

## Rethinking Control and Trust Dynamics in and between Organizations

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**ABSTRACT** Control and trust issues are at the heart of collaboration in and between organizations. In this introduction to the Special Issue (SI) on the control-trust dynamics, we first propose an integrative framework to take stock of the main themes discussed in both the micro and macro literature. We then contextualize how the papers in this issue flesh out key mechanisms underlying the interplay between control and trust over time. The remainder of the introduction highlights directions for future research by refining and extending our understanding of control and trust as mechanisms of collaboration across levels of analysis. Our future research suggestions are organized around the main building blocks of control-trust research: (1) constructs, (2) interactions, (3) actors, (4) temporal dynamics, (5) outcomes, and (6) context.

**Keywords:** control, trust, trustworthiness, cooperation, formal and informal governance

### INTRODUCTION

A difficult challenge that organizational actors face is how to arrange their control and trust mechanisms to reduce opportunism, enhance cohesion and predictability, and achieve high performance. Control broadly refers to the direction and regulation of behaviour to achieve desired outcomes through the establishment of rules, norms, procedures, incentives, and enforcement mechanisms. Trust is commonly defined as ‘the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party’ (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712). On the one hand, when levels of control and trust are effectively

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combined within organizational systems, individuals exhibit high levels of commitment, motivation, cooperation, and performance because they more clearly understand the standards that they need to achieve and are confident that they will benefit from working to achieve those standards (Bachmann, 2001; Bijlsma-Frankema and Costa, 2005). On the other hand, control and trust-building efforts draw on distinct and often opposing social and psychological mechanisms. For instance, some forms of control may undermine trust, and therefore organizational performance, by signalling bad intentions and undermining the intrinsic motivation to cooperate (Ghoshal and Moran, 1996). As actors vary greatly in their understanding, motivation, capabilities, and objectives, it is not always obvious which mechanisms and interactions yield positive or negative organizational outcomes (Christ, 2013; Long, 2010; Vosselman and van der Meer-Kooistra, 2009).

Recent events illustrate the salience of these issues. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated remote work and reliance on digital tools, underscoring the importance of striking a balance between control and trust. The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in organizational settings also brings issues of control and trust to the forefront. AI systems are increasingly used to automate tasks and make decisions. Effective control and trust mechanisms are needed in AI-powered collaboration to ensure ethical use and understanding of the technology. Trust in AI systems is critical for individuals, but control is necessary to ensure that the AI system aligns with organizational values.

Scholarship on control-trust dynamics is currently at a critical crossroads. Recently, a review of the control-trust dynamics literature (Long and Sitkin, 2018) and a meta-analysis of contractual and relational governance (Cao and Lumineau, 2015) identified several theoretical oversights and conceptual blind spots that have significantly limited the researchers' capacities to build a cumulative and coherent knowledge base about control-trust dynamics. For example, while scholars across disciplines (e.g., organizational behaviour, strategic management, international business, organization theory, marketing, accounting, and supply chain management) conduct research on control-trust issues, much of this work has been 'siloed' in different disciplinary perspectives. This has led to a micro-macro divide, resulting in a control-trust literature that is fragmented around competing perspectives, each of which examines only certain aspects of, or mechanisms underlying, complex control-trust relationships. This lack of integration could lead to mis-specified models and incomplete or biased conclusions.

This introduction provides an overview of several of these controversies. Our aim is to reinvigorate the discussion on control-trust dynamics by providing novel insights and perspectives. We begin by discussing six fundamental building blocks of control-trust research, and the current state of knowledge about them. Next, we outline the main insights presented in the articles featured in this special issue (SI), which offer fresh perspectives on control-trust dynamics. Finally, we describe how scholars can advance research by building on the most promising directions for research on control-trust dynamics.

## AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

We organize our discussion of the literature around six main themes that form an integrative framework (see Figure 1). We present each theme separately for analytical

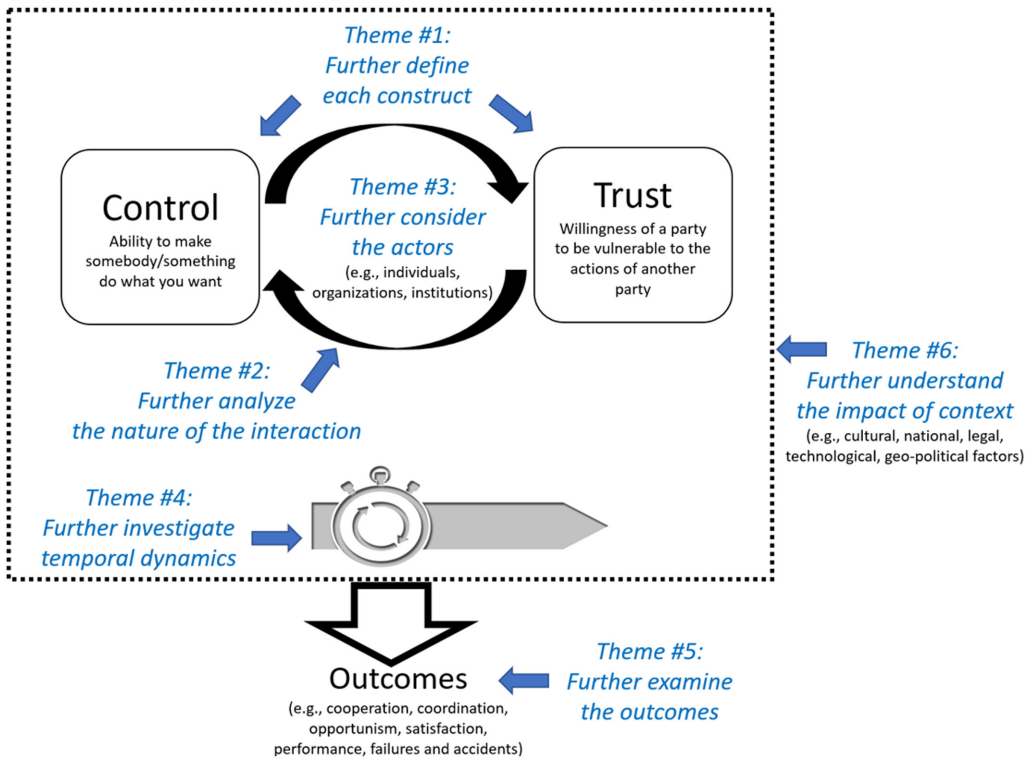


Figure 1. Conceptual elements of control-trust dynamics

purposes. These themes are foundational, conceptual building blocks of control-trust research, informed by Whetten's (1989) suggestions on developing theory. We suggest that the key facets of control-trust dynamics are addressed by the six following themes: (1) constructs, (2) interactions, (3) actors, (4) temporal dynamics, (5) outcomes, and (6) context. These themes together provide a comprehensive roadmap to control-trust dynamics.

Micro-focused researchers examine control-trust dynamics within organizations, while macro-focused scholars examine such dynamics in interorganizational relationships and interactions between firms and their environments. Control aims to achieve predictability and coordination, while trust achieves openness and flexibility based on belief and confidence in others' competence, consideration, and consistency. The conditions under which controls and trust complement, undermine, or substitute for each other comprise the core challenge for control-trust research. Control-trust dynamics involve a broad range of actors, including individuals, organizations, and institutions. Control-trust temporal dynamics refer to how control mechanisms and trust change over time in interpersonal and organizational relationships. Control-trust dynamics can be influenced by external factors, such as changes in the competitive landscape, regulations, or social norms. Outcomes are observable or measurable consequences arising from the interplay between control and trust. Contextual factors are elements within, across, and beyond organizations that impact control-trust dynamics.

The micro and macro scholarship on control-trust dynamics has led to fragmentation and missed research opportunities. For example, existing perspectives on control-trust dynamics fail to effectively outline how individuals' control and trust perceptions are influenced by their concurrent experiences with multiple referents: the organization, their supervisors, peers, and direct reports (Long, 2021). Understanding control-trust dynamics such as these is vital for managers and organizations seeking to build and maintain effective relationships in complex organizational environments. In Table I, we summarize the current knowledge in micro and macro research along the six themes we have identified.

We next present a brief synopsis of the articles included in this SI and how they contribute to the themes discussed above.

## SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES IN THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Sweet et al. (2023) contribute to *Theme 1 (constructs)* and *Theme 2 (control-trust interaction)* by examining conditions where informal controls can foster trust. They examine the early trust formation in work relationships based on a theory that outlines how the unofficial socialization practice of workgroup hazing can foster organizational trust in new organizational entrants. They describe how hazing constitutes a bounded context where workgroups systemically force newcomers to demonstrate their trustworthiness to the group insiders. The authors identify two motivations for workgroup hazing. First, group insiders feel vulnerable to newcomers, and seek to shift that risk back onto newcomers. Second, group insiders perceive hazing as a way to establishing person-group fit that can serve as a proxy for the entrant's trustworthiness. The authors also describe how the perceived trustworthiness of newcomers affects how group insiders subsequently attempt to exercise control through hazing processes.

Hurmelinna-Laukkanen et al. (2023) explore how emergent and 'unowned' features in new technology deployment can serve as a catalyst for unintended changes in control and trust at all organizational levels (*Theme 4, dynamics*). Their study illustrates how four unintended control practices (incidental monitoring, organizational surveillance, individual concealment, and collective resistance) can lead to varying control and trust perceptions in different organizational groups that shape organizational members' experiences (especially trust, suspicion, and distrust) in unexpected and dysfunctional ways. Their work challenges assumptions concerning deliberate managerial action (*Theme 3, actor involvement*) and draws attention to the ways that unintended control practices can be seen as initially neutral, but can lead to a point at which suspicion or low-level trust deteriorates into distrust. Their study also explores how distrust development may be halted in high-trust context without specific managerial intervention, and how reversing cycles of distrust may start from reducing vulnerability to unintended control practices (*Theme 2, control-trust interactions*).

Bhardwaj and Sergeeva (2023) use a case study of the Magnum Photos cooperative organization to show how organizations adopt controls to combat opportunism (*Theme 5, outcomes*). Magnum Photos is a member-owned cooperative that represents photographers for assignments, licences their photos, and sells their prints. Photographers are highly concerned about the misuse of their photos. Magnum Photos has lessened these concerns considerably by extensively screening new members based on shared values,

Table I. Themes in the micro and macro research on control and trust

Themes	Micro Research	Macro Research
#1 Control & trust constructs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the effects of formal/informal controls on individual attitudinal states (McAllister, 1995)</li> <li>• Distinctions between control input/process/output (Ouchi, 1979) and elements of trustworthiness (i.e., competence/benevolence/ integrity) (Mayer et al., 1995)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on formal contracts (Faems et al., 2008; Woolthuis et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Analysis of the functions of contracts (e.g, control vs. coordination) (Mayer and Argyres, 2004; Reuer and Ariño, 2007)</li> <li>• Distinction between different dimensions of trust (integrity vs. competence) (Connelly et al., 2018; Krishnan et al., 2016; Malhotra and Lumineau, 2011)</li> </ul>
#2 Control & trust interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the effects of joint decisions about use of manager control and trust-building activities (Long and Sitkin, 2006; Weibel, 2007)</li> <li>• Analysis of how controls increase/decrease trust among individuals (Weibel et al., 2016)</li> <li>• How control and trust influence each other (Costa and Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on questions related to trust-control complementarity vs. substitution (Cao and Lumineau, 2015)</li> <li>• Analysis of the impact of control tools such as contracts on trust</li> <li>• Influence of prior ties on contractual choice (Gulati and Sitch, 2008; Ryall and Sampson, 2009)</li> </ul>
#3 Actors subjected to control & trust dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing assumptions of limited managerial involvement in trust-building (Long and Sitkin, 2018)</li> <li>• Need to include direct analyses of trustors' control perceptions (Whitener et al., 1998)</li> <li>• Increasing research into how managers enact control and trust-building and effects of multiple activities (Long, 2018)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of the boundary spanners' profiles (e.g, occupation, linguistic attributes) on control-trust mechanisms (Argyres and Mayer, 2007; Bercovitz and Tyler, 2014; Ün et al., 2022)</li> <li>• Effect of contract style on emotions, behaviours, and expectations among organizational actors and other stakeholders (Lumineau, 2017; Weber and Mayer, 2011)</li> </ul>

(Continues)

Table I. (Continued)

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Micro Research</i>	<i>Macro Research</i>
#4 Control & trust temporal dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on how applied controls influence trust attitudes (McAllister, 1995)</li> <li>• Developing ideas about how control/trust assessment influences control/trust-building activities (Ferrin et al., 2007).</li> <li>• Experimental researchers find that 'how' actors apply controls influences trust development (Coletti et al., 2005).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of temporal context and different types of uncertainty at different stages of relationships (Brattström et al., 2019; Oliveira and Lumineau, 2017; Woolthuis et al., 2005)</li> <li>• Different kinds of contractual mechanisms and applications can trigger different trust dynamics, and governance mechanisms in alliances can operate as both complements and substitutes at different points in the relationship (Faems et al., 2008; Keller et al., 2021)</li> </ul>
#5 Outcomes related to control & trust dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on how managerial controls influence subordinate trust (Weibel, 2007)</li> <li>• Evaluation of trust attitudes, control perceptions, and control/trust effects on cooperation (Shapiro, 1987)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigation of how control-trust dynamics influence opportunism (Cavusgil et al., 2004; Liu et al., 2009), satisfaction, and performance (Heide et al., 2014; Kumar et al., 2011; Poppo and Zenger, 1998)</li> </ul>
#6 Context influencing control & trust dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examines the influence of cultural, national and geo-political factors on control/trust dynamics within organizations (Pearce et al., 2000)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence of the nature of the transaction (e.g., asset specificity), legal context (Zhou and Poppo, 2010), cultural context (Cao et al., 2018; Handley and Angst, 2015), and type of relationships (e.g., strategic alliance, JV, buyer-supplier) (Burkert et al., 2012)</li> </ul>

defining members' copyrights clearly, and limiting members' autonomy. These controls engender trust in the cooperative, in part by creating consistency in interpretations of other members' behaviours, and by helping members to express their values and aspirations. Transaction cost economics and agency theory might predict that eventually values-based screening efforts will fail as a few opportunistic members find ways to evade these controls. However, Magnum Photos has survived and thrived for over 75 years, suggesting conditions under which control and trust can be sustained as complements (*Theme 2, control-trust interaction*).

Vedel and Geraldi (2023) also contribute to *Theme 2 (control-trust interaction)* by adopting a constitutive approach to control-trust dynamics. A constitutive approach assumes that social interaction brings phenomena into existence and sets the conditions for how they develop (Putnam et al., 2016). The authors specifically shed light on managers' roles, not merely in reacting to external dynamics, but also in creating and shaping such dynamics (*Theme 3, actor involvement*). They conduct a longitudinal case study exploring how managers in a pharmaceutical company dealt with control-trust dynamics in a collaboration with a university and a biotech firm. The authors suggest that paradoxical control-trust dynamics require managers' 'More-Than' responses, which is a new category of responses that reflects paradoxical rather than substitutional (Either-Or) and complementary (Both-And) control-trust dynamics. This study deepens our understanding of the nature of the interaction between control and trust by investigating managers' extensive repertoire of responses to deal with control-trust dynamics in their interorganizational relationships.

Swärd et al. (2023) bring a novel perspective, in particular, to *Theme 4 (dynamics)* through an analysis of the relationship between control-trust dynamics and interorganizational relationships (IOR) dynamics. With a focus on temporal issues, the authors investigate how control and trust refer to and create one another at specific points in the relationship. Their longitudinal case study of a client–contractor relationship suggests that conflicting enactments of vulnerability and risk caused by critical incidents lead to tensions between the parties regarding how and when they rely on control and trust. These findings are important for understanding control-trust dynamics because they suggest that there are continuous adjustments in the relationship between control and trust as an IOR evolves.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTROL-TRUST DYNAMICS RESEARCH

In this section, we describe what we consider to be the most promising avenues in control-trust research. Building on our integrative framework, the specific contributions made by the papers in this SI, as well as the extant literature, we hope to open up new perspectives on future areas of inquiry.

### Theme 1: Constructs

Clarifying control and trust constructs and their underlying conceptualizations is critical to advancing our understanding of control-trust phenomena. First, construct clarity provides a common terminology to articulate our ideas and support



conceptualizations (Suddaby, 2010). Second, clarifying the definition and scope of these constructs is likely to improve their operationalizations in empirical investigations (Schwab, 1980). By generating more definitive pictures of how control and trust are composed and operationally differentiated, scholars can more clearly analyse how these factors independently and jointly influence authorities' and subordinates' decisions, actions, and experiences, as well as evaluate how control and trust dynamics are balanced.

*Direction #1a: Disentangle formal vs. informal mechanisms.* One challenge that control-scholars must confront is to identify ways to clearly distinguish formal and informal controls (Cardinal et al., 2010). This is important because numerous studies (e.g., Das and Teng, 1998) suggest that formal and informal control applications can produce a significant impact on trust. It has been noted that some of the most highly cited works in the field distinguish formal and informal controls based on incomplete or incorrect attributes (Long and Sitkin, 2018).<sup>[1],[2]</sup> For example, traditional sociological treatments of formal controls only emphasize its negative and trust-undermining aspects while ignoring how formal control can facilitate trust when it reduces fears of abuse and supports positive action (Sitkin, 1995). Similarly, the strong embeddedness and rigid resistance to change that sometimes accompanies informational, cultural control has been given limited attention in the control literature (Merchant and Van der Stede, 2007).

Future research should continue to examine the composition and impacts produced by informal control mechanisms. In addition to outlining specific motives for implementing these controls, two articles in this issue provide clear evidence that informal controls can be carefully designed and implemented in ways that ensure members maintain particular values (Barker, 1993; Cardinal et al., 2004, 2010). For example, Bhardwaj and Sergeeva (2023) detail how Magnum Photos employed informal control mechanisms to reduce member opportunism, enhance coordination and cooperation, and ultimately, foster greater trust among organizational members. Sweet et al. (2023) closely examine how controllers apply informal controls through socialization-based 'hazing' processes to create situations where group members must demonstrate their trustworthiness to a collective.

A promising avenue for future control-trust research is laid out by Vedel and Geraldi (2023). They analyse formal and informal alliance governance mechanisms using Keller et al.'s (2021) typology, which distinguishes four types of mechanisms based on how they are codified (formal versus informal) and how they are enforced (i.e., contractual or legal enforcement vs. relational or self-enforcing mechanisms). The four mechanism types are: formal contractual, formal relational, informal contractual, and informal relational governance. This typology separates which controls are implemented from how they are implemented (Long and Sitkin, 2018). Future research should leverage this typology to more directly examine the effects of using controls to monitor or coordinate others' actions.

*Direction #1b: Connect theoretical contributions from different disciplines.* As noted above, the relationship between control and trust has been studied in a variety of business fields,



including organizational behaviour, strategy, operations management, marketing, and accounting. These fields in turn draw from psychology, sociology, and economics. There remain many important opportunities, however, for the micro and the macro literatures in management to draw even more deeply from the social science disciplines, as well as from research in the other business fields. We describe a few examples here.

The management literature on interorganizational relationships draws very little on the economics literature that uses game theory to analyse repeated exchange between partners (what it calls ‘relational contracts’; e.g., Baker et al., 2002). This economics literature emphasizes the role of non-contracted financial incentives to motivate cooperation, rather than trust as understood in the management literature, and has produced evidence consistent with the use of such incentives (e.g., Gil and Zanarone, 2016, 2017). A natural question this suggests is: ‘When are non-contracted incentives used to govern interorganizational relationships, and when is trust relied upon instead to obtain the benefits of enhanced flexibility and reduced costs attained through informal, flexible approaches?’.

Another research opportunity is for management scholars to build more connections with the rich literature on control in accounting (Dekker, 2004; Velez et al., 2008; Vosselman and van der Meer-Kooistra, 2009). Contracts often feature one of several payment structures that give rise to alternate accounting practices for interorganizational relationships: e.g., cost plus, cost plus/incentive fee, and fixed price (e.g., Kalnins and Mayer, 2004). How do each of these payment arrangements – which are forms of control – affect the development of trust, if at all, and what are the implications for relationship performance? Addressing this and similar questions is important because such systems of control rely upon trust in those supplying the underlying information, in the people or algorithms that analyse and process that information, and in the decisions made about how to report that information.

A third example concerns how to bring psychology into the study of interorganizational governance. Several studies have begun to address this topic by studying how social psychological theories of framing can explain control-oriented elements of contract design, with implications for trust development (Christ et al., 2012; Weber and Bauman, 2019; Weber and Mayer, 2011). Future research could build on this literature by exploring how other psychological considerations affect contract design, and naturally, different contract designs often lead to very different interparty dynamics and outcomes.

*Direction #1c: Improve the operationalization of control and trust.* Three questions that scholars need to address more specifically are: (1) Who is doing the controlling and trusting? (2) When are those actions taking place? and (3) Why are the actions being directed in particular ways? By observing how technologies alter organizational control practices (de Vaujany et al., 2021; Sewell and Taskin, 2015; Zuboff, 2015), Hurmelinna-Laukkanen et al. (2023) examine the constitution of controls as relational practices that are applied through monitoring and surveillance (Brivot and Gendron, 2011; Patil and Bernstein, 2021). They outline several forms of control-based actions that have not been clearly and systematically distinguished previously: incidental monitoring (i.e., monitoring others’ work habits and changes in work content), organizational

surveillance (i.e., covertly evaluating how individuals act in relation to a technology's functions), individual concealment (avoiding particular patterns of technology usage), and collective resistance (resisting and regulating technology usage). While these forms require further definition, future work could examine how they may operate differently in different contexts.

Producing accurate operationalizations of controls and trust-building activities requires explicit references to specific individuals, groups, or organizations who are targets of control and trust-building activities, as well as specific factors that motivate those actions (Bijlsma-Frankema et al., 2015; Long and Sitkin, 2018; Rousseau et al., 1998; Weibel et al., 2015). Bhardwaj and Sergeeva's (2023) address this challenge by describing how value orientations played critical roles in decision-making around control and trust issues at Magnum Photos (Alvesson and Lindkvist, 1993; Ouchi, 1980). By initiating screening processes that ensured members were committed to similar values, they describe how Magnum Photos sought to foster a collective sense of meaning and increase trust between members which reduced opportunism, smoothed decision-making, and obviated the need to initiate more formal and costly control actions.

As scholars pursue construct clarity, they must address assertions that control and trust comprise a conceptual 'duality': a relativistic state where control and trust comprise dynamic elements that perpetually refer to, define, and create one another (Möllering, 2005). While the duality concept has been influential, it has never been operationalized, and questions persist about when and how actors actually invoke dualistic control-trust perspectives. Swärd et al.'s (2023) article highlights conditions in which control-trust dualities are more and less salient in interorganizational relationships. They outline when critical incidents highlight risks and power asymmetries that initiate action-reaction cycles, and cause actors to recalibrate their assessments of how control and trust relate to one another dynamically. As research in this area moves forward, scholars should seek to operationalize conditions under which actors are unable to perceive control or trust without the other factor being present, as well as conditions in which control and trust become more salient or are only recognized in the presence of the other factor.

## **Theme 2: Control-trust interaction**

Different modes of governance leverage distinct and often opposing psychological and behavioural mechanisms (Lumineau, 2017; Weber and Bauman, 2019). Therefore, greater clarity is needed regarding the mechanisms underlying each type of governance individually and collectively (e.g., why and how mechanisms substitute or complement each other). Many opportunities exist to further explore, for instance, how different governance and control-trust-building configurations influence information processing and, in turn, varying levels of problem solving.

*Direction #2a: Go beyond the substitution vs. complementary debate.* Although progress has been made towards reconciling some of the broader aspects of the complement-substitution debate (Cao and Lumineau, 2015; Long and Sitkin, 2018), significant questions remain

to be answered regarding why particular patterns of complementarity and substitution exist. There is an increasing call for scholarly work that goes beyond the question of when control and trust are complements or substitutes. For example, Grabner and Moers (2013) examine how managers integrate controls and other relationship-building activities (including trust-building activities) to motivate the achievement of various performance objectives (Merchant et al., 2003; Merchant and Van der Stede, 2007). In addition, Long's (2018) multi-method study demonstrates how managers work to promote specific forms of cooperation by combining specific forms of controls with particular demonstrations of trustworthiness.

One potentially important area of research is how an individual's perspective and motives might influence their experiences with control-trust dynamics. Related to this question, both Bhardwaj and Sergeeva (2023) and Sweet et al. (2023) in this issue outline complementary effects of informal controls and trust-building on unit cohesion. They suggest that sense of common purpose and organizational trust exhibited by individuals who share the same values and are accepted as a part of the 'in-group', may respond positively to combinations of strong informal norms, practices, and shared values. Both sets of authors also point out, however, that 'out-group' members (i.e., those who do not maintain the same values) may see those same mechanisms as excessively controlling and exclusionary.

Several observations presented in the articles here suggest that it may be time for control-trust scholars to look beyond the complementary-substitution debate to examine other control-trust relationships. For example, Hurmelinna-Laukkanen et al. (2023) demonstrate how 'unowned' processes can stimulate the development of unintended control practices (MacKay and Chia, 2013). They suggest that, due to the complexity of organizational contexts and the multiplex nature of value matrices, control and trust dynamics are constantly changing in emergent and often unintentional ways (Möllering, 2013). Therefore, the efforts authorities make to apply controls or demonstrate trust may at times foster negative reactions, while at other times generate positive reactions from the same referents. Building on these initial observations, future research should examine the stability and fluidity of complementarity and substitutability of control and trust over time, consistent with Keller et al.'s (2021) study described above.

The 'More-Than' responses Vedel and Geraldi (2023) introduce provide a potentially important perspective that pushes past examining control and trust as complements or substitutes only. More-Than responses are one way of 'connecting oppositional pairs, moving outside of them, or situating them in a new relationship' (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 128). The authors observe that managers may enact More-Than responses through the efforts they make to transcend existing organizational boundaries or engage in innovative collaborations that go far beyond the specifications of current agreements. When organizational actors implement these types of responses, they reframe and transcend relationships in ways that lead these exchange partners to develop relational parameters based on new expectations (Brattström et al., 2019; Faems et al., 2008; Inkpen and Currall, 2004; Zheng et al., 2008).

*Direction #2b: Incorporate more diverse methodologies.* It is noteworthy that all four of the empirical papers accepted for this SI employed qualitative methodologies. For

example, Vedel and Geraldi (2023) use a qualitative, process-based approach to integrate managerial and environmental perspectives and examine in depth the paradoxical tensions present in control-trust dynamics. By employing a longitudinal analysis, they are able to examine the various categories of actions managers take to ensure that their interorganizational relationships perform and endure over time. Hurmelinna-Laukkanen et al. (2023) similarly employ ethnographic techniques to chronicle how unintended control practices emerge in the wake of shifting control-trust dynamics (Järventie-Thesleff et al., 2016). Bhardwaj and Sergeeva's (2023) historical case study (Argyres et al., 2020; Cardinal et al., 2018) combines collected memoirs, private archival data, and interviews to identify factors that enable organizations to redress opportunism concerns, build trust among members of similar values catalysed copyrighting innovations.

Swärd et al. (2023) also employ a process-based approach because they see control and trusting behaviours as 'an emergent property of the moment-by-moment interactions between actors and the environment of their action' (Suchman, 1987, p. 179). They believe that this approach is necessary to understand how parties establish control and trust 'domains' which they describe as defined points in time when positive control and trust dualities exist.

While possibly coincidental, the apparent efficacy of qualitative techniques may suggest that research into control-trust dynamics remains in a relatively nascent stage, and that qualitative approaches uniquely facilitate the development of rich descriptions of previously unidentified control-trust dynamics. On the other hand, more recently-developed quantitative approaches such as fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (Fiss, 2011) also show significant analytical promise, especially when more than two constructs (bundle, package, system) are involved. For instance, Hofman et al. (2017) conceptualize contracts as bundles of different functions and use fuzzy set qualitative comparative analyses on a sample of 125 collaborative projects to analyse the interplay between different contractual functions across different contextual settings. Their results indicate that contractual coordination is an important function for achieving highly performing collaborative projects. Future research should continue to apply these kinds of qualitative techniques. Researchers may refine these perspectives using quantitative, longitudinal, and 'big-data' methodologies to extend these insights across time and organizational contexts.

### **Theme 3: Actor Involvement**

As scholars continue to formulate a detailed understanding of how actors enact control and trust dynamics within and across organizations, several of the articles in this issue present the field with interesting directions for future research concerning actor involvement. For example, Vedel and Geraldi's (2023) process-based constitutive approach to evaluating how managers address the paradoxes inherent in control-trust dynamics explains how managers concurrently respond to environmental pressures by enacting opportunities, structures, and constraints that impact other actors and organizations (Putnam et al., 2016; Weick, 1988). They observe that, at times, managers see control and trust as paradoxical, while at other times, control and trust appear to them as entirely

coherent and consistent (Sitkin, 1995). Scholars could utilize Vedel and Gerali's perspective to examine how individuals grapple with control-trust dynamics across a range of topics including how self-reinforcing virtuous and vicious control and trust loops emerge and develop (Faems et al., 2008; Möllering and Sydow, 2019; Vlaar et al., 2007), how perceived complementarities between contractual and relational governance mechanisms are identified and perceived (Zheng et al., 2008), and how control and trust evolve from initial conditions in long-term relationships (Ariño et al., 2014; Inkpen and Currall, 2004; Mayer and Argyres, 2004). By moving past thinking merely about complementary and substitutive relationships, their work should motivate research into various factors that influence individuals' perceptions and behaviours, such as goal ambiguity and goal conflicts (Brattström et al., 2019; Howard et al., 2019; Huber et al., 2013).

Alternatively, Hurmelinna-Laukkanen et al. (2023) describe situations where control may be exercised by individuals who lack legitimate authority but affect control-trust dynamics through upward-influence mechanisms. Further research along this line of inquiry could delineate how power asymmetries arise and contribute to control applications, as well as how employee agency and opportunism manifest in control-trust dynamics (MacKay and Chia, 2013); how distrust develops and can be repaired (Brattström et al., 2019; Gillespie and Siebert, 2017; Gustafsson et al., 2021); and how elements of control can be applied to best effect (Cooper, 2005; Delbridge and Ezzamel, 2005). This research may assist scholars in identifying and comprehending how individual, subordinate-based factors influence authorities' control and trust-building decisions (den Hartog et al., 2002; Long, 2018; Long and Sitkin, 2006).

Swärd et al.'s (2023) article shows how future research can generate important insights into how actors react when critical incidents create relationship asymmetries (Majchrzak et al., 2015). Their perspective highlights the importance of understanding actors' asymmetric perceptions within interorganizational relationships. Specifically, their work describes how critical incidents increase the salience both of actors' vulnerabilities and the dualities inherent on control-trust dynamics (Möllering, 2005; Möllering and Sydow, 2019; Sydow and Windeler, 2003). They delineate how asymmetries cause tensions in relationships because actors react differently to the control and trust-building (or lack of) mechanisms that they encounter. In addition to challenging assumptions that relationships between interorganizational partners are symmetric (Lumineau and Oliveira, 2018), their work holds the potential to reorient perspectives on how routinizing and reorganizing happen in interorganizational relationships.

*Direction #3a: Pay more attention to the role of mental framing.* Several of the articles in this issue suggest that Weber and Mayer's (2011) work on contracting and interorganizational governance provide a potentially important lens through which to examine how control and trust mechanisms are enacted and experienced. Weber and Mayer (2011) argue that individuals' mental frames of contracts as a promotion-or prevention-focused can have profound impacts on how contracts and the individuals who enforce them are perceived. These mental frames lead individuals to generate particular and defined sets of expectations, behaviours, and emotions that foster qualitatively different exchange relationships and outcomes. The distinctions that



individuals draw between prevention and promotion-focused initiatives are important theoretically because they challenge previously held distinctions between formal and relational contracts and focus scholars on the mental frames that individuals use to understand contract parameters.

The articles in this issue provide evidence that mental frames can significantly impact how control and trust dynamics manifest in organizations. For example, mental frames can account for the experiences and behaviours of the individuals and groups that Hurmelinna-Laukkanen et al.'s (2023) study in their analyses. Mental frames also contribute to the dynamics that Bhardwaj and Sergeeva (2023) identify. There, the organization applied some contractual mechanisms to, at times, prevent unwanted behaviours among some groups. At other times, they used a more promotion-focused approach to instil shared values and a sense of common purpose. Additionally, Vedel and Geraldi (2023) describe different mental frames that produce and are reinforced through particular control and trust-building activities.

*Direction #3b: Further connect the individual and organizational levels.* A complicating but very real aspect of control-trust dynamics is that how individuals enact and experience control-trust dynamics is directly and indirectly influenced by key elements in organizational environments (Mishra and Mishra, 2013). There is a wealth of research opportunities regarding how control-trust dynamics cascade across organizational levels. Long (2021), for example, presents a model of the complex milieu of multi-level interactions between managers, their subordinates, their immediate supervisors, and organizational governance practices that influence actors' experiences, decisions, and actions. Similarly, Schilke and Cook (2013) and Schilke and Lumineau (2023) identify several key mechanisms that drive trust across multiple levels of interorganizational relationships, and delineate how trust comes to permeate organizational action.

Future research should examine how control and trust-building at one level influence individuals' actions at other organizational levels. In this issue, Vedel and Geraldi's (2023) perspective shows how controls applied (or not applied) at one level of a hierarchy influence control practices that other individuals within an organization enact. They demonstrate that control practices emerge around management's decisions concerning the use of control technology. In these environments, new control practices may emerge unintentionally and unexpectedly through vertical, horizontal or diagonal organizational interactions (MacKay and Chia, 2013). The authors observe that practices evolve differently depending on levels of trust, suspicion and distrust that are experienced by different individuals and groups throughout an organization's hierarchy. They describe how the intentions of members of the organization's IT, legal, financial departments regarding technology use conflicted with management's intentions. The confusion that these mixed motivations generated for frontline employees increased their levels of suspicion and distrust of the organization, its management, and the technology itself.

Examining control-trust dynamics at the group and team levels presents another important avenue for future research. In this issue, Bhardwaj and Sergeeva (2023) and Sweet et al. (2023) provide evidence of this in their descriptions of how control-trust dynamics were enacted by groups of multiple individuals within particular organizations



(Marks and Panzer, 2004). These articles highlight how control-trust dynamics between members of the same group can directly and indirectly influence how those group members enact control over, and trust among, the individuals and groups they seek to influence. As such, this work refines and extends previous perspectives presented by Gavac et al. (2016) who describe how the social norms that groups evolve to become standards are used by these groups to define the boundaries of expected and appropriate behaviours (Moreland and Levine, 1982; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979).

Sweet et al. (2023) outline how perceptions of ‘new-comer fit’ influence subsequent socialization and trust-building activities (Bauer et al., 2007; Jones, 1986; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). They go on to describe how the components of a socialization process that is, by definition, a control activity, can instil trustworthiness in organizational ‘new-comers’ through specially-designed hazing activities that are organizationally endorsed and adjusted as newcomer compliance and trustworthiness are recognized and acknowledged (Fang et al., 2011; Feldman, 1981; Fisher, 1985).

#### **Theme 4: Temporal Dynamics**

*Direction #4. Unpack the temporal complexity underpinning the control-trust interplay.* We encourage future research to better understand how temporality affects the interplay of control and trust. The control-trust interplay is influenced by various temporal factors such as cycles, events, and stages that underpin the operation of collaboration. For instance, the product life cycle, critical events, and the role of deadlines and milestones can all impact the control-trust interplay. Furthermore, the study of time and temporal issues requires the consideration of how the past and future influence present actions, as well as how clock time, cyclical time, event time, and life-cycle time impact the control-trust interplay. Sequences, trajectories, and patterns of development can also provide valuable insights into the temporal dynamics of the control-trust interplay. By examining the temporal patterns of behaviour and decision-making, researchers can identify key factors that influence the control-trust interplay over time.

Such endeavours are illustrated by two papers in the SI. Swärd et al.’s (2023) explores how control and trust refer to and create one another through action-reaction cycles in interorganizational relationships. Conflicting enactments of vulnerability and risk lead to tensions between parties, which threaten to distort the relationship. Coping practices, such as routinizing, re-organizing, and joint problem-solving, are applied to (re)form positive expectations. The study thus highlights the importance of recognizing the presence of temporal controlling and trusting domains in managing relationships.

Unpacking temporality in the control-trust interplay can benefit from both theoretical and empirical approaches. Future research can focus on conceptual development by drawing on the literature on time (Ancona et al., 2001) and on concepts such as subjective time (Shipp and Jansen, 2021). On the empirical side, future studies can consider using dynamic data collection methods such as those enabled by the Internet of Things, Big Data, and real-time tracking data with electronic tags or radio-frequency identification. Such research endeavours could help us better understand how control and trust

evolve over time, and how they are influenced by various factors such as changes in the environment, market conditions, or organizational goals. Additionally, researchers may benefit from exploring techniques from other fields of research, such as informatics and neuroscience, to study time and temporal issues in the context of the control-trust interplay. This research direction could provide insights, for instance, into how the brain processes information related to control and trust, and how this affects behaviour in interorganizational relationships.

### **Theme 5: Outcomes**

*Direction #5: Better understand the ambivalent impact of control-trust dynamics.* An important priority for future research is to examine how control-trust dynamics affect the outcomes of relationships, such as the development of trust (e.g., its initial production but also its resilience and immunity to erosion), and overall exchange performance. Research on the interplay between control and trust has usually focused on examining the impact of this relationship on a singular outcome. However, upon reviewing the extant literature, it becomes evident that the use of both control and trust mechanisms can have simultaneously beneficial and detrimental outcomes. In essence, the impact of the control-trust interplay may not be unidimensional, but rather ambivalent, encompassing both positive and negative aspects (Sitkin, 1995).

Lumineau (2017) addressed this relationship by offering several propositions that would benefit from empirical testing. These propositions are based on the ideas that contractual control influences calculative and non-calculative judgements about trust and distrust, which in turn determines their outcomes. In this theory, trust and distrust are treated as separate constructs (Lewicki et al., 1998). Other research suggests that while some aspects of contractual control risk conflict, others enhance coordination (e.g., Argyres et al., 2007; Schilke and Lumineau, 2018), and therefore different dimensions of contractual control may affect trust differently, with different implications for exchange performance. In this issue, Sweet et al. (2023) contribute to the understanding of the ambivalence of outcomes in the interplay between control and trust by examining workgroup hazing as a unique context in which workgroups can actively constrain newcomers' behaviours through control to build trust with them. The paper uncovers two key mechanisms that impact these control-trust dynamics: a shift in vulnerability from the workgroup to the newcomer and person-group fit serving as a proxy for the trustworthiness of the newcomer. Vedel and Gerald's (2023) also delve into the ambivalence of outcomes. Their findings emphasize that balancing may not be the sole managerial response to control-trust dynamics and propose that adeptly handling paradoxical situations could be crucial for attaining a mix of positive and negative outcomes, ultimately affecting the performance and endurance of interorganizational relationships.

We encourage further research on the potential ambivalence of control-trust dynamics on various outcomes, and the resulting trade-offs it implies for organizational actors. Understanding the ambivalent impact of control and trust mechanisms is important for decision-making processes, because it facilitates a more nuanced evaluation of the potential consequences associated with various governance choices.

## Theme 6: Context

Contextual factors can have a significant impact on control-trust dynamics within and between organizations. Context refers to the various situational and environmental factors that can influence or affect a particular phenomenon or situation. These factors may include organizational culture, industry norms, political and economic conditions, social and cultural values, legal and regulatory frameworks, technology, and many others. Opportunities to advance research on the control-trust dynamics by analysing contextual factors are exemplified in the SI by Bhardwaj and Sergeeva (2023). Their research highlights how Magnum Photos, a cooperative of freelance photographers, screened prospective members based on shared values to promote values-based trust, which acted as a 'shift parameter' to render collective organizing economically viable. The study shows how organizing around shared values influenced both control and innovativeness, and sheds light on the significant role shared values play in attenuating hazards of opportunism and promoting cooperation in collectivist organizations where measurement problems occur. Overall, the study underscores the importance of considering the broader context in which economic agents operate to understand their collective organizing behaviours in relations to control-trust dynamics.

*Direction #6: Analyse the impact of digital technologies.* We see much potential in further analysing how digital technologies can impact control-trust dynamics by changing the way information is shared and managed. Recent research has started to analyse the impact of the so-called 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' on trust (e.g., Lumineau et al., 2023; van der Werff et al., 2021) and control (e.g., Kellogg et al., 2020; Schafheite et al., 2020; Zorina et al., 2021), but little has been done at the intersection of control and trust specifically. The adoption of digital technologies can allow for greater transparency, collaboration and information sharing among employees, improving communication and potentially increasing trust among employees. However, these technologies also create new vulnerabilities and risks, such as data breaches, which can lead to a breakdown of trust and a greater need for control measures. For instance, Hurmelinna-Laukkanen et al. (2023) highlight the crucial role of contextual factors in shaping the emergence and development of unintended control practices and trust asymmetries. Their study suggests that organizational members' use of new technological features, and their observations of others' behaviours, were important contextual factors that contributed to the emergence of unintended control practices. By focusing on the emergent and unintentional aspects of control-trust dynamics, the authors offer a more nuanced understanding of how control and trust interact in a continuous process of forming and reforming attitudes and related behaviours. We see many opportunities to study the evolution of trust: for example, how it may be becoming more impersonal and systemic due to the increasing reliance on digital monitoring.

A case in point is blockchain technology, a type of decentralized distributed ledger technology that allows for the secure and transparent recording of transactions and other data. The use of blockchains has the potential to significantly impact control-trust dynamics within and between organizations, particularly in the areas

Table II. Overview of the directions for future research

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Directions for future research</i>
Constructs	#1a: Disentangle the distinction between formal vs. informal mechanisms (e.g., codification vs. enforcement) #1b: Connect theoretical contributions from different disciplines (e.g., relational contracts in economics, payment arrangements in accounting) #1c: Improve the operationalization of control and trust (e.g., duality)
Control-trust interaction	#2a: Go beyond the substitution vs. complementary debate (e.g., More-Than responses) #2b: Incorporate more diverse methodologies (e.g., fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis)
Actor involvement	#3a: Pay more attention to the role of mental framing (e.g., promotion-or prevention focus) #3b: Further connect the individual and organizational levels (e.g., multi-level interactions)
Temporal dynamics	#4: Unpack the temporal complexity underpinning the control-trust interplay (e.g., cycles, events, and stages that underpin the operation of collaboration)
Outcomes	#5: Better understand the ambivalent impact of control-trust dynamics (e.g., trade-offs between positive and negative outcomes)
Context	#6: Analyse the impact of digital technologies (e.g., blockchain)

of transparency, security, and accountability. Because blockchains are decentralized and distributed, all parties involved in a transaction or process can view and verify the data being recorded. This increased transparency can help to build trust among organizations and their stakeholders, as it provides a level of assurance that the data being recorded is accurate and reliable. In addition to transparency, blockchains also offer enhanced security features, such as cryptography and consensus protocols, that make it difficult for malicious actors to tamper with or manipulate the data being recorded. This can help to build trust among organizations by mitigating the risk of fraud or other types of malfeasance. Finally, blockchains can also help to promote accountability within organizations by providing a tamper-proof and auditable record of all transactions and other data. This can help to ensure that all parties involved in a transaction or process are held accountable for their actions, thereby increasing trust among stakeholders. Overall, future research in this area has the potential to provide valuable insights into how actors can navigate the complex interplay between control and trust in a rapidly changing and uncertain environment.

Table II summarizes our suggestions for future research, organized according to the six themes of our integrative framework.

## CONCLUSION

While scholars have studied control-trust dynamics for decades, our research and the articles that are presented in this special issue suggest that there are many fertile avenues

for future work in this area. Reflective of the articles in this SI, we propose an integrative framework that considers the main elements discussed in both micro and macro literature on the dynamics of control and trust. We also leverage the insights generated in this special issue to present directions for future research on formal and informal mechanisms of collaboration across levels of analyses.

Some of the articles in this issue suggest that scholars should continue to focus on identifying new, and refining existing, constructs, because these efforts can shed new light onto forms of control and trust in and between organizations. Other articles in the issue suggest that we should also deepen our understanding the various interrelationships between control and trust. These observations suggest that our reliance on existing conceptualizations of dualism, complementarity, and on substitution, while valuable, may also present incomplete and limited views of control-trust relations and outcomes.

It is also important to acknowledge that control and trust are not static constructs; they continue to evolve over time and vary across contexts and relationships. For example, the articles in this issue demonstrate how technological advances in the ways we interact, communicate, and conduct business using online platforms, social media, and artificial intelligence systems force organizational actors to grapple with a variety of control-trust challenges and opportunities. Precipitated changes in cultural, societal, and individual factors influence how control and trust are perceived and enacted, highlighting the need for context-specific approaches to understanding and managing these phenomena.

Future research should continue to explore the intricacies of the control-trust relationship while addressing gaps in our current understanding. By delving deeper into the underlying mechanisms and processes that drive control and trust dynamics, researchers can develop more nuanced theoretical frameworks and practical interventions to enhance trust and manage control effectively. Ultimately, recognizing the importance of control and trust in human interactions and systems is crucial for understanding how healthy relationships are formed, cooperation is forged, and performance on various dimensions is realized. We hope that our introduction and the articles contained in this issue will help scholars take stock of what we have learned thus far, and to push forward to generate new, more accurate and more complete ideas on these critical issues.

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## NOTES

- [1] For example, several works employ stylized and overly narrow descriptions of ‘formal controls’ as employing impersonal authority to create restrictive environments that meticulously prescribe and closely oversee controlees’ behaviours and outputs (Fox, 1974; Hartmann and Slapnicar, 2009; Shapiro, 1987; Tolbert and Zucker, 1986). Scholars apply similarly narrow conceptualizations to describe ‘informal’ social or clan-based controls as ‘soft’ controls that are applied with little explicit monitoring by affording

controllees significant autonomy to pursue their interests and develop strong relational ties with controllers (Bradach and Eccles, 1989; Das and Teng, 1998; Inkpen and Currall, 2004; Malhotra and Murnighan, 2002). A primary challenge with these classifications is that they can mis-specify the mechanisms and relationships in ways that can lead to inaccurate hypotheses regarding control, trust, and performance.

- [2] Some macro studies differentiate between these mechanisms based on the level of codification employed in their ruling principles and enforcement mechanisms (McEvily et al., 2014; Poppo and Zenger, 2002; Soda and Zaheer, 2012). Importantly, discrepancies may result from different theoretical perspectives underlying research on interfirm governance with some studies focusing on the interplay of legal contracts and relational norms (Abdi and Aulakh, 2012; Ryall and Sampson, 2009) and others emphasizing the use of formal structures and informal patterns as governance mechanisms (McEvily et al., 2014; Soda and Zaheer, 2012).

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