Trust as an Action: About the Overrated Significance of Trust in Information Sources in a Digitized World

Sarah Westphal and Bernd Blöbaum

Abstract This paper demonstrates that trust, which actually informs the actions of people, can only be identified under specific preconditions and is relevant less often than it appears to be by the frequent and manifold use of the term. Using online information as an example, it is pointed out, that, when defining trust with a focus on the trusting action, trust can only apply to one specific, pre-selected information source. Therefore, it is then argued, that trust is an especially rare and special phenomenon with information sources on the Internet.

1 Trust as an Omnipresent and Fundamentally Relevant Phenomenon in Social Interactions

"Today nearly everyone seems to be talking about 'trust'. Presidential candidates, political columnists, pollsters, social critics, moral philosophers, and the man in the street all use the word freely and earnestly" (Barber 1983, p. 1). What Barber wrote as introducing words in his book in 1983 seems still to be the case today. Be it trust in the context of intelligence agencies and Edward Snowden, trust in banks in the face of financial crises, or trust in sports in light of doping—in media coverage as well as in everyday language trust is an omnipresent phenomenon.

Two aspects of scientific research on trust also contribute to the fact that trust seems to be a concept of relevance in every context. First, in sociological research on trust,[1] which looks at trust from a macro-perspective, trust is regarded as a social mechanism of fundamental importance in modern society. From this perspective, trust becomes relevant in relationships of dependency in contexts of risk (Luhmann

---

[1] This is also true for some works in philosophy and political science, which shares some views of sociological research.

S. Westphal (✉) • B. Blöbaum
University of Münster, Münster, Germany
e-mail: sarah.westphal@uni-muenster.de; bernd.bloebaum@uni-muenster.de

1968; Barber 1983; Giddens 1995; Endreß 2002). From this perspective, however, essentially every social interaction bears a risk because one cannot know how the other actor will act (Müller 2013, pp. 42–43; Giddens 1995, p. 114; Hartmann 2010, p. 20). Especially in modern societies, which are so complex that individuals have to enter into numerous relationships of dependency with unfamiliar actors and institutions they cannot control (Giddens 1995, p. 103; Luhmann 1968, p. 43), risk becomes pervasive. In these contexts, trust becomes relevant as a social mechanism to reduce the complexity of social interactions (Luhmann 1968, p. 13; Kohring 2004, p. 94, 102; Lewis and Weigert 1985, p. 696; Seligman 2000, pp. 18–19) so that individuals are still able to act in these contexts. Other researchers do not even confine the relevance of trust to situations of risk, but state that trust shadows all social interactions in a non-reflexive way (Endreß 2010, p. 95, 98; Lagerspetz 1998, p. 30).

Second, from the perspective advocated in this contribution, some works on trust confound the concept of trust with other comparable concepts and mix up situations of trust with similar situations in which those other concepts come into effect, e.g., calculation (Coleman 1990; Lewicki and Bunker 1996), confidence (Lewicki et al. 1998; Guenther and Möllering 2010; Barber 1983), or familiarity (Endreß 2012; Lagerspetz 1998).

This confounding of concepts and the fundamental relevance in many or all social interactions make it difficult to narrow down the meaning of trust as a concept, which is generally hard to grasp (Ripperger 2003, p. 34; Gambetta 1988, pp. IX–X).

2 Definition of Trust as an Action in Specific Social Interactions

Since there a several alternatives to trust, such as calculation, confidence, and familiarity (Kohring 2004, pp. 135–136), that come into effect in similar situations and are also capable of reducing complexity, it is argued here that trust does not come into effect in all social interactions and that the circumstances of the situation should be carefully considered before defining a situation or a social interaction as one of trust. To implement this, trust is conceptualized from a micro-perspective as a social mechanism enabling actions in a concrete social interaction that only comes into effect under specific preconditions and fulfills a specific function for the trustor that exceeds the overall function to reduce complexity.

In a situation of trust, an actor (the trustor) voluntarily enters into a relationship of dependency with another actor (the trustee; Gambetta 2001, p. 213; Hartmann 2010, p. 20; Preisendörfer 1995, p. 266; Ripperger 2003, p. 37), because he[2] has a

---

[2] The male form is used in the following for reasons of simplicity, but this is a reference to both sexes.

specific problem he cannot or does not want to solve on his own since he lacks the resources or does not want to invest them (Kohring 2004, p. 94; Preisendörfer 1995, p. 267). Depending on the problem and the trustee, the trustor has specific expectations of the trustee (Hardin 2001). However, the trustor is uncertain about whether the trustee will fulfill these expectations because of the contingency of the trustee's actions and because the trustor lacks sufficient information about the trustee (Simmel 1999, p. 393). In a situation of trust, the trustor remains in this state of uncertainty until the end of the interaction and can only say retrospectively whether the trustee lived up to expectations (Kohring 2004, p. 130; Preisendörfer 1995, p. 265; Seligman 2000, p. 21). The trustor perceives this contingency and uncertainty as a risk (Kohring 2004, p. 91), meaning that, next to the advantages of using the resources of the trustee, the trustor is also aware of the negative side of this dependency that the trustee could fall short of his expectations and that negative consequences could be the result for the trustor (Kohring 2006, p. 124; Ripperger 2003, pp. 41–42). In a trust situation, however, the trustor tolerates the risk (Kohring 2004, p. 95; Lewis and Weigert 1985, S. 969) and focuses on the advantages of the dependency (Kieserling 2012, p. 141).

If these preconditions (relationship of dependency, lack of sufficient information about the trustee, uncertainty about the fulfillment of expectations, risk perception and tolerance of risk) are not met, the situation is not one of trust, but rather one of the functional equivalents of trust (e.g., confidence, familiarity or calculation) that reduces complexity in this situation. For example, if the actor is not uncertain about whether the other actor will fulfill his expectations but is able to predict the actions of the other actor because the latter is entirely bound by his role and rules, the situation is one of confidence rather than trust (Kohring 2004, p. 112; Seligman 2000, p. 19). If the actor does not tolerate the risk that the other actor could not live up to his expectations but tries to reduce this risk by seeking further information about this actor, the situation is one of calculation rather than trust (Kohring 2004, p. 119). If the actor has a lot of information about the other actor from past interactions and experience so that he does not perceive any contingency in the others actions and thus no risk of unfulfilled expectations but assumes that the other will act as always, the situation is one of familiarity but not of trust (Luhmann 1968, p. 71).

These prerequisites of a trust situation also shape the definition of trust. The focus of the definition used here is the action of the trustor. Based on the work of Kohring (2004) trust is defined as

> a social mechanism that enables the trustor to engage in a particular form of action, which is connected to a contingent action of a preselected and responsible trustee, to whom the trustor holds a relationship of dependency he perceives as risky. This particular form of action and the associated tolerance of the risk, which can only be legitimated by few nonfactual arguments, yield the advantage of economizing resources for the trustor.

Thus, trust describes a specific relationship of dependency in which a trustor transfers responsibility for actions to the trustee (Kohring 2004, p. 112) and connects his own actions to the actions of the trustee. More than reducing
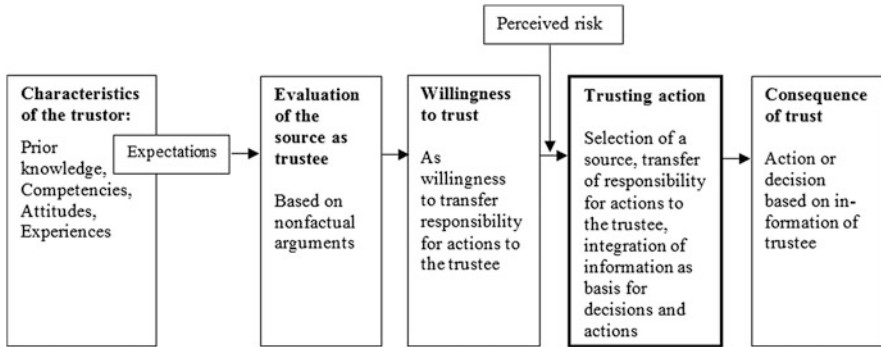
Fig. 1 Trust in information sources as a process (image of the authors based on Mayer et al. 1995; Kohring 2004)

complexity, trust as an action fulfills a specific function for the trustor: it econo-mizes the resources of the trustor. By engaging in a trusting action, the trustor is able to save his own resources because of several reasons. First, in a situation of trust, the trustor only uses nonfactual arguments like for example the white coat of the doctor (see Fig. 1). Such arguments provide insufficient information about the trustee, because they do not indicate whether the trustee will fulfill the expectations of the trustor (Kohring 2004, p. 113), but are much easier to access and process than factual arguments like medical knowledge. Second, the trustor renounces seeking so much information to be able to control (Mayer et al. 1995, p. 712) or calculate the actions of the trustee (Kohring 2004, pp. 112–119). Third, the trustor tolerates the risk and renounces further efforts to reduce it (Kohring 2004, p. 95). Fourth, the trustor lets the trustee perform actions instead of performing them personally (Kohring 2004, p. 112).

The definition of trust as a mechanism enabling a specific action can be illus-trated by an example of a trust situation. Consider the case of a sick person who consults a new doctor to cure a disease. The sick person connects his own actions (choosing and contacting the doctor as well as entrusting himself to the charge of the doctor for an operation) to the actions of the doctor he wants to profit from (the operation) and which he cannot perform on his own. Therefore, the patient transfers the responsibility for the operation to the doctor although he is not certain whether the doctor, with whom he does not have any prior experience, will meet his expectations. He is aware that the doctor has liberties in choosing a diagnosis and selecting between different ways of operating and that it is possible that the doctor might not live up to the patient's expectations of an operation without complica-tions. But the patient tolerates the risk that the doctor could possibly fall short of his expectations and produce negative consequences for him (e.g., health damage). The patient can only legitimate his positive expectations that the doctor will perform the operation successfully by using nonfactual knowledge about the doctor (e.g., his title, the white coat), but no factual or professional knowledge (Kohring 2007,

p. 30). Since the patient relies on this symbolic knowledge instead of controlling the doctor, and because he can use the resources of the doctor, he can save up his own resources.

From our perspective, trust can only be defined with a focus on the trusting action. It cannot be defined as an expectation (Lewicki et al. 1998, p. 439; Luhmann 1968, p. 37), because expectations are not a sufficient criterion to define trust, since they also play a role in similar concepts such as hope and confidence (Kohring 2006, p. 125; Seligman 2000, p. 19), as well as quality (Wolling 2004). Trust can also not be defined with a focus on the evaluation of trustworthiness (McKnight et al. 1998; Butler and Cantrell 1984), since similar evaluations are also connected to the concept of credibility (Hovland et al. 1953) and "knowing that A considers B trustworthy is of little use if A does not intend to act on that basis [. . .]" (Dietz and Den Hartog 2006, p. 565). Trust as a psychological state with the intention or willingness to trust as a willingness to be vulnerable is the focus of many (psychological) definitions of trust (Mayer et al. 1995; Baier 1986; Corritore et al. 2003; Kramer 1999; Möllering 2001; Warren 1999). In contrast, in the sociological perspective on trust followed here, trust can only be seen as part of a social relationship, whereas applying it only to a psychological state of one individual is seen as a reduction or restriction (Lewis and Weigert 1985, p. 968; Endreß 2002, p. 71). In line with this, the mere willingness to be vulnerable is insufficient to define trust because the formerly described prerequisites of trust and the specific function of trust only come into effect in the trusting action. As Dietz and Den Hartog (2006) stated: "[. . .] The decision is only an intention to act. For A to demonstrate unequivocally her/his trust in B, (s)he must follow through on this decision by engaging in any of the trust-informed risk-taking behaviors [. . .]" (p. 559). First, the prerequisite of a relationship of dependency in a trust situation is only fully accomplished if the trustor engages in a trusting action. Because only with the trusting action does the trustor transfer responsibilities for actions to the trustee, connect his own actions to those of the trustee, and thus make the success of his actions dependent on the actions of the trustee (Kohring 2004, p. 132). In contrast, the willingness to be vulnerable is an attitude of the trustor towards the trustee and thus a one-way relation.

Second, the risk of the trust situation is only taken if the trustor engages in a trusting action. "Risks [. . .] emerge only as a component of decision and action. [. . .] If you refrain from action you run no risk" (Luhmann 2000, p. 100). Therefore, in being willing to make himself vulnerable the trustor runs no risk (Mayer et al. 1995, p. 724). Moreover, the willingness to be vulnerable does not necessarily mean that the trustor also engages in a trusting action, actually makes himself vulnerable, and takes a risk (Dietz and Den Hartog 2006, p. 560). This can be the case if the trustor is willing to trust the trustee and to make himself vulnerable, because he thinks him trustworthy, but he does not engage in an action because he perceives the risk that the trustee might not meet his expectations as too high, based on the understanding that a high amount of damage is possible if his expectations are not met. External risks that are not related to the trustee can also prevent the

trustor from engaging in a trusting action even if he is willing to make himself vulnerable to the trustee (Mayer et al. 1995, p. 726).

Third, the advantage of trust to economize resources for the trustor (Kohring 2004, p. 99) only comes into effect if the trustor engages in a trusting action. The willingness to be vulnerable does not economize resources for the trustor. Instead, he must invest some of his own resources to form this willingness when evaluating whether the trustee is trustworthy. Not until he engages in a trusting action is the trustor able to economize his resources because then he lets the trustee perform actions for him and connects his own actions to them.

Therefore, the focus of the definition in this contribution lies on the trusting action, whereas expectations, the evaluation of the trustee's trustworthiness, and the willingness to trust are conceptualized as prerequisites for the trusting action, as shown in Fig. 1.

3 Significance of Trust in Information Sources on the Internet

The definition of trust with a focus on the trusting action can also be transferred to (online) information sources. *Trust as a social mechanism enables the trustor to make a specific selection that is based on the contingent selection of a preselected and responsible (online) information source to which the trustor holds a relationship of dependency he perceives as risky. This particular form of selection and the associated tolerance of the risk, which can only be legitimated by a few nonfactual arguments, yield the advantage of economizing resources for the trustor.* The action which the trustor transfers to the online information source as a trustee is the selection of relevant information, and the risk is that the online information source provides false, biased or incomplete information to the trustor (Corritore et al. 2003, p. 742).

When dealing with trust in online information sources, it is important to consider that trust comes into effect to achieve a specific goal for the trustor and is not an end in itself (Hartmann 2010, p. 19). By trusting online information sources, the trustor's goal is to solve a problem, such as to make a decision or take an action on the basis of the information from the trustee. Therefore, the selection as a trusting action is not a mere selection, but a selection of an online information source that has an effect on subsequent decisions and actions of the trustor (Kohring 2004, p. 182). Because of this, trust is a key variable for media effects (Kohring 2004, p. 183). These consequences of trust are also important aspects of the trust situation, because only through these consequences of trust (actions and decisions) does the risk of the trust situation—that the trustee might not live up to the expectations of the trustor—become a real risk. False, biased, and incomplete information is not a risk in itself, but only becomes a risk if the recipient acts upon this information like making a false decision or engaging in a wrong action,

which are associated with negative consequences for the trustor (Lagerspetz 1998, p. 41; Luhmann 2000, p. 100).[3]

These remarks demonstrate that trust as an action comes into effect in risky relationships of dependency to reduce complexity. The Internet, with its flood of information and variety of information sources that are difficult to evaluate, is a context of high complexity. It is also a context of risk because gatekeepers and quality controls are lacking on the Internet (Neuberger 2009, pp. 38–39; Kelton et al. 2008, p. 363; Guenther and Möllering 2010, p. 31) and thus there is a high risk of false, biased, and incomplete information. Because of this, trust seems to be a relevant issue with online information sources.

In the following the opposite is argued, that *trust is a rare and special situation in the context of online information sources* if it is defined with a focus on the trusting action in a special relationship of dependency in which responsibility for actions is transferred to the trustee and the trustor bases his own actions or decisions on those of the trustee. There are several arguments for the hypothesis that trust occurs only rarely in the context of online information sources. First, for trust to become relevant, a recipient has to want to use information to solve a problem and make a decision or engage in an action. But a lot of (online) information is not immediately relevant for actions and decisions of recipients, e.g., information about crises in other countries that have no direct consequences for recipients.

Second, situations in which the trustor lacks information are different from situations in which the trustor lacks other resources (e.g., abilities to carry out an operation or to repair a car). When lacking other resources, the trustor cannot acquire those resources without considerable effort, like studying medicine or automotive repair, and therefore cannot solve his problem on his own. When lacking information, the trustor is still in a position to solve his problem on his own. He can select information autonomously by considering several information sources and generating his own understanding of the issue. Therefore, he does not have to trust an information source and does not have to transfer responsibility for information selection to this source. This is likely a frequent occurrence on the Internet because various sources can be reached very easily and quickly with just a few clicks.

Third, from a perspective of trust as a special form of dependency and action as advocated here, it is no longer a situation of trust if a recipient considers several information sources because the recipient does not transfer responsibility for actions to an information source but simply solves his own lack of information problem independently. An example with the TV show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" can illustrate this argument. In this TV show, the candidate trusts several people in the audience, whose multiple choice answer he uses as a basis for his own answer in the game, so he therefore depends on those people (Kohring

---

[3] This is why only decisions and actions can be conceptualized as consequences of trust but not attitudes or opinions, because only actions and decisions are associated with risks (see above, Luhmann 2000, p. 100).

2004, p. 95). But in effect, every person that the candidate trusts in the audience says exactly the same thing, for example, answer "B". In this specific scenario, trust in several sources of information (here, people from the audience) is possible. If the scenario in the show was comparable to the reception of online information sources, the people in the audience would provide not only the answer but also arguments for choosing this answer over the others. At this point, the candidate is able to weigh those arguments and connect them to his own knowledge and experience. This way, he can build up an argumentation and come to a conclusion on his own without depending on people in the audience, who only assist him in finding his answer. But the responsibility lies with the candidate to deduce the right answer from the different arguments. There is no relationship of dependency when a recipient consults several information sources because he does not transfer but retains responsibility for the selection of information.

Moreover, there are further reasons that, from the perspective of trust chosen here, trust is not possible with several (online) information sources. First, the relationship between the recipient and the information source is broken if the recipient consults several information sources because the sources fade into the background and their information remains in the foreground: "[...] Consumers collect bits and pieces of information from different Web sites without necessarily paying a lot of attention to who authored each information bit" (Eysenbach 2008, p. 140).

Second, trust is not possible with several sources because, in a trusting action, the action of the trustor (here: the selection of a source and its information as a basis for a decision or an action) is causally linked to the action of the trustee (here: the selection of information by the source; Kohring 2004, p. 170). Such a causal link is not possible if the recipient consults several information sources and uses only bits and pieces of information to get an idea of the topic.

Third, the tolerance of risk has been described as a central aspect of a trust situation and a trusting action. However, if the recipient consults several information sources, he does not have to tolerate the risk of false, biased, or incomplete information because he reduces this risk by cross-checking information among the various sources. He can compare the information of several sources to check their adequacy, complete his understanding of the information, and gain different perspectives on the topic. Some researchers have stated that, even after reducing the risk, there is still some risk left that can then be surmounted by trust (Mayer et al. 1995). However, in cases where some risk still remains, the recipient has the opportunity to seek as much information as needed until the risk of false information is subjectively overcome and he is able to make his decision. Moreover, in a trust situation as it is viewed here, the risk only exists because of the relationship of dependency to the trustee (Ripperger 2003, p. 38). Since there is no relationship of dependency to a specific trustee when the recipient consults several information sources, the only risk is that the recipient selects false information, fails to understand the topic, and draws erroneous conclusions. This is a risk that has nothing to do with depending on an information source, but rather is based on the recipient depending on his own abilities. For this reason, consulting several information sources is not a case of trust but rather of self-confidence (Kohring 2004, p. 112).

Fourth, the saving of resources for the trustor was a further aspect of the definition of trust. If the recipient as a trustor hands over responsibility for the selection of information to one specific source and takes only the information of this source as a basis for his decision or action, he does not have to invest his own resources to solve his problem of a lack of information. If the recipient consults several online information sources, however, he must invest his own cognitive and temporal resources to seek information and evaluate both the information and the sources, which is especially difficult on the Internet due to its lack of quality control (Flanagin and Metzger 2008, p. 5; Kelton et al. 2008, p. 363). Moreover, he has to select which information of which source he wants to explore further and then has to piece the information together to make sense of it and to get an idea of the topic. This can be troublesome because conflicting perspectives on a topic produce new complexity (Babrow and Kline 2000, p. 1811) that the recipient has to reduce again. Therefore, the recipient has to invest a lot more resources when consulting several resources compared to when he trusts one specific source, then depends on this source and adopts its perspective on the topic. Therefore, with its advantage of saving resources for the trustor, trust is a very effective way of reducing complexity (Kohring 2004, p. 134).

But this advantage of saving resources loses some of its effect on the Internet, because new Internet sources can be consulted more quickly than in the offline world because they are only a few clicks away, and search engines, which are frequently employed (van Eimeren and Frees 2014), make this task very easy. This quick and easy access to a lot of different information supports the recipient's opportunity to solve his problem of a lack of information on his own. For this reason, it can be assumed that it is a rather rare case that a recipient depends only on one specific source on the Internet and that trust, as it is defined here, rarely becomes relevant on the Internet. Therefore, on the one hand, digitization enhances problems of trust because of a high complexity, quality problems, and possibly conflicting sources that are difficult to assess. On the other hand, digitization reduces problems of trust because of the possibility of cross-checking information quickly and easily, and because there is no need to depend on one specific information source.

Nevertheless, it is not entirely impossible for trust to become relevant in the online context. Trust is especially likely to come into effect with recipients who lack resources, for example cognitive resources, as the experience and ability to search for and evaluate online information sources can be difficult for those recipients due to the flood of information and problems of quality (Eysenbach and Jadad 2001, p. 24). Trust also becomes relevant if people do not want to invest their own resources, e.g., if they do not want to invest a lot of time to solve their problem. Even if it is much easier and quicker to get additional information from several other sources on the Internet than with sources in the offline context, the recipient still has to invest more resources when looking for online information from additional sources than if he just depends on one specific source and adopts the perspective this source has on the topic.

When trust becomes relevant, it enables the source as a trustee to have a high impact on the recipient as a trustor. When trusting a source, the recipient depends only on this source and its perspective on a topic without using other online information sources, and consequently, the source has a far-reaching impact on his decisions and actions. Therefore, the situation of trust is a special situation and very desirable from the perspective of information sources.

4   Conclusion

In this contribution it was argued that trust becomes relevant more seldom than previous research and the general use of the term in everyday language and the media may make us believe. This was demonstrated in the context of online information sources in which trust is assumed to be an especially rare and special occasion.

Specific preconditions for trust to come into effect showed that trust is not relevant in every social interaction but that other similar concepts come into effect in situations that share some aspects of a trust situation. For this reason, it is necessary, on the Internet as well as in other contexts, to precisely look at the situation and the relationship between actors to decide whether trust is relevant in this context or not.

Since these preconditions and the specific function of trust only really come into effect if the trustor engages in an action, trust was defined with a focus on the trusting action instead of an expectation, evaluation, or willingness. If applied to information sources, this definition conceptualizes trust as an action of selection that impacts the consequent decisions and actions of the trustor, which makes trust an important factor in media effects. Nevertheless, if defined this way, trust is not relevant in all information contexts but only if that information is directly relevant for people's decisions and actions.

On the Internet, the complexity of which seems to be a fitting context for trust to be relevant, trust is less omnipresent and relevant in fewer contexts than previously assumed. Since trust is defined here as a specific relationship of dependency between a recipient and a source in which the recipient transfers responsibility for the selection of information to the source, trust can only be conceptualized with reference to one specific source but not several information sources. Because several sources are very easily and quickly accessible on the Internet, which supports the opportunity for the recipient to solve his problem of a lack of information on his own, trust might become a rather rare case in this context.

Even if trust might be only rarely relevant in the context of online information sources, it is still important to analyze trust in this context for two reasons. First, research on trust in online information sources is needed to explore empirically the real significance that trust has in this context. Second, even if it might be rare, the high impact that a trusted information source can have on a recipient is another reason that research on trust in online information sources is relevant.

References

Babrow, A. S., & Kline, K. N. (2000). From "reducing" to "coping with" uncertainty: Reconceptualizing the central challenge in breast self-exams. *Social Science & Medicine, 51*(12), 1805–1816.

Baier, A. (1986). Trust and antitrust. *Ethics, 96*(2), 231–260.

Barber, B. (1983). *The logic and limits of trust*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Butler, J. K., & Cantrell, R. S. (1984). A behavioral decision theory approach to modeling dyadic trust in superiors and subordinates. *Psychological Reports, 55*, 19–28.

Coleman, J. S. (1990). *Foundations of social theory*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Havard University Press.

Corritore, C. L., Kracher, B., & Wiedenbeck, S. (2003). On-line trust: Concepts, evolving themes, a model. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies, 58*, 737–758.

Dietz, G., & Den Hartog, D. (2006). Measuring trust inside organisations. *Personnel Review, 35* (5), 557–588.

Endreß, M. (2002). *Vertrauen*. Bielefeld: transcript Verl.

Endreß, M. (2010). Vertrauen: Soziologische Perspektiven. In M. Maring (Ed.), *Vertrauen: Zwischen sozialem Kitt und der Senkung von Transaktionskosten* (Vol. 3, pp. 91–114). Karlsruhe: KIT Scientific Publishing.

Endreß, M. (2012). Vertrauen und Misstrauen—Soziologische Überlegungen. In C. Schilcher, M. Will-Zocholl, & M. Ziegler (Eds.), *Vertrauen und Kooperation in der Arbeitswelt*. Wiesbaden: Springer Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Eysenbach, G. (2008). Credibility of health information and digital media: New perspectives and implications for youth. In A. J. Flanagin & M. J. Metzger (Eds.), *Digital media, youth, and credibility* (pp. 123–154). Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Eysenbach, G., & Jadad, A. R. (2001). Evidence-based patient choice and consumer health informatics in the Internet age. *Journal of Medical Internet Research, 3*(2), e19.

Flanagin, A. J., & Metzger, M. J. (2008). Digital media and youth: Unparalleled opportunity and unprecedented responsibility. In A. J. Flanagin & M. J. Metzger (Eds.), *Digital media, youth, and credibility* (pp. 5–28). Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Gambetta, D. (1988). Foreword. In D. Gambetta (Ed.), *Trust: Making and breaking cooperative relations* (pp. IX–X). New York: Basil Blackwell.

Gambetta, D. (2001). Können wir dem Vertrauen vertrauen? In M. Hartmann & C. Offe (Eds.), *Vertrauen: Die Grundlage des sozialen Zusammenhalts* (pp. 204–237). Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verl.

Giddens, A. (1995). *Konsequenzen der Moderne*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main.

Guenther, T., & Möllering, G. (2010). A framework for studying the problem of trust in online settings. In D. Latusek & A. Gerbasi (Eds.), *Trust and technology in a ubiquitous modern environment: Theoretical and methodological perspectives* (pp. 16–34). Hershey: IGI Global.

Hardin, R. (2001). Conceptions and explanations of trust. In K. S. Cook (Ed.), *Trust in society* (pp. 3–39). New York: Russell Sage.

Hartmann, M. (2010). Die Komplexität des Vertrauens. In M. Maring (Ed.), *Vertrauen: Zwischen sozialem Kitt und der Senkung von Transaktionskosten* (Vol. 3, pp. 15–26). Karlsruhe: KIT Scientific Publishing.

Hovland, C. I., Janis, I. L., Irving, L., & Kelley, H. (1953). *Communication and persuasion: Psychological studies of opinion change*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Kelton, K., Fleischmann, K. R., & Wallce, W. A. (2008). Trust in digital information. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 59*(3), 363–374.

Kieserling, A. (2012). Vertrauen: Ein Mechanismus der Reduktion sozialer Komplexität (1968). In O. Jahraus, A. Nassehi, M. Grizelj, I. Saake, C. Kirchmeier, & J. Müller (Eds.), *Luhmann-Handbuch: Leben—Werk—Wirkung* (pp. 140–144). Stuttgart: Metzler.

Kohring, M. (2004). *Vertrauen in Journalismus: Theorie und Empirie*. Konstanz: UVK Verlags-Gesell.

Kohring, M. (2006). Zum Verhältnis von Wissen und Vertrauen: Eine Typologie am Beispiel öffentlicher Kommunikation. In K. Pühringer & S. Zielmann (Eds.), *Vom Wissen und Nicht-Wissen einer Wissenschaft* (Vol. 7, pp. 121–134). Berlin: Lit Verlag.

Kohring, M. (2007). Vertrauen statt Wissen—Qualität im Wissenschaftsjournalismus. In G. Kienzlen, J. Lublinski, & V. Stollorz (Eds.), *Fakt, Fiktion, Fälschung: Trends im Wissenschaftsjournalismus* (pp. 25–38). Konstanz: UVK Verlags-Gesell.

Kramer, R. M. (1999). Trust and distrust in organizations: Emerging perspectives, enduring questions. *Annual Review of Psychology, 50*, 569–598.

Lagerspetz, O. (1998). *Trust: The tacit demand*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Lewicki, R. J., & Bunker, B. B. (1996). Developing and maintaining trust in work relationships. In R. M. Kramer & T. R. Tyler (Eds.), *Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research* (pp. 114–139). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Lewicki, R. T., McAllister, D. J., & Bier, R. J. (1998). Trust and distrust: New relationships and realities. *The Academy of Management Review, 23*(3), 438–458.

Lewis, J. D., & Weigert, A. (1985). Trust as a social reality. *Social Forces, 63*(4), 967–985.

Luhmann, N. (1968). *Vertrauen: Ein Mechanismus der Reduktion sozialer Komplexität*. Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag.

Luhmann, N. (2000). Familiarity, confidence, trust: Problems and alternatives. In D. Gambetta (Ed.), *Trust: Making and breaking cooperative relations* (pp. 94–107). Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoormann, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *The Academy of Mangament Review, 20*(3), 709–734.

McKnight, D. H., Cummings, L. L., & Norman, L. C. (1998). Initial trust formation in new organizational relationships. *The Academy of Management Review, 23*(3), 473–490.

Möllering, G. (2001). The nature of trust: From Georg Simmel to a theory of expectation, interpretation and suspension. *Sociology, 35*, 403–420.

Müller, J. (2013). *Mechanisms of trust: News media in democratic and authoritarian regimes*. Frankfurt: Campus-Verl.

Neuberger, C. (2009). Internet, Journalismus und Öffentlichkeit: Analyse des Medienumbruchs. In C. Neuberger (Ed.), *Journalismus im Internet. Profession—Partizipation—Technisierung*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwiss.

Preisendörfer, P. (1995). Vertrauen als soziologische Kategorie: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer entscheidungstheoretischen Fundierung des Vertrauenskonzepts. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie, 24*(4), 263–272.

Ripperger, T. (2003). *Ökonomik des Vertrauens: Analyse eines Organisationsprinzips* (2nd ed.). Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Seligman, A. B. (2000). *The problem of trust* (2nd ed.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Simmel, G. (1999). *Soziologie: Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*. Frankfurt am Main.

van Eimeren, B., & Frees, B. (2014). Ergebnisse der ARD/ZDF-Onlinestudie 2014: 79 Prozent der Deutschen online—Zuwachs bei mobiler Internetnutzung und Bewegtbild. *Media Perspektiven, 7–8*, 378–396.

Warren, M. E. (1999). *Democracy and trust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wolling, J. (2004). Qualitätserwartungen, Qualitätswahrnehmungen und die Nutzung von Fernsehserien: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie und Empirie der subjektiven Qualitätsauswahl von Medienangeboten. *Publizistik, 49*, 171–193.