virtual workers? What training for employees and managers? Adequate or more needed? How would you describe the team culture/spirit?	Contextual mechanisms Extra-Relational mechanisms	2D 2C
17	Do you encounter any specific issues when working with colleagues virtually? Is there anything stopping you from having a stronger relationship with your manager? *If I could just fix that one thing (behaviour/issue/policy…)*	Contextual mechanisms / Relational mechanisms	2D 2B
18	DISPOSITION When you meet someone for the first time would you say that you are likely to Be wary of them Give them the benefit of the doubt, trusting them straight away Stay neutral and wait to make up your mind? Do you think that people are generally trustworthy?	Personal f mechanisms	2A

Have you anything else to add about remote working or specifically about building strong relationships when working remotely?

Appendix D: Leader Interview Guide

Research Objective 1:	**To determine the specific behaviours which impact upon leader-member trust in a virtual environment**
Research Objective 2:	**To establish the personal, relational, extra-relational and contextual mechanisms which affect leader-member trust in a virtual environment**
Research Objective 3:	**To explore the effect of communication on VT leader-member trust.**

I am interested in discussing your relationship with two of your employees:

EMPLOYEE A: Name

EMPLOYEE B: Name

Firstly, can you tell me a bit about your role?
What are your views on virtual management v traditional management?
What makes a good virtual manager?
Does one's leadership style have to differ?
Is it possible to develop strong relationships virtually?
Is everyone suited to virtual management?
What sort of training do virtual managers receive?
How adequate are the technologies? Does it impact your relationships in any way?
Describe your leadership style.
What makes a good virtual employee? What do you expect?

#	QUESTION WORDING	OBJECTIVE TOPIC	#
	EMPLOYEE A		
1	How would you describe your relationship with **EMPLOYEE A**?	Relational mechanisms	2B
2	When did you first communicate? First impressions? 3rd party discussions/ reputation – did you speak with any colleagues, know anyone that had worked with them previously? LinkedIn? What impression did that give you of them? (Credentials/ role-base trust?) When you first began working together did you meet face-to-face straight away or after a time? Tell me about that first F2F meeting (what did you talk about?) 1st impression from F2F meeting – versus initial impressions pre- F2F – CHANGE?	Initial Interactions Extra-relational mechanisms	2B 2C
3	How has your relationship developed over time? Tell me of any **crucial** moments in the relationship, either good or bad. **Was there a particular event or behaviour that made you say, I can trust this person?** Strong performer? How reliable are they? (promises/ fulfilling duties…) How consistent are they in their behaviours?	Relational mechanisms	2B
4	What is your level of trust in **EMPLOYEE A**? Why so? How do you define trust?	Relational mechanisms Behaviour	2B 1
5	How would they know you trust them/ don't trust them?	Behaviour	1
6	Would you say your manager is similar or dissimilar to you? How so? **POSSIBLE PROBES:** Personal interests? Approach to work? Values?	Personal mechanisms/ Relational mechanisms	2A 2B
7	I am interested in understanding how you usually communicate with **EMPLOYEE A**?	Communication	3

	When was it good/ bad? Do you feel that they communicates openly and honestly? How so? How much F2F is nb? At what stage of the relationship is it nb? What is it about F2F comms that is unique? Does VC not replace F2F? **POSSIBLE PROBES** ***How often do you communicate? Is frequent communication important?*** *What is the primary medium of communication?* *How much face-to-face contact do you have? Weekly/ Monthly/ Annually.* *When is the last time you met face-to-face* ***How do you prefer to communicate with your manager?*** ***Does it depend on the purpose?***		
8	How available is he/she?	Communication	3
9	Do you think he/she trusts you? Tell me how they demonstrate/ have demonstrated this?	Relational mechanisms	2B
10	Do you think they have any concern for your success/ well-being? Is this important to you?	Behaviour	1

EMPLOYEE B			
1	How would you describe your relationship with **EMPLOYEE B**?	Relational mechanisms	2B
2	When did you first communicate? First impressions? 3rd party discussions/ reputation – did you speak with any colleagues, know anyone that had worked with your manager previously? LinkedIn? What impression did that give you of them as a person **AND** a manager? (Credentials/ role-base trust?) When you first began working together did you meet face-to-face straight away or after a time? Tell me about that first F2F meeting (what did you talk about?) 1st impression from F2F meeting – versus initial impressions pre- F2F – CHANGE?	Initial Interactions Extra-relational mechanisms	2B 2C

3	How has your relationship developed over time? Tell me of any **crucial** moments in the relationship, either good or bad. **Was there a particular event or behaviour that made you say, I can trust this person?** Strong performer? How reliable are they? (promises/ fulfilling duties…) How consistent are they in their behaviours?	Relational mechanisms	2B
4	What is your level of trust in **EMPLOYEE B**? Why so? How do you define trust?	Relational mechanisms Behaviour	2 1
5	How would they know you trust them/ don't trust them?	Behaviour	1
6	Would you say your manager is similar or dissimilar to you? How so? **POSSIBLE PROBES:** Personal interests? Approach to work? Values?	Personal mechanisms/ Relational mechanisms	2A 2B
7	I am interested in understanding how you usually communicate with **EMPLOYEE B**? When was it good/ bad? Do you feel that they communicates openly and honestly? How so? How much F2F is nb? At what stage of the relationship is it nb? What is it about F2F comms that is unique? Does VC not replace F2F? **POSSIBLE PROBES** ***How often do you communicate? Is frequent communication important?*** *What is the primary medium of communication?* *How much face-to-face contact do you have? Weekly/ Monthly/ Annually.* *When is the last time you met face-to-face* ***How do you prefer to communicate with your manager?*** ***Does it depend on the purpose?***	Communication	3
8	How available is he/she?	Communication	3
9	Do you think he/she trusts you? Tell me how they demonstrate/ have demonstrated this?	Relational mechanisms	2B

10	Do you think they have any concern for your success/ well-being? Is this important to you?	Behaviour	1

22	How closely do you monitor employees? Do you think close monitoring is important or is there a culture of high control in the organisation? Type of organisational culture? Does the culture impact on your relationship with your manager in any way? Policies, 3rd parties etc	Behaviour Monitoring and Control	1
23	DISPOSITION When you meet someone for the first time would you say that you are likely to Be wary of them Give them the benefit of the doubt, trusting them straight away Stay neutral and wait to make up your mind? Do you think that people are generally trustworthy?	Personal mechanisms	2A

Have you anything else to add about remote working or specifically about building strong relationships when working remotely?

Appendix E: Interview Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Research Consent Form

- I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the study on *'an investigation of how trust is built and maintained between managers and employees in virtual teams'.* ☐

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the investigators of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result. ☐

- I consent to my personal data, as outlined in the accompanying information sheet, being used for this study and other research. I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence. ☐

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice. ☐

- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation and agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study. ☐

Name of volunteer (BLOCK CAPITALS) ....

Signed ....

Date ....

Name of researcher/person taking consent ……..

Signed ....

Date ………………………………………