

TRUST VARIETY
CONCEPTUAL NATURE, DIMENSIONS AND TYPOLOGIES

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ABSTRACT

One common feature of studies on trust is the variety of the construct's typologies and the lack of a clear and generally agreed definition of the concept. This failure of alignment has been responsible for a lot of 'communication' problems among scholars. Often, when they suppose they are referring to the same construct, they are in reality dealing with very different concepts and types of trust. Academic comparison thus becomes sterile, and this causes different (and sometimes conflicting) interpretations. For these reasons and for further knowledge developments it is useful to order and clarify the polyhedral nature of trust. To fully appreciate the increasing complexity of trust literature, a review of the major research areas has been carried out. This makes it possible to understand the conceptual pitfalls of the construct, and the dimensions used to define the various trust typologies. The paper analyses: (1) the conceptual nature of the construct (expectation, belief, willingness, confidence or attitude); (2) its different dimensions (cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects); (3) different trust typologies (target- content- and strength-based).

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1. INTRODUCTION¹

Many disciplines have studied the trust concept. Indeed, the construct's high level of abstraction has made it the central subject of very different relational contexts studied by a variety of disciplines. Trust amongst friends and/or relatives has often been the object of research in psychology, sociology and, more specifically, social psychology. In the event of an interaction between two subject belonging to the same institution and/or teamwork, organizational disciplines are interested in understanding the social mechanisms which make more effective co-operation among different actors committed to achieve the same task. At the same time, two individuals interacting as gatekeeper of two different companies, such as a buyer and a key account, configure an exchange relationship that becomes central field of research for marketing and, more specifically, for sales management studies. These disciplines are interested in achieving a deeper insight in the role of trust for the successful conclusion of a negotiation as well as in isolating the most effective actions to increase the seller's perceived reliability.

The high generalization level of the construct makes it applicable not only to inter-personal relationships, but also to the interactions that occur amongst different organizations. In this case, the concept can be used in different relational contexts, too: alliances and horizontal joint ventures between firms with complementary resources, partnerships amongst companies at different levels of the supply chain, inter-company relations in industrial districts, and, in general, in all those situations where exists a business to business interaction. In such contexts, various disciplines are interested in understanding the role of trust, its impact on performance, its different configurations and different growth's mechanisms, as Strategic management, Organization and Marketing.

More recently, following the development of information and communication technologies, the understanding of the exchange and relational mechanisms amongst virtual agents has become a new fascinating frontier of trust knowledge development. This implies the need to focus on new interaction levels that involve virtual communications interfaces different from the traditional ones, creating a link amongst the disciplines mentioned above on the one hand, and IT and cognitive sciences on the other (e.g. Castelfranchi and Tan, 2001).

This short overview allows to understand how trust has become the subject of investigation by a number of disciplines that, in time, following a natural process of convergence, have increasingly featured the multidisciplinary nature of studies on trust. To fully appreciate this multidisciplinary nature, a review of the major outcomes from the different management disciplines is needed. Indeed, one common feature of studies on trust is the variety of the construct's typologies proposed and the lack of a clear and generally agreed definition of the concept and of its conceptual nature. This failure of alignment has been responsible for a lot of 'communication' problems among scholars. Often, when they suppose they are referring to the same construct, they are in reality dealing with very different concepts and types of trust. Academic comparison thus becomes sterile, and this causes different (and sometimes conflicting) interpretations. For these reasons and for further knowledge developments about the trust concept we believe it useful to order and to clarify its polyhedral nature.

Once a definition of the borders and conceptual pitfalls of the construct has been clarified, it will be possible to analyse the dimensions that contribute to define the various trust typologies. In order to clarify the essence of the construct, the paper is developed as follows: first of all the conceptual nature of the construct will be analysed, defining the various analytic components of the trust "conceptual sequence" (paragraph 2); the trust multi-dimensional configuration and its various components will constitute the further step of our analytic process (paragraph 3); in this way it will be possible to define,

¹ Author wishes to thank the anonymous referees for their useful suggestions, which allowed to improve the structure and

by means of the prevalence of some specific analytic dimensions, various typologies of trust (paragraph 4); finally, in order to better understand the borders of the trust concept, we will clarify the similarities, but above all the differences, regarding concepts contiguous to that of trust, such as distrust, but also those of reputation, faith and confidence (paragraph 5).

2. THE CONCEPTUAL NATURES OF TRUST

Trust is a very difficult construct to define. These difficulties have produced a remarkable variety of meanings. Before analysing the various contents of trust, it is necessary to deepen the modalities adopted in order to circumscribe the conceptual nature of the construct. Thus we can clarify the essence of the object of our study, despite the fact that there is no real convergence of opinions. Trust has been conceptualised mostly as *expectation*, *belief*, *willingness* and *confidence*. There are also other perspectives, such as the concepts of *attitude*, *reliance* or *acceptance of risk* and *vulnerability* regarding the actions performed by the trustee. Rarer concepts are those of trust as a *psychological state* or *construct*, as *perception* about a subject, as a *cognitive schema*, as a *feeling* regarding a specific counterpart or a situation, as an *assumption* about the behaviours and the willingness of the counterpart, as a *judgement* and, finally, as *anticipated co-operation*. Good (1988: 43), in an extreme attempt of synthesis, defines trust as a '*theory*' that a person processes about the future behaviour of another subject. The author (1989: 43, footnote 2) specifies that the term *theory* is used in general terms and could be replaced by other expressions such as '*assumption*' or '*conception commonly adopted*', if these were equally concise. Table 1 contains a synthesis of the more common trust conceptual natures. Limiting our analysis to the more frequently adopted concepts, *Expectation* and *Belief*, followed by *Willingness*, *Confidence* and *Attitude*, we will briefly describe the meaning associated with each of them.

[Table 1 about here]

- 1 The *expectation*, that according to Rotter (1967, 1971) should be considered in general terms, mostly refers to the trustee's willingness to keep promises and to fulfill obligations (e.g. Rotter, 1971; 1980a; Barber, 1983; Dwyer, Schurr & Oh, 1987; Hagen & Choe, 1998). It is often defined as the expectation of an easy to predict (e.g. Zaheer, Mc Evily & Perrone, 1998), ethically correct (Hosmer, 1995), coordinated and collaborative *behavior* (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh, 1987; Hagen & Choe, 1998), that produces a favorable outcome for the trustor (e.g. Frost, Stimpson & Maughan, 1978; Robinson, 1996; Bhattacharya, Devinney & Pillutla, 1998). The prediction is referred to non-opportunistic behaviors that are not designed to take advantage of the trustor's vulnerability (e.g. Bradach & Eccles, 1989; Anderson & Narus, 1990, Bromiley & Cummings, 1995; Sako & Helper, 1998). Expectation not only refers to the generic willingness to keep promises, but it is also associated with the antecedents of trust, such as the level of competencies, honesty and goodwill of the trustee (e.g. Barber, 1983; Blomqvist, 1997), and non opportunistic motivations to act.
- 2 The *belief*, that has been sometimes characterized as '*confident*' in order to show its fiduciary content and to distinguish it from others of a more generic nature (Crosby, Evans & Cowles, 1990), refers once again to the reliability of the trustee's promises (e.g. Swan, Trawick & Silva, 1985; Schurr & Ozanne, 1985) and to the fulfillment of her/his obligations (e.g. Schurr & Ozanne, 1985; Anderson & Weitz, 1989), acting easy to predict future behaviors (e.g. Brockner & Siegel, 1996). Such behaviors have to be favorable for the trustor in the long period (e.g. Anderson & Narus, 1990; Crosby, Evans & Cowles, 1990; Mistzal, 1996) and they should not cause harmful consequences for him (e.g. Anderson & Narus, 1990; Andaleeb, 1995; Uzzi, 1997).

In contrast to those who propose a definition of trust founded mostly on *rational beliefs*, some authors, such as Pruitt (1981) and Uzzi (1997: 43), underline the necessity to move away from mere economic calculation, in order to assume a more heuristic attitude. In other words, the belief would not have to be related to a particular ability or a specific behavior of the counterpart, but in a more general sense, defined as a sort of *readiness to act* in whichever situation. This definition refers to a more ‘abstract’ type of trust that is ‘far’ by specific contexts, situations and behaviors. This analysis is increasingly important as different disciplines emphasize a definition of trust based on different kinds of beliefs as central aspects of human behavior. While the rational choices theory mainly focus on the costs and benefits of the trusting decision (e.g. Gambetta, 1989; Coleman, 1990), psychologists focus on goodwill and behavioral consistency, sociologists consider specific aspects related to the social relations, and management studies connects beliefs to the output of the counterpart's actions or to the abilities of the trustee. Thus, even if it seems to be a good level of convergence towards the construct defined as *belief* or as *expectation* (34 definitions out a complete set of 72 different definitions totally considered), there is in reality general disagreement about the contents of these beliefs or expectations. In fact, the contents vary according to the discipline to which the different proponents of different theories belong (Donney, Cannon & Mullen, 1998: 603).

3 *Willingness* mostly refers to the trustor’s availability to be vulnerable in front of the counterpart (e.g. Zand, 1972; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995; Mishra, 1996) or, in more general terms, to be exposed to risky situations (e.g. Johnson-George & Swap, 1982; Andaleeb, 1992). Explicit references in these cases to the concept of *willingness to risk* and *willingness to be vulnerable*,² make clear the ‘enacted’ character of trust. When the trustor

² Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer (1998) in the introduction of the *Special Issue of Academy of Management Review* say that trust considered as ‘willingness to be vulnerable’ introduced by Mayer, Davis e Schoorman (1995) is the most used definition in the articles of the *Special Issue*.

assumes the decision to trust in a third party, she/he is immediately exposed to the risk of opportunistic behaviors of the trustee. Some definitions also refer to the generic *willingness to rely* on the counterpart (e.g. Moorman, Zaltman & Desphande, 1992; Andaleeb, 1996; Doney, Cannon & Mullan, 1998) and ‘*to voluntarily depend*’ on it (Deutsch, 1973; McKnight, Cummings & Chervany, 1998). Others evidence the centrality of the trust’s behavioral dimension referring to the explicit *willingness to act* in a favorable way for the counterpart, and to coordinate own behaviors with the trustor’s ones. As shown later, some authors consider implicitly that the two fundamental elements for defining the concept of trust are: (1) the beliefs referred to the counterpart, and (2) the will to act, incorporating therefore into the trust definition its behavioral dimension (Moorman, Zaltman & Desphandè, 1992). They think that trust is more than a mere belief in a third party’s reliability. It should contain an explicit willingness to act based on these beliefs. Without this behavioral dimension, we could not refer to a trust concept, but only to a generic belief, not necessarily of a fiduciary type (Doney, Cannon & Mullen, 1998: 604).

4 *Confidence* has been mainly associated with the reliability and integrity of the partner involved in the relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), its availability and honesty (Lazarlere & Houston, 1980), its goodwill (Ring & Van de Ven, 1992), its intentions and ability (Deutsch, 1962), and the certainty that he/she will not take advantage of the trustor’s vulnerability (Sabel, 1993). In this regard Mc Allister (1995: 25) defined trust as ‘the extent to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another subject’. Rempel & Holmes (1986) offer a more general definition, considering trust as ‘the degree of confidence one feels when thinking of a relationship’ with a third party.³

³ Das & Teng (1998), on the contrary, believe that ‘the concept of confidence in partner cooperation is distinct from the concept of trust. First, we need to note that trust relates to expectations about the motives of the *trustee*. Confidence, however, deals with the perceived level of certainty that the partner will behave in a desirable manner. Thus the key difference is that whereas trust refers to expectations about positive motives, confidence refers to certainty about cooperative behaviors. Second, whereas trust is a contributor to confidence in partner cooperation – along with control –

5 Trust has also been defined, although less frequently, in terms of *attitude* (e.g. Bialaszewsky & Giallourakis, 1985; Luhmann, 1989; Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard & Werner, 1998). Luhmann (1989) considers it as the fundamental attitude for being able to assume risky decisions. Without trust the possibilities for action in risky situations would be reduced drastically. Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard & Werner (1998: 513) defined trust as ‘an attitude held by one individual - the trustor - toward another - the trustee (...). This attitude is derived from the trustor's perceptions, beliefs, and attributions about the trustee, based upon his or her observations of the trustee's behaviour.’ Such a definition shows how the fiduciary attitude springs up from perceptions and beliefs (developed as a result of experience and past observations), representing a separate and synthetic concept that overlays single beliefs, perceptions and attributions. These last factors constitute, therefore, the elementary units on which the overall attitude (trust) is built. In fact, the attitude developed towards the trustees is founded on the acquaintance, beliefs and feeling developed about them (Jones & George, 1998). Owing to its clear similarities with trust theories, a short analysis of the concept of attitude would be opportune.

Attitude constitutes one of the main concepts of contemporary psychology. It was originally defined as ‘amount of affect that a person has for or against an object’ (Thurstone, 1931, cited in Peter & Olson, 1990). Subsequently, Allport (1935), on the basis of a content analysis of the various definitions proposed by psychologists, defined it as ‘mental and neurological readiness to respond’, organized by means of experience and able of having an effect on individual behavior and responses. In consumer behavior studies attitude has been generally defined as an organized and relatively stable set of knowledge, beliefs, feelings and values, representing therefore a synthetic element overlapping its more elementary units (Peter & Olson, 1990). To define the concept of attitude requires to clarify the relation between the construct itself and its parts - beliefs, feelings, values and so on - and its consequences -

confidence, in terms of certainty of partner cooperation, cannot be equated with trust, which is merely about positive

mainly the behaviors derived from it.

With reference to the relation between attitudes and its parts many authors think that the first one constitutes a synthesis of the beliefs about the single characteristics of the object (e.g. Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Peter & Olson, 1990). Fishbein, moving from the pioneering contribution of Lancaster (1966), considers the possibility of separating the objects into a ‘bundle of attributes’, and isolating the more important characteristics in concurring to define the attitude towards the object, which constitute its founding ‘beliefs’. This approach implicitly supports the hypothesis that all the characteristics do not contribute with the same weight to define the fiduciary image of an object. The overall attitude depends on the appraisals related to salient beliefs. In synthesis, we can state that beliefs, together with feelings, values and personal knowledge constitute the fundamental components of attitudes. They are the basis for the intentions to act and, consequently, for behavior. Beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviors represent, therefore, different concepts, tied by a cause-effect relation following this sequence: beliefs --> attitudes --> intentions --> behaviors. This “conceptual sequence” can be a good reference for understanding the logical nexuses between the several kinds of trust concept - e.g. belief, attitude, willingness, trust and behavioral dimension - representing, at the same time, a synthesis of what has been discussed up to this point (as shown in Figure 1).

[Figure 1 about here]

In conclusion we can define trust as an overlaying and synthetic construct, such as attitude. It is naturally founded on beliefs relative to single characteristics of the counterpart and to situation-specific elements. The single beliefs derive from observations of signals and chunk of information, manifested from the counterpart and rising from past experience. In particular, beliefs constitute the underlying

structure of the 'semantic network', defined in terms of *cogit* and *affit* (see Bagozzi, 1999), on which trust - as a synthetic construct - is based. Relative to the consequences of the fiduciary attitude, these are translated into an implicit *intention to act* and a consequent *behavior* (coherent with the decision to trust). We agree therefore with those (e.g. Morgan & Hunt, 1994) who consider intention and behavior as natural consequences of trusting, representing a constituent element of it. In fact, vulnerability and risk of opportunism, which constitute the fundamental requirement for trusting, are both consequences of trusting behavior (e.g. Sheppard & Sherman, 1998; Baier, 1986; Coleman, 1990).

3. TRUST DIMENSIONS: THE ORIGIN OF TRUST VARIETY

The various dimensions of trust represent a point on which an intense debate has developed in the literature. Originally, the construct has been defined in uni-dimensional terms, as a synthetic concept. More recently the limits of the mono-dimensional approach have been shown, demonstrating inductively, but also deductively, the multi-dimensional nature of the construct. This is the main reason for trust's polyhedral nature. In this regard studies of trust seem to have followed a development similar to that followed by studies about the attitude concept. This, originally defined as a uni-dimensional construct such as the simple amount of affect towards a person or an object, was later defined on three fundamental dimensions (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960): a cognitive one, based on opinions about the object (*knowledge about the object*); a second one of affective type, which includes feelings and preferences (*positive or negative evaluation of the object*); and a third of a conative nature based on behaviors and intentions to act (*intention or actual behavior*).

The multi-dimensional nature of trust has been generally characterized by the same dimensions: *cognitive*, *affective* and *conative* (Cummings & Bromiley, 1995; 1996). The *cognitive* dimension refers to the rational content of trusting. It does not coincide exclusively with pure economic calculation, which has been defined as calculative trust (e.g. Williamson, 1993). This dimension also includes the

acquaintance of the other and its abilities and competencies, being more directly connected to the predictive nature of trust (Sitkin & Roth, 1993; Heumer, 1998). The *emotional* (or *affective*) dimension has been generally referred to the mood generated between the two parties and to the mutual feeling on which the relationship is built. This, generally, develops an emotional link between the subjects in the relationship. The *behavioral* dimension refers, instead, to the willingness to act and to the transformation of trust into coherent behavior. The main reason for the distinction between these three different dimensions is the identification of various determinants and different processes of development for each of them (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982; McAllister, 1995).

Bi-dimensional concepts of trust were initially introduced. The most widespread of these are cognitive-emotional and cognitive-behavioral dichotomies. Lewis & Weigert (1985), for example, in order to define the different typologies of trust and to evidence some concepts which could erroneously be confused with trust, introduced a classification based on the different weight of the cognitive and the emotional dimension. They defined ideological, cognitive, behavioral and routine trust (Lewis & Weigert, 1985: 973).⁴ The usefulness of the classification is that it allows for a distinction between ‘adjacent’ concepts that are not directly assimilable to trust, such as faith and fate, where the emotional dimension predominates and there is a virtual absence of the cognitive one (see par. 5).

Regarding the cognitive-behavioral dichotomy, Swan & Nolan (1985), inspired by a previous contribution of Scott (1980), introduced a definition founded on the aforesaid dichotomy (Swan & Nolan, 1995: 40). The contribution of Moorman, Zaltman & Deshpandé (1992) is also particularly important for this goal. The authors argue that only the co-presence of the two dimensions guarantees the existence of the ‘real’ trust. In fact, a subject that believes in the reliability of a partner, without demonstrating the willingness to effectively act in a coherent way, manifest an insufficient level of trust

⁴ Moving from a previous distinction between *reliableness* and *emotional trust* originally introduced by Johnson-George & Swap (1982), recently McAllister (1995) proposed a classification very similar to that of Lewis & Weigert (1985),

(Moorman, Deshpandè & Zaltman, 1993: 82). On the opportunity to distinguish the cognitive dimension from the behavioral one, Morgan & Hunt (1994) do not agree. They believe that considering the cognitive dimension is enough. The behavioral dimension, defined by Moorman, Deshpandé & Zaltman as ‘willingness to act’, is considered implicit in the concept of trust itself. ‘(..) Just as behavioral intention is best viewed as an outcome of attitude and not as part of its definition (..), ‘willingness to rely’ should be viewed as an outcome (or, alternatively, a potential indicator) of trust and not as a part of how one defines it’ (Morgan e Hunt, 1994: 23-24). Having defined trust in terms of cognitive synthesis we agree with this last perspective, considering action as an unavoidable consequence of trust.

More recently authors have proposed more developed classifications, aimed at configuring the bi-dimensional categorization into three fundamental dimensions: affective, cognitive and behavioral. There are also other classifications based on other criteria. Sometimes the antecedents of trust have been used as its analytic dimensions. As an example, reference to the abilities perceived in the counterpart has been considered as a dimension of trust characterizing the so-called dimension ‘ability and competence’ (e.g. Andaleeb, 1992; Nooteboom, 1996). In the same way, the trustee’s motivations and intentions have been considered as specific dimensions of trust (e.g. Andaleeb, 1992). We think that these are determinants of trust (that is *cogit* or *supercogit*, in the definition proposed from Bagozzi, 1999) and not its analytic dimensions: as such they have to be considered ‘external’ to the construct. The attempt to use antecedents in order to define the various typologies of trust is the main reason for the confusion between the antecedents of trust and its real contents.

distinguishing the *affect-based trust* from the *cognition-based trust*. Similarly Jones & George (1998) defined four different trust dimensions: *values, attitude, mood* and *emotions*.

4. TRUST TYPOLOGIES

In the previous paragraph we have seen different typologies of trust based on the prevalence of its single dimensions (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral). The variety of trust typologies is not limited exclusively to its analytic dimensions. It develops on different layers - contents (and drivers), analytical levels, various consistency - producing an huge variety of typologies. A synthetic overview of other classification criteria will allow a greater understanding of the variety in trust. The more common distinctions, in addition to those already analyzed in the previous paragraph, refer to the following elements:

1. Target of trust, distinguishing various relational levels to which the concept of trust is applicable (such as institutional, systemic, interorganizational, interpersonal, and so on);
2. Contents of trust, considering specifically the antecedent on which it is based (calculative, rational, cognitive, value-based, and so on);
3. Quality and consistency of trust (from fragile to strong or full trust).

Later on we will analyze the different classifications with reference to these three points, which are the most recurrent in the literature. We will consider, moreover, the relations between a trust concept and its opposite (distrust), and we will point to some 'residual' classifications that aren't included in the categories previously listed.

1. Different relational levels: the target of trust. As we said in the introduction of this paper, the construct high level of abstraction has made it the central subject of very different relational contexts (e.g. Williamson, 1993; Lewicki & Bunker, 1995): relationships amongst people (interpersonal trust) and organizations (interorganizational trust) are the most common in management literature.

Authors' involvement is not limited to understanding the role and mechanisms for increasing trust among individuals or organizations but, more recently, has been extended to comprehending the

connections between the two levels of analysis. In other words, they are trying to understand how the trust developed among different individuals in the role of ‘boundary spanners’ has an impact on the stock and dynamics of trust at inter-organizational level and vice versa (e.g. Zaheer, McEvily & Perrone, 1998; Jap, 1999). This requires an integration of models focused on inter-personal relationships with those that are more organization-oriented, and makes a multidisciplinary approach to trust mandatory.

We should not neglect further analytical levels, usually defined as systemic and institutional (McKnight & Chervany, 1996; Lane, 1998), concerning the relationship with public institutions, governments, economic and financial systems, society and, more generally, according to sociologists, with other human beings. It is easy to imagine the impact that this kind of trust has on interorganizational and interpersonal relationships (Fukuyama, 1995).

The extreme ductility of trust and its high level of abstraction makes it a construct that is applicable to several relational levels: the institutional one concerning systems of enterprises (e.g. industrial districts or ‘networks of place’), and the dyadic level of interorganizational and interpersonal relationships. It is relevant to note that antecedents and building strategies are different for each of these layer-specific trust typologies.

2. *Various contents of trust.* Another common distinction is based on the content of trust or, more precisely, on the nature of its antecedents: so-called calculative trust (or *rational* or *deterrence-based*), trust based on knowledge of the trustee’s profile (defined usually as *cognitive trust*); and trust founded on identification and personal values (defined sometimes as *normative trust* and *goodwill trust*) (e.g. Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Shapiro, Sheppard & Cheraskin, 1992; Sheppard & Tuckinski, 1996; Child, 1998; Sako, 1991; 1998; Sako & Helper, 1998). The first typology refers to a trust founded exclusively on economic convenience and rational calculation. In some cases, it can be convenient to choose the

option to trust a third party (also in the absence of sufficient acquaintances). In these cases the possible losses deriving from the trusting decision are less than the probable advantages deriving from a trust-based behavior. In other words, trusting can determine more positive returns than damages. Another modality to mean this typology of trust refers not to personal convenience, so much as that perceived by the counterpart. This case is closer to *deterrence-based trust* (Shapiro, Sheppard & Cheraskin, 1992). Trust is granted because if the trustee behaves in an unreliable way, its reputation decreases as a result of the trustor's dissatisfaction. This typology of trust is typical of the first stages of the relationship, in which, not having precise information about the counterpart and often lacking a direct acquaintance, it can be mostly based on rational calculation. Because it is founded exclusively on a calculation of economic convenience (Williamson, 1993), and because it is enacted without a personal experience, it could be defined as a kind of proto-trust.

The second typology, the so-called *knowledge-based trust* (or *cognitive trust*), arises when the experience deriving from the interaction between the parties concurs to develop specific knowledge about the characteristics of the counterpart, its behaviors and, above all, its competencies and ability. Trusting in a subject means above all recognizing that it has the necessary know-how to carry out in a complete and satisfactory manner those activities demanded by the trustor. The knowledge about the set of the trustee's competencies allows the decision to trust to be based on a rational (but non-economic) process.

Finally, the last content of trust is essentially based on *identification* and *personal values*. This is the most abstract typology of trust and the easiest to transfer (because it is less connected to specific activities and performances). It is a content that is developed normally in the more advanced stages of the relationship, when a high level of interdependence has been built up among the parties. This situation allows the single subject to know not only the competencies of the trustee, but also its cultural values and ideas. If in the case of *knowledge-based trust* the counterpart is perceived as reliable with

respect to specific activities or to a well defined set of competencies, in the case of *value-based trust* the reliability of the counterpart is defined in a more abstract way, without any reference to specific activities. For this reason the scope of activities and performances in a relation of this type becomes larger, increasing, consequently, the potential of value expansion for this typology of relationships.

The classification proposed by Huemer (1998; 2000) is similar to the previous distinction. It distinguishes between predictive trust (Sitkin & Roth, 1993) and exploratory trust. The first typology, corresponding to calculative trust and cognitive trust, is founded on the certainty of the expectations generated from a subject (Huemer, 2000). In this sense it acts as a stabilizer of the relations, favoring exchanges and reducing transactional costs. But, to consider exclusively the predictive dimension of trust means not exploiting its many potentialities derived by innovative activities and ambiguous relational contexts. These are indeterminable and dynamic, and this contrasts with the tendency to stabilization and to inertia that are associated with the predictive function of trust. In order to explore new borders, Huemer (2000) introduces the concept of *exploratory trust*. In some senses this is reducible to the more abstract trust (that is value-based) which is less tied to the concept of risk and much more flexible than the predictive one. The exclusive development of predictive trust - based on the ability to repeat activities already carried out in the past - determines an unavoidable tendency to the stabilization and to the re-production of the relations. It does not facilitate the management of the typical indetermination of innovative processes. This indetermination is manageable precisely by activating the exploratory dimension of trust (March, 1991). This allows for new relations and for undertaking radically new learning paths.

3. *The consistency of trust: fragile vs. strong.* Trust has also been characterized as a function of its intensity (or strength) and, consequently, on the basis of its adequacy in order to face relational situations characterized by risks of different kinds. In this regard Andaleeb (1992) first defines the

fundamental dimensions of the trust as: (1) the motivations that determine the actions of the counterpart and (2) its ability in realizing output useful for the trustor's satisfaction. He then proposes, crossing these dimensions, four trust typologies classified on the so-called *trust continuum*, between the two ends of *strong trust* and *distrust*. The first is full trust, where the trustee has no opportunistic motivations and possesses a set of competencies that are coherent with the task. Distrust is characterized by the low presence of both these dimensions. The intermediate typologies are '*hopeful trust*' (high motivations, low abilities) and '*unstable trust*' (low motivations, high abilities). Barney & Hansen (1994: 176) define weak trust as suitable to relationships where the parties are not exposed to vulnerability. Typically these situations do not ask for specific mechanisms or contracts in order to create trust between the parties. The semi-strong typology is associated with relations where there is a good level of vulnerability for the trustor. In these situations it is necessary to plan adequate mechanisms for the government of the transactions in order to assure the mutual trust. Strong trust exists where the level of vulnerability is such that no economic, legal or social mechanisms for the government of the transactions are adequate to defend the parties against the possibility of opportunistic behaviors. Similar classifications distinguish between *thick* and *thin* trust, and fragile and resilient trust (e.g. Williams, 1989; Meyerson, Weick e Kramer, 1996). One of the fundamental characteristics of all these classifications is that they are based on the criterion of trust intensity, moving from an end that considers situations of the complete absence of trust, up to the opposite end of full or strong trust. Regarding this last point, we think it could be useful to clarify the existing relations between the concept of trust, the absence of trust and the concept of distrust.

4. *Distrust as the opposite of trust?* Trust is declinable on a continuum that goes from a negative end, usually defined as 'distrust', to a positive one - that of 'full' or 'strong' trust. In these cases distrust has been defined as the opposite image of trust: once trust is defined, its negation has also been described.

Distrust has the same predictive function as trust, representing another way to manage uncertainty (Luhmann, 1979; Lewicki, McAllister & Bies, 1998). The complete absence of trust/distrust (and an absolute lack of attitude regarding the trustee) is much more problematic than the presence of distrust. It represents, however, useful information for making decisions in risky situations. Although the more common vision leads to the assumption that the ‘more trust there is the better’, and that distrust is a negative situation, we should analyze with greater attention the concept of distrust for its function of economic ordering and relational efficiency (e.g. Lewicki, McAllister & Bies, 1998: 452; Wlagenbach, 2001). Sitkin & Roth (1993: 373) consider distrust as the belief that the values of an individual and his motivations will lead him to approach all situations in an unacceptable way’. In the same way Lewicki, McAllister & Bies (1998: 439) define it as a ‘confident negative expectation’ about the behavior of another subject. The predictive function of distrust has induced these authors to introduce a classification of the social situations founded on the joint presence of trust and distrust intensity. In this way they have clarified that the two constructs do not represent two ends of the same continuum, but two elements in an orthogonal relationship. The model confirms, therefore, that distrust and trust attitudes can coexist, producing ambivalent attitudes (Mishra, 1996: 282; Kramer, 1996). ‘(..) Trust and distrust are also complements for one another, because both function to reduce social complexity’ (Luhmann, 1979: 71). This assumption induces ‘not to mediate’ between situations of high trust and high distrust, proposing as a result a synthetic level of trust/distrust. They are constructs that should be considered separately because they are based on different antecedents.

5. *Other trust typologies.* The trust typologies examined up to this point do not exhaust the variety produced by the literature. Among the further main classifications of the construct there are at least two more significant ones. They are based on:

- 1 the different mechanisms of trust development;

2 the different kind of relationships and the respective level of risks associated with them.

The first classification criteria distinguishes between trust based on the characteristics of the counterpart (*characteristic-based trust*), that generated by a sequence of mutual interactions (*process-based trust*), and that based on a more institutional level (*institutionally-based trust*) (Zucker, 1986). In the first case trust constitutes the output of an inference process based on perception, analysis and interpretation of the trustee characteristics (in terms of competencies, ability, motivations, values and so on). In this case the trustee has to verify how he is perceived by others (potential trustors) and to manage the perceptive elements (chunks) on which the fiduciary representation is founded. Trust can also be the output of a relational process developed between the parties (process-based trust), or the result of the presence of third parties (institutional) supplying, in the role of fiduciary intermediary, the due level of reliability about the counterpart.

With reference to the second category of typologies, those based on different relational situations, they can generate different kinds of risk or various levels of opportunism that shape different trust requirements (e.g. Dwyer, Schurr & Oh, 1987; Ring & Van de Ven, 1992). Sheppard & Sherman (1998), after having classified the relations in four fundamental types - *shallow dependence*, *deep dependence*, *shallow interdependence*, *deep interdependence* (each of them with different profiles of risk) - then define four types of trust, one for each kind of relation: *deterrence*, *obligation*, *discovery* and *internalization*.

This paragraph has analyzed some of the main kinds of trust proposed in the literature. Table 2 contains a partial synthesis of this variety, based on the classification criteria used by each contribution. Sometimes, because of low clarity about the concept of trust itself, authors have generated constructs that are similar to trust but conceptually different from it. To resolve the confusion between the concepts of trust and 'adjacent' constructs, we think it useful to conclude this paper with a brief analysis of these contiguous concepts, in order to better clarify the concept of trust by showing the

differences between it and the adjacent concepts.

[Table 2 about here]

5. TRUST CONTIGUITIES

In our view trust represents a cognitive synthesis that indicates the ability of the counterpart to maintain promises. It is an overlaying construct regarding the single elements that contribute to determine it (the antecedents, e.g. competencies, motivations and values). ‘To trust’ constitutes therefore the synthetic information that allows the subject to manage relational uncertainty. Such information can derive from several antecedents, from which it is possible to infer trust. As a synthetic construct, trust is therefore a variable overlaying single determinants. Among the determinants, a fundamental role is carried out by experience. Acquaintance referred to the behavior of the counterpart is one of the main assumptions for trust creation. According to many authors, experience is nearly a necessary condition for trust. In this regard some have observed that it is also possible to develop trust without direct experience with the counterpart. In these cases we cannot talk about trust *strictu senso*, but about concepts that, although they are similar to it, are different from trust. The most important of these are ‘reputation’ and the so-called ‘unconditioned trust’. The former is the reliable image that a subject has created in the ‘market’. It is an antecedent of trust that has been developed without direct contact or relational experiences between the parties. Reputation depends on information received from third parties. How information contributes to form the reputation of an actor depends above all on source’s reliability (*credibility*). Credibility is the main assumption to transfer trust from the informative source to the trustee, operating a working *trust extension* (e.g. Doney & Cannon, 1997; Doney, Callon & Mullen, 1998). The other situation where it is possible to establish a trust relation in the absence of direct experience is through

unconditioned trust. This does not represent a manifestation of trust toward a trustee, because it is not connected to a specific counterpart. It depends exclusively on a generic propensity to trust others without reference to a specific relational situation. Therefore it is important not to confuse trust, which is a relation-specific construct, with ‘unconditioned trust’ or ‘personal fiduciary propensity’, that are characteristics of the trustor (Luhmann, 1989: 127). Such a propensity can also be generated (and learned) from the environment where the subject carries out its own activity.

The distinction between trust, ‘faith’ and ‘confidence’ proposed by Luhmann (1989) and Hart (1989) is relevant for understanding other trust contiguities. According to Hart (1989) trust is a ‘suspended’ concept between ‘faith’ and ‘confidence’. Between these three concepts there is a relation on a continuum that expresses various kinds of belief, based on the intensity of the evidence. ‘Faith’ does not demand any evidence; ‘trust’ is an expectation based on inconclusive evidence, tolerating uncertainty or risk; ‘confidence’ is a belief strongly based on solid evidence or logical deduction (Hart, 1989: 241). Among the concepts similar to the trust but different from it, Hardy, Phillips & Lawrence (1998) introduced an interesting distinction between spontaneous trust, generated trust, manipulation and capitulation. While the first two typologies are directly connected to trust - it can be spontaneous or, on the contrary, the result of a deliberate development process - the last two, introducing a ‘façade’ of trust, conceal others meanings, which are far from the real essence of trust.

6. CONCLUSION

This short review allows for a partial understanding of the complexity of the trust concept. It has been studied in a number of disciplines that, in time, following a natural process of convergence, have increasingly featured the multidisciplinary of studies on trust. Our goal, as researcher on this field, is to cross borders between different disciplines. This is the only way to appreciate the polyhedral nature of trust construct. Understanding the conceptual essence of trust, through its ‘conceptual sequence’

(beliefs, attitude, willingness to act and behavior), its multidimensionality (cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects), and its different typologies (target- content- and strength-based), are fundamental steps for a better understanding of the concept and for future and clearer debate about the issue.

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TABLE 1 – MAIN CONCEPTUAL NATURES OF TRUST

(Legend: Marketing – normal; *Organization & Strategic management* – italics; Psychology & Sociology – underlined)

<i>Meanings</i>	Authors
<i>Expectation</i>	Garfinkel (1967); Dwyer, Schurr & Oh (1987); Blomqvist (1997) <i>Zucker (1986); Bradach ed Eccles (1989); Hosmer (1995); Robinson (1996); Bhattacharya, Devinney & Pillutla (1998); Hagen & Choe (1998); Zaheer, McEvily & Perrone (1998); Sako ed Helper (1998)</i> <u>Frost, Stimpson & Maughan (1978); Barber (1983); Boon ed Holmes (1991); Rotter (1967; 1971; 1980)</u>
<i>Belief</i>	Schurr & Ozanne (1985); Swan, Trawick & Silva (1985); Anderson & Weitz (1989); Crosby, Evans & Cowles (1990); Anderson & Narus (1990); Morgan (1991); Andaleeb (1995) <i>Sitkin & Roth (1993); Cummings & Broley (1996); Robinson (1996); Brockner & Siegel (1996); Uzzi (1997); Lewicki, McAllister & Bies (1998); McKnight, Cummings & Chervany (1998)</i> Mistral (1996); Kimmel, Pruitt, Magenau, Koner-Goldband & Carnevale (1980); Pruitt (1981)
<i>Willingness</i>	Andaleeb (1992); Moorman, Zaltman & Desphande (1992); Andaleeb (1996) <i>Zand (1972); McAllister (1995); Mayer, Davis & Schoorman (1995); Mishra (1996); Doney, Cannon & Mullan (1998); McKnight, Cummings & Chervany (1998)</i> Deutsch (1973); Johnson-George & Swap (1982); Lewis & Weigert (1985)
<i>Confidence</i>	Morgan & Hunt (1994); Kumar, Scheer & Steenkamp (1995) <i>Lazarere & Houston (1980); Ring & Van de Ven (1992); Sabel (1993); Barney & Hansen (1994); McAllister (1995); Webb (1996)</i> <u>Deutsch (1960); Rempel & Holmes (1986); Sabel (1993)</u>
<i>Attitude</i>	<i>Bialaszewsky & Giallourakis (1985); Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard & Werner (1998)</i> <u>Luhmann (1988)</u>
<i>Reliance</i>	<i>Curral & Judge (1995)</i> <u>Giffin (1967); Schlenker, Helm & Tedeschi (1973)</u>
<i>Acceptance/Incorporation of risk/vulnerability</i>	<i>Sheppard & Sherman (1998); Baier (1986)</i> <u>Coleman (1990)</u>
<i>Psychological state</i>	<i>Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer (1998)</i> <u>Gibb (1964)</u>
<i>Perception</i>	Anderson, Lodish & Weitz (1987); Doney & Cannon (1997).
<i>Subjective probability</i>	Nooteboom (1996) <u>Gambetta (1989)</u>
<i>Feeling</i>	<i>Tyler & Degoley (1996)</i>
<i>Assumption</i>	<i>Robinson (1996)</i>
<i>Judgement</i>	<i>Webb (1996)</i>
<i>Anticipated cooperation</i>	<i>Burt & Knetz (1996)</i>
<i>Psychological construct</i>	<i>Jones & George (1998)</i>

FIGURE 1 – RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DIFFERENT TRUST'S CONCEPTS

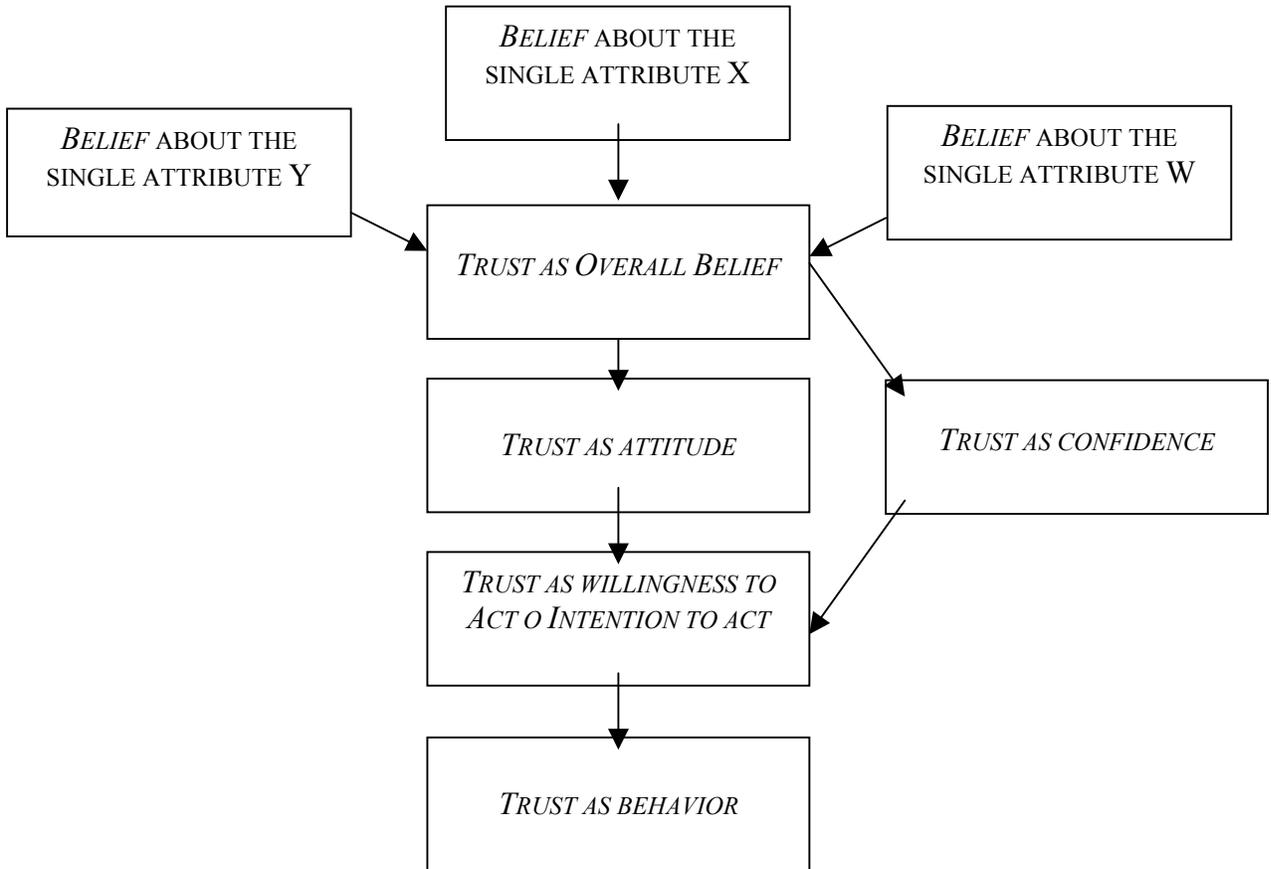


TABLE 2 – SOME CLASSIFICATIONS OF TRUST: A SYNTHESIS

Criteria	Typologies
Trust dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ideological, cognitive, emotional & routine trust (Lewis & Wiegert, 1985) - Affective, cognitive & behavioral trust (Cummings & Bromiley, 1996) - Behavioral & intentional trust (Nooteboom, Berger & Noorderhaven, 1997) - Affect-based & cognition-based trust (McAllister, 1995) - Reliability & emotional trust (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982) - Values, attitude and mood & emotions (Jones & George, 1998) - Institutionalization & habitualization (Nooteboom, Berger & Noorderhaven, 1997) - Competence- & goodwill-based dimensions (Nooteboom, 1996)
Relational layer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calculative, institutional ('hyphenated') & personal trust (Williamson, 1993) - Institutional-based, system-based & societal trust (Lane, 1998) - Individual, inter-personal, institutional trust (Lewicki & Bunker, 1995) - Calculative, relational & institutional trust (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Cannon, 1998) - Dispositional, personal/interpersonal & system trust (McKnight & Chervany)
Contents and antecedents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calculative, knowledge-based & institutional (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996) - Deterrence-based, knowledge-based & identification-based trust (Shapiro, Sheppard & Cheraskin, 1992; Sheppard & Tuckinski, 1996) - Calculative, cognitive & normative trust (Lane, 1998; Child, 1998) - Contractual trust, competence trust & goodwill trust (Sako, 1991; Sako & Helper, 1998) - Predictability-based & value-based trust (Sitkin & Roth, 1993) - Predictability & explorative trust (Huemer, 2000)
Strength/Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full, instable & hopeful trust (Andaleeb, 1992) - Thick or thin, weak or strong, fragile or resilient trust (Williams, 1989, Meyerson, Weick & Kramer, 1996) - Weak, semi-strong & strong trust (Barney & Hansen, 1994) - Trust vs. distrust (many authors, e.g. Andaleeb, 1992)
Development processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Characteristic-based, process-based, institutionally-based (Zucker, 1986) - Calculative processes, predictive processes, intention-based processes, knowledge-based processes, transfer-based processes (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Doney, Cannon & Mullen, 1998)
Other classifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basic trust, guarded trust & extended trust (Brenkert, 1998) - Deterrence, obligation, discovery & internalization (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998) - Task-focused, fiduciary & relational forms of trust (Barber, 1983)
Contiguous concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spontaneous trust, generated trust, manipulation & capitulation (Hardy, Phillips & Lawrence, 1998) - Trust, faith, confidence & reputation (Luhmann, 1989; Hart, 1989) - Trust, power & commitment (Gambetta, 1989; Anderson & Weitz, 1993; Morgan & Hunt, 1994) - Rational prediction, probable anticipation, uncertainty, panic, fate, faith (Lewis & Wiegert, 1985)