



Preserving organizational trust during disruption

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	<p>preservation of employees’ trust in their organization. We identify three trust preservation practices used in the successful case organizations – cognitive bridging, emotional embodying and inclusive enacting – and show that organizational members’ understanding of the established foundations of trust in the organization, and their ability to mobilize these, are critical to the preservation of trust. Our findings further show that power and political dynamics shape the accomplishment of trust preservation. Third, we position trust preservation as a manifestation and extension of active trust, and show that for trust to be preserved in disruptive contexts, both familiarization and transformation of existing trust practices are required.</p>



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3 **Preserving organizational trust during disruption**
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7 *Stefanie Gustafsson*
8 School of Management
9 University of Bath
10 s.gustafsson@bath.ac.uk
11
12

13
14 *Nicole Gillespie*
15 UQ Business School
16 University of Queensland
17 n.gillespie@business.uq.edu.au
18
19

20
21 *Rosalind Searle*
22 Adam Smith Business School
23 University of Glasgow
24 Rosalind.Searle@glasgow.ac.uk
25
26

27 *Veronica Hope Hailey*
28 School of Management
29 University of Bath
30 v.hope.hailey@bath.ac.uk
31
32

33 *Graham Dietz*
34 Durham University Business School
35 Durham University
36 (Graham sadly passed away during the research project)
37
38

39 (Please direct correspondence to the first author)
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Abstract

How is organizational trust preserved during times of disruption? We address this question building on the concept of active trust which views trust as an ongoing accomplishment constituted by reflexive actors. Drawing on a multi-case study of four organizations that experienced major disruption in response to the Global Financial Crisis, we contribute to trust theory in three ways. First, we extend beyond the current focus on trust building and repair by developing conceptual understanding of trust preservation as a distinct phenomenon. Second, we develop a theoretical model that explains how organizational actors accomplish the preservation of employees' trust in their organization. We identify three trust preservation practices used in the successful case organizations – cognitive bridging, emotional embodying and inclusive enacting – and show that organizational members' understanding of the established foundations of trust in the organization, and their ability to mobilize these, are critical to the preservation of trust. Our findings further show that power and political dynamics shape the accomplishment of trust preservation. Third, we position trust preservation as a manifestation and extension of active trust, and show that for trust to be preserved in disruptive contexts, both familiarization and transformation of existing trust practices are required.

Key words: trust in organizations, employee trust, trust preservation, organizational disruption

Introduction

A substantial body of research indicates that trust within organizations facilitates social exchange, cooperation, and effective organizing (e.g. Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995; McEvily, Perrone & Zaheer, 2003) and it is well accepted that business, government, and civic society rely on a workable degree of trust to function. Organizational trust is particularly important during periods of disruption, as it facilitates the ability of organizational members to successfully navigate and respond constructively to challenging events and associated change, and underpins organizational agility and resilience (e.g. Balogun, Hope Hailey & Gustafsson, 2015; McLain & Hackman, 1999; Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; Oreg et al., 2018). Yet contexts of disruption, triggered by events such as economic crises, automation and technological advances, and strategic change initiatives, threaten employee trust in the organization (Mishra & Mishra, 1994; Kiefer, 2005; Maguire & Phillips, 2008; Stahl & Sitkin, 2005; Sørensen, Hasle & Pejtersen, 2011; Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002).

The importance of, and challenge to, trust during disruption raises the pertinent question of how organizational members can preserve trust in such periods. This question is highly relevant given the rate at which organizations are facing disruption (Morgeson, Mitchell & Liu, 2015). We came to this focus on trust preservation unexpectedly. Initially our multi-case study aimed to examine how organizations engaged with trust during major disruption stemming from the global financial crisis. These organizations faced a high likelihood of a major downsizing and therefore a

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3 potential breach of employee trust. To our surprise, our data revealed that in three of
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6 our four case organizations, employees' trust in their organization was preserved.
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8 Furthermore, in these cases we observed that management neither sought to *build* nor
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11 *repair* trust, rather their focus was on *preserving established trust* in the employee-
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14 organization relationship.
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17 Empirical insights into how organizational members *build* and *repair* trust are
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19 well developed (Bachmann, Gillespie & Priem, 2015; Dirks, Lewicki & Zaheer, 2009;
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21 Kramer & Lewicki, 2010). However, these literatures focus largely on strategies aimed
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23 at achieving a *change* in the state of trust in the relationship, rather than its
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25 *preservation*. This prompted us to develop theoretical and empirical understanding of
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27 what we call 'the preservation of organizational trust'. To do so, we draw on the
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29 concept of active trust (Child & Möllering, 2003; Giddens, 1990, 1994; Luhmann, 1988,
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31 2017), which views trust as an ongoing accomplishment that requires continuous
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33 reproduction by reflexive actors (Möllering, 2006, 2013). Our empirical insights were
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35 generated through an examination of four organizations that experienced significant
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37 disruption during the 2009 global financial crisis. We draw on interviews and focus
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39 groups with 94 informants, ranging from shop floor employees to senior executives.
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49 Our paper makes three key contributions to the literature on organizational
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51 trust. First, we advance a conceptual understanding of the phenomenon of trust
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53 preservation and show how it is distinct from trust building and repair. Second, we
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55 develop a conceptual model that explains *how* organizational actors accomplish the
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57 preservation of employees' trust in the organization, in a context of disruption where
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3 this trust is threatened. We identify key preservation practices and show why an
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5 understanding of and ability to mobilize established trust foundations in the
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7 organization is critical to trust preservation. Third, we extend understanding of active
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9 trust practices by showing that they have both familiar and transformative elements.
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13 **Employee trust in organizations**

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15 Trust is commonly defined as “a psychological state that comprises the intention to
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17 accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of
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19 another” (Rousseau et al., 1998:395). As this definition highlights with its focus on
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21 vulnerability, trust is particularly relevant in contexts of uncertainty and risk (Luhmann,
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23 1988; Mayer et al., 1995). Indeed, complete knowledge or certainty, or the absence of
24
25 risk in the relationship, would eliminate the need for trust (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). As
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27 Möllering (2006:11) argues, at its heart trust requires a ‘leap of faith’: “suspending
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29 irreducible social vulnerability and uncertainty *as if* they were favorably resolved”.
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38 Trust in organizational contexts has been studied in relation to multiple
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40 referents (e.g. peers, leaders, organizations) and levels of analysis (i.e. individual or
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42 collective that is trusting; see Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Our focus is on intra-
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44 organizational trust: that is employees’ trust in their employing organization.
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46 Employees include all organizational members employed by the organization,
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48 irrespective of their role or hierarchical position (Weibel et al., 2015). Gillespie and Dietz
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50 (2009) argue that employees’ trust in their organization is influenced by the trust-
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52 warranting properties of multiple organizational members (e.g. senior leaders, line
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54 management, peers) and multiple organizational components (e.g. HR systems,
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3 policies and practices, culture, strategy). In accordance, we view intra-organizational
4 trust as a meso concept influenced by micro-level psychological processes, behaviors,
5 and group dynamics, and macro-level organizational structures and arrangements
6 (Dietz, 2011; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Rousseau et al., 1998). This aligns with Grey and
7 Garsten's (2001:233) conceptualization of intra-organizational trust as a "precarious,
8 socially constructed accomplishment enacted through the interplay of social or
9 discursive structures, including those of work organizations, and individual subjects".
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22 While we have noted that trust affords benefits to organizations and their
23 actors, it is important to note that trust is not inherently good. Trust can be a 'poisoned
24 chalice' that enables manipulation, unwelcome obligations and exploitation (Skinner,
25 Dietz & Weibel, 2014). Culbert and McDonough (1986) highlight that trust is not-
26 interest free, but rather it is in management's interest that employees trust the
27 organizational system because it increases performance and effectiveness.
28 Accordingly, intra-organizational trust is a source of power and control that can have
29 productive and repressive effects on employees, depending on how it is exercised
30 (Grey & Garsten, 2001; Siebert et al., 2015).
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46 To date research on intra-organizational trust has largely focused on two trust
47 processes: trust building and trust repair. We briefly review these literatures to
48 contextualize and distinguish the concept of trust preservation.
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53 **Trust building**

54 The primary aim of trust building (or trust development) is to increase trust to a future
55 higher state, in recognition that the current state of trust in the relationship is in some
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3 way limited (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010; Hernandez, Long & Sitkin, 2014; Lewicki,
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6 Tomlinson & Gillespie, 2006). Studies have identified many behaviors, factors and
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9 conditions which support trust building in organizational contexts. This work has
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11 examined new relationships with no or limited relationship history (Schaubroeck, Peng
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13 & Hannah, 2013; van der Werff & Buckley, 2017), existing relationships where trust is
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15 limited or underdeveloped and there is a desire to enhance trust (Colquitt et al., 2011;
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17 Sloan & Oliver, 2013), and contexts where institutional support for trust is under-
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19 developed (Child & Möllering, 2003). This literature delineates presumptive and
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21 institutional bases of trust that are impersonal (e.g. rules, roles, norms), from relational
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23 or interaction-based trust, which is grounded in direct interactions and knowledge of
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25 the other party (Bachmann & Inkpen, 2011; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010; Lewicki et al., 2006;
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27 Rousseau et al., 1998). Importantly, most research on trust building makes little
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29 reference to heightened vulnerability or disruption in the relationship.
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38 This research tends to view trustors as “vigilant social perceivers” who evaluate
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40 the “cumulative presence or absence of cues” about the “trust-warranting properties”
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42 of other social actors and situations (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010:257). Mayer and
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44 colleagues’ (1995) seminal model views trust as a decision informed by three
45
46 dimensions of trustworthiness: ability, benevolence and integrity. Adapting these
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48 dimensions to the organizational level, Gillespie and Dietz (2009:128) argue that
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50 employees’ assessments of their organization’s trustworthiness are based on the
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52 organization’s collective competencies and characteristics that enable it to meet its
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54 goals and responsibilities (i.e. ability), the care and concern shown for the well-being
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3 of employees and other stakeholders (i.e. benevolence), and the organization's
4 adherence to commonly accepted moral principles, such as honesty and fairness (i.e.
5 integrity). Further factors found to initiate and build employees' trust include:
6 managerial behaviors such as sharing and delegation of control and communication
7 (Culbert & McDonough, 1986; Whitener et al., 1998), emotion regulation (Williams,
8 2007) and processes, controls and structural parameters that govern their relationship
9 (Searle et al., 2011; Weibel et al., 2015).

22 **Trust repair**

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24 In contrast to trust building, trust repair is primarily concerned with *restoring trust to a*
25 *past state* following a breach or violation that damaged trust (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010).
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27 The focus is on activities aimed to "return the relationship to a positive state" (Dirks et
28 al., 2009:69). After a trust violation, vulnerability, risk and uncertainty are salient
29 characteristics of the relationship (Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2017). Trust betrayal is typically
30 associated with negative emotions such as anger, cynicism and defensiveness (Kiefer,
31 2005; Lewicki, McAllister & Bies, 1998), as well as 'paranoid cognitions' characterized
32 by hypervigilance towards potential future untrustworthy behavior (Gillespie & Dietz,
33 2009; Kramer, 1999) and a tendency to privilege negative evidence over positive
34 evidence (Kim et al., 2004).

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51 Research on trust repair identifies strategies taken by one or both parties to
52 restore trust after a violation (Bachmann et al., 2015). Dirks et al. (2009) summarize
53 three main strategies: 1) *changing attributions*, where the violator seeks to re-cast
54 understanding of the violation events to present themselves in a more trustworthy
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3 light through tactics such as denials, explanations and social accounts; 2) *social*
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6 *equilibrium* which involves engaging in social rituals (e.g. apologizing, punishment and
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8 penance, offering compensation) to atone for the violation and restore balance in the
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10 relationship, and 3) *structural* approaches designed to prevent future violations (e.g.
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12 changing incentives and control mechanisms). These reactive tactics repair trust in
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14 interpersonal (e.g. Kim et al., 2004; Korsgaard, Brodt & Whitener, 2002) and
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16 organizational referents (e.g. Dietz & Gillespie, 2011; Eberl, Geiger & Aßländer, 2015;
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18 Gillespie, Dietz & Lockey, 2014).

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25 Although these literatures provide valuable insight on building and repairing
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27 organizational trust, understanding of trust preservation is limited. Whilst there is likely
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29 to be some overlap in the processes, practices and mechanisms that build, repair and
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31 preserve trust, to date there is little conceptual or empirical research focused on trust
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33 preservation itself. To develop this conceptual understanding, we draw on the notion
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35 of active trust.

36 37 38 39 40 **Active Trust**

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43 The notion of 'active trust' is grounded in the work of sociologists such as Giddens
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45 (1990, 1994) and Luhmann (1988, 2017; see also Child & Möllering, 2003; Kroeger,
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47 2019; Möllering, 2006, 2013). From this perspective, trust is an ongoing
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49 accomplishment, continuously worked on by actors. For Luhmann, active trust is
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51 informed by previous interactions and exchanges in reference to familiar sources of
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53 trust, such as social rules and institutional procedures that constitute social systems.
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55 For trust to be constituted, actors draw on these sources to inform different trust
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3 strategies, for example, by influencing the conditions in which people are situated
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5 through open, intimate and intensive communication (Giddens, 1994), or creating
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7 "access points" for direct interaction between "experts" representing a system, such as
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9 leaders, and organizational actors more widely (Giddens, 1990:83). However, actors do
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11 not passively accept these trust foundations but rather have the ability to consciously
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13 and reflexively shape them and "as a result, make trust more or less likely" (Child &
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15 Möllering, 2003:70). The conceptualization of active trust, thus, emphasizes the active
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17 role of organizational members in the constitution of trust.
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25 Active trust suggests that trust is ongoing, requiring continuous reproduction
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27 even once established (Möllering, 2006, 2013). For Giddens (1990), this reconstitution
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29 of trust is particularly important in contexts of late modernity which are inheritably
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31 unstable. According to Luhmann (1988, 2017), active trust always requires a process of
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33 familiarization where actors "reintroduce the unfamiliar into the familiar" (1988:95)
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35 because "trust is only possible in a familiar world" (2017:23). Child and Möllering's
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37 (2003) empirical application of active trust shows how foreign managers developed
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39 trust with local Chinese operators through familiarization by engaging in three active
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41 trust strategies: establishing personal rapport with Chinese staff, recruiting managers
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43 locally, and importing familiar practices and standards from their own context. Further,
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45 Grimpe (2019:104) highlights the importance of contextualization practices for
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47 reproducing the familiar, conceptualizing active trust as "trustors' ongoing
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49 (re)creations of relevant context". Relatedly, Kasten (2018) proposes that the
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3 maintenance of identification-based trust requires ongoing trustful behavior that
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6 reaffirms the socio-emotional foundation of the relationship.
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8 **Conceptualizing trust preservation**

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10 Building on this work, we conceptualize trust preservation as a manifestation and
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12 extension of active trust: a manifestation due to its focus on reproducing established
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14 trust, and an extension because it has distinctive elements. Specifically, we propose
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16 that for trust to require active preservation, there needs to be a jolt - a discrepant or
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18 surprising event (Meyer, 1982; Weick, 1993) - that disrupts the context in which the
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20 relationship is embedded. These jolts are significant because they disrupt familiar,
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22 habitualized ways of thinking and feeling about the relationship and its presumed
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24 stability (e.g. Morgeson et al., 2015; Weick, 1993) and trigger a heightened sense of
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26 vulnerability and uncertainty in the relationship - or in Luhmann's (1988) terms, the
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28 possibility of a sudden collapse of confidence and trust. Importantly, jolts trigger
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30 conscious awareness of the need to actively preserve trust. For example, in the context
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32 of an employee-organization relationship, a jolt may be in the form of a merger,
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34 significant downsizing, work automation, or a scandal. Smaller jolts such as change in
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36 senior leadership or one's direct supervisor may matter too. In these contexts, trust is
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38 not yet broken, rather it is in a state of suspension as employees seek reassurance that
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40 the practices and understandings that underpin trust will be retained and continued
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42 trust is warranted. Drawing on these theoretical insights, we therefore conceptualize
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44 trust preservation as *active practices to preserve established trust in the relationship,*
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60 *triggered by a jolt that heightens uncertainty and vulnerability in the relationship.*

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This definition of trust preservation suggests it conceptually differs to trust building and repair in important ways (Table 1). First, for trust to be preserved, it must be established in the relationship. This is significant because, as emphasized by the active trust literature, the establishment of trust in a relationship requires learning and building a relationship history and set of expectations which informs the way trust can be reconstituted over time (Möllering, 2006). As such, the actions required to *preserve established trust* in a relationship may differ from the strategies required to *initiate and build trust*.

Second, whereas trust building seeks to *gain* trust, trust preservation aims to *protect* established trust. Trust preservation occurs in the context of a jolt that heightens salience of the vulnerability and uncertainty in the relationship. Importantly, the relationship itself has not changed, rather only the *context* in which the relationship is embedded. Hence, because trust has not been breached or lost, preservation is distinct from trust repair, where the aim is to *restore damaged trust* to a past positive state in response to a trust breach. In contrast to breached relationships, where parties experience strong negative emotions (e.g. anger, blame, guilt), trust preservation occurs in the context of an established trusting relationship, where salient emotions are associated with concerns about the future (e.g. anxiety, concern). Hence, trust repair strategies such as apologies, denials and penance are unlikely to be appropriate or viable for trust preservation.

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3 In sum, there are reasons to believe that the phenomena of trust preservation
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6 differs from trust building and repair. Hence, our aim is to develop an empirically
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8
9 informed theoretical understanding of how intra-organizational trust preservation can
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11 be accomplished by asking: *Which practices do organizational leaders and members*
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13 *use to actively preserve employee trust in the organization during periods of disruption?*

16 **Research methods**

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19 To generate robust and generalizable theoretical understanding of this underexplored
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22 phenomena, we use a qualitative multi-case study design (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt
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24 & Graebner, 2007; Walsh & Bartunek, 2011). Qualitative data allows us to emphasize
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27 “(a) contextualization, (b) vivid description, (c) dynamic (and possible causal)
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29 structuring of the organizational member’s socially constructed world, and (d) the
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31 worldviews of the people under study” (Lee, 1999:43, cited in Maguire & Phillips, 2008).
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36 Our data came from a larger research project investigating organizational trust
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38 during the global financial crisis. These organizations faced a common ‘jolt’: the
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40 economic shock resulted in significant funding and revenue cuts which disrupted
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42 existing ways of operating, making organizational transformation necessary. In three
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44 organizations, employee trust was preserved during the disruption. This ‘rare and
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46 unique’ quality made them ideal for theoretical sampling (Eisenhardt, 1989). To
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48 strengthen theory building, we added a contrasting case where organizational trust
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50 declined. Our four cases represented different industries, including retail (RetailCo),
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52 manufacturing (EnCorp), and public services (a local City Council - CityCouncil and
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54 Central Government Department – GovDept) to enable more generalizable
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3 explanations. Each organization had a history of participating in research and an
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5 interest in understanding organizational trust during disruption.
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8 *Data collection*

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11 We gathered testimonies from a representation of employees at each organization
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13 using semi-structured focus groups and interviews during a time when the disruption
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15 had largely been navigated but was still fresh in the minds of our participants. We
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17 conducted thirteen 90-minute focus groups involving 73 non-managerial employees
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19 ('E', four to ten participants per focus group) and 21 one-hour interviews with leaders
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21 and managers ('M'). To capture different perspectives, managers were sampled from
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23 diverse functions (e.g. Senior Management, Human Resources, Operations) whom the
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25 organization identified as actively involved in the organization's response to the
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27 disruption, and lower-level employees (e.g. workforce representatives, junior
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29 employees, team leaders) from various locations and functions whom the organization
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31 identified as having been directly affected by the changes. In total 94 organizational
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33 members participated in this research, of whom 78% were non-managerial staff,
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35 providing a large data-set of diverse experiences. Table 2 provides an overview of the
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37 data collection.
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51 All participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity of any quotes
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53 used. The interview and focus group semi-structured protocol included questions on
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55 employees' trust in their organization before the jolt (e.g. *How would you characterize*
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57 *trust in the organization prior to* [the precipitating challenge?]), the impact of the
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3 financial crisis and organizational interventions on trust (e.g. *How did this impact on*
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6 *employee trust in the organization?*), how the organization sought to manage trust (e.g.
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8 *What, if any, specific practices or processes influenced trust in the organization?*) and
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10 where effective strategies were described, why these practices were effective (e.g. *Why*
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12 *do you think those interventions were successful in maintaining/repairing trust?*). The
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14 interview protocol also asked how the organization sought to manage the threat to
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16 trust over the disruptive period (e.g. *Which specific strategies are being used to manage*
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18 *trust?*). All interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Data collection
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20 stopped once theoretical saturation was achieved (Eisenhardt, 1989).
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26 27 *Data analysis*

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29 Our data analysis involved four stages.

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32 *Stage 1: Case analysis.* We first considered each organization case-by-case
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34 (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Working closely with interview transcripts enabled in-depth
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36 understanding of the meaning of trust, the jolt and threats to trust, the actions taken
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38 by organizational members, and whether and how trust was preserved. We created
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40 and collaboratively refined case summaries to organize the empirical material
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42 (Eisenhardt, 1989), and noted that at RetailCo, CityCouncil and EnCorp, organizational
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44 members generally experienced trust as preserved during the disruptive period,
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46 whereas by contrast, trust in GovDept eroded.
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54 *Stage 2: Coding.* Next, we coded the data to identify practices associated with
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56 trust preservation, as well as delineating conditions and mechanisms underpinning
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58 preservation. We created a list of first-order codes on a case-by-case basis which we
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3 iteratively refined to confirm that the codes captured participants' descriptions. We
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5 identified different practices, triggered by the jolt, which interviewees described as
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7 influential for trust during challenging times, as well as organization-specific elements
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9 perceived to be critical for trust. Following an abductive approach (Timmermans &
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11 Tavory, 2012), we examined the literatures on trust building and repair (e.g. Lewicki &
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13 Kramer, 2010; Mayer et al., 1995; Whitener et al., 1998) and active trust (e.g. Giddens,
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15 1990, 1994; Luhmann, 1988, 2017; Möllering, 2006, 2013) to delineate conceptual
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17 differences and similarities and to refine our analysis.
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25 *Stage 3: Cross-case comparison.* The codes identified guided the third analytical
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27 stage. We searched for patterns which distinguished organizations – differentiating
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29 the successful from the unsuccessful. We also refined the three aggregate components
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31 underpinning the preservation of organizational trust: *conditional factors*, *trust*
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33 *preservation practices* and *enabling mechanisms* (see Figure 1).
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39 *Stage 4: Model development.* Finally, we interrogated the data to understand
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41 how the components interrelated to accomplish trust preservation. Following several
42
43 iterative stages between data and literature, as well as extensive conversations
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45 between the authors, we arrived at the final model of organizational trust preservation
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47 (Figure 2). Tables 3 to 6 of the online appendix show data that support our concepts
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49 and findings.
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54 --- Insert Figure 1 here ---
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56 **Findings**

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3 In this section, we explain and illustrate the three main components underpinning our
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5 model: 1) conditional factors preceding trust preservation, 2) the trust preservation
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7 practices themselves, and 3) the enabling mechanisms informing these practices.
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10 **Conditional factors**

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12 In each case, trust preservation was preceded by an external jolt triggering two
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14 conditional factors: 1) disruption of familiarity and 2) salience of vulnerability. The
15
16 *disruption of familiarity* stemmed from the economic crisis and its challenge to the
17
18 ongoing viability of each organization. This temporarily questioned familiar and
19
20 automatic ways of trusting, heightening the *salience of vulnerability* in the employee-
21
22 organization relationship. It also created uncertainty about the future and triggered
23
24 negative emotional responses amongst organizational members, particularly in
25
26 relation to job security and working conditions. Together, these inter-related factors
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28 posed a threat to employees' trust in the organization. These factors manifested in
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30 each case organization as follows.
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40 RetailCo (RC) is an employee-owned partnership employing 38,000 members in
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42 department stores at the time of research. A strategic review revealed that if the retail
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44 division continued with its existing business model, it would threaten the financial
45
46 viability of the partnership. This jolt made it clear to management that a new approach
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48 was needed. There were suggestions that significant pay cuts and downsizing of back-
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50 office jobs was required to enhance efficiency, although in its 160-year history the
51
52 partnership had never faced a major job loss. Such a move was a direct challenge to the
53
54 organization's mission statement 'Principle #1': "*The Partnership's ultimate purpose is*
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3 *the happiness of all its members, through their worthwhile and satisfying employment*
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6 *in a successful business. Because the Partnership is owned in trust for its members, they*
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8 *share the responsibilities of ownership as well as its rewards – profit, knowledge and*
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11 *power”. The consequence was heightened vulnerability and uncertainty among*
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14 *partners, “We didn’t know how it was going to affect the individual, the team, and the*
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16 *branch itself. It was unknown territory.” (E4RC), which threatened existing trust*
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19 *relations, “I think trust generally [was] under a fair bit of strain.” (E6RC).*
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22 EnCorp (EC) is a 255-year-old engineering company employing approximately
23
24 50,000 people over 23 countries at the time of data collection. EnCorp is designed as
25
26 a matrix, so that at the plant level there is autonomy, *“on a day-to-day basis, the plants*
27
28 *run themselves” (M1EC). As a result of the global recession, EnCorp’s Driveline division*
29
30 *was hit suddenly by a large decline in orders. To maintain viability, senior managers*
31
32 *recognized the need for large-scale transformation. For instance, in response to the*
33
34 *decline in sales, which one union official likened to EnCorp “dropping off a cliff”, there*
35
36 *were suggestions that 60% of the workforce would be affected by redundancies and*
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38 *pay cuts which created insecurity about future employment, “I was worrying for my*
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40 *job” (E3EC).*
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48 CityCouncil (CC), a local government body in an economically deprived region
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50 of northern England employed about 7,000 people. During the financial crisis, it
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52 became evident that a reduction to the council’s central government grant was
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54 inevitable following cuts necessitated by the government bailout of the banks. £58m
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56 was cut from CityCouncil’s £745m annual budget, with further cuts threatened. This
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3 drastic budget reduction was likely to impact large parts of the workforce, inducing
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5
6 fear and uncertainty among employees who were not sure of the consequences these
7
8 changes would bring, *"There was obviously likely to be cuts. You couldn't tell how you*
9
10 *were going to be affected."* (E8CC) and *"I felt quite vulnerable within the council."* (E6CC).
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14 GovDept (GD), a central government department, employed around 2,500
15
16 people directly plus thousands more through associated agencies. Similar to
17
18 CityCouncil, government budget cuts resulted in a £3bn reduction from GovDept's
19
20 £17bn budget over three years. GovDept was also forced to absorb a complex merger
21
22 of rival departments with significant impact on modes of operating, and felt under
23
24 pressure from the media and politicians. These events created uncertainty and
25
26 employees felt they were entering *"difficult territory"* (E1GD). They feared that their
27
28 department might be abolished, and hence focused on driving efficiency by stripping
29
30 out processes, creating considerable job uncertainty. Further, the loss of an important
31
32 work portfolio to another department made employees feel exposed and wary.
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40 **Trust preserving practices**

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42 Confronted with the disruption to familiarity, and the associated heightened
43
44 experience of vulnerability and uncertainty, organizational members recognized the
45
46 need for deliberate action to preserve trust. Our analysis revealed that managers
47
48 responded by engaging in three trust preserving practices: 1) cognitive bridging, 2)
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50 emotional embodying and 3) inclusive enacting.
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55 *Cognitive bridging*

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3 The first practice aimed to help organizational members cope with uncertainty by
4
5 developing shared understanding of the need for change and positive associations
6
7 towards the future in a way that connected with the organization's past. These were
8
9 attempts to shift cognitions to facilitate coping with the disruption by creating a sense
10
11 of continuity between the organization's past, present and future. In other words,
12
13 creating a cognitive bridge for people to 'walk over' (Williams, 2007), by explaining
14
15 why the status quo of the *past* was no longer viable given the *present* disruptive
16
17 context, by providing information on how the organization would transition from the
18
19 *present* uncertainty to a more certain and positive *future*, and by specifying what the
20
21 organization in the *future* would look like.
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30 Senior members sought to develop employees' understanding of the disruptive
31
32 events and the associated necessity of change by explaining openly why the status
33
34 quo was commercially or operationally untenable, "*changing your business means that*
35
36 *people have to understand why you're changing*" (M2RC). This was amplified through
37
38 personal communications. For example, RetailCo's senior leaders used national
39
40 roadshows to explain the planned changes directly to local staff:
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46 *"We went on roadshows around the country. The managing director of every shop*
47
48 *stood alongside a Board member and shared the vision and the interpretation of*
49
50 *that vision for their shop of the business. It was a stark realization that if sales*
51
52 *were going to be flat and costs continued to rise – he called it his pincer movement*
53
54 *– that only one thing was going to happen to our profit. It really garnered the*
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3 *troops around the fact that we were going to have to face tough decisions, but*
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6 *there was an incredibly rational reason why.” (M2RC)*
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8 The use of the ‘pincer movement’ metaphor strengthened understanding of the need
9 for change
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11 that *“got everybody immediately into the intellectual place” (M2RC)*. As a RetailCo
12
13 employee stated: *“We knew that we needed to change the business because the model,*
14
15 *as strong as it is, wouldn't be resilient enough against where the world was changing.”*
16
17 (E3RC). However, while communications were generally perceived to be handled well,
18
19 perceptions differed across branches: *“It's not for every branch but this branch, it's*
20
21 *handled very, very well.” (E7RC); “The language used centrally was very misleading. At*
22
23 *the last moment they said, “Oh, by the way we're cutting your pay by 20%.” That really*
24
25 *came as an afterthought - they weren't upfront with that” (E8RC).*
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35 At EnCorp, senior management communicated directly with affected plants
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37 when announcing the need for change, while union officials held conversations with
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39 staff at the local level. Communication became *“more frequent so that [...] people were*
40
41 *aware it was changing and therefore could understand the reasons for the change.”*
42
43 (M4EC). The emphasis on communicating honestly and openly was overall received
44
45 positively and helped to facilitate trust relations, *“We trust the management because*
46
47 *they are showing us hard, cold facts.” (M5EC).*
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54 In contrast, CityCouncil's approach to communication had some early
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56 shortcomings. Prior to the initiation of a communication strategy, information access
57
58 varied across the directorates with participants finding out *“second-hand”* creating
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3 spaces for "rumors" to emerge (E1CC). Later in the process, senior managers used a
4
5 more consistent and honest communication process to enable a deeper and more
6
7 mature conversation. One manager referred to colleagues being told: "*The 'givens' [..]*
8
9 *We were open and transparent about that.*" (M1CC). Similarly, one employee suggested
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11 that later in the process "*the feedback from managers seemed more open and focused*
12
13 *on what they were doing.*" (E9CC).
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20 Cognitive bridging also involved articulating a positive future vision, reducing
21
22 the negative impact perceived in the present. For example, RetailCo's senior managers
23
24 designed the "*Branch of the Future*" ('BoF') which aimed to create a successful
25
26 organization that was financially sustainable in the long-term: "*It was about a long-*
27
28 *term shift in what branches were about. Hence it was called Branch of the Future.*"
29
30 (M1RC). This fostered commitment among RetailCo's partners for the proposed
31
32 changes: "*I think everyone realized what needed to be done.*" (E2RC).
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39 Similarly, one of EnCorp's affected plants was established as a 'Centre of
40
41 Excellence' creating "*a sustainable vision of a future with high skills and employment*"
42
43 (M1EC). The emphasis on sustainability again was important for trust preservation
44
45 because it demonstrated the organization's commitment to investing in its employees
46
47 and provided evidence that existing trust relations were important in the future: "*[It*
48
49 *provided] actual evidence that the parent company does see there's a future in the plant*
50
51 *because they could've easily shut it.*" (M2EC).
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57 CityCouncil's SWITCH initiative was designed to recognize employees' existing
58
59 skills and attributes and find a suitable fit for the future. One manager explained:
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3 *"SWITCH stands for 'staff, working, in, transition in change'. It's a strengths-based*
4 *framework - assessing their strengths and moving them from a job that they are*
5 *currently doing to a role that we need them to do in the future."* (M1CC). While generally
6 interviewees suggested that the intention behind SWITCH had been positive, some
7 expressed concerns about how capabilities were being matched: *"You've been matched*
8 *to this job and you think 'oh great'. Then you read all the way down, it says you need*
9 *these qualifications which you haven't got, so why do they match you to it in the first*
10 *place?"* (E9CC). Employees who were matched to jobs for which they did not possess
11 necessary qualifications felt under-valued which challenged their trust in senior
12 management (Culbert & McDonough, 1986). However, as these initial inconsistencies
13 were remedied by management over time, employees began to see SWITCH in a more
14 positive light:

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35 *"Everything that's new, there's going to be flaws in the system, but they have tried*
36 *to correct it, they have definitely tried to amend it. So, it's more suitable to*
37 *everyone. Now, we are matched more on our level."* (E8CC).

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43 In contrast, for GovDept's employees the changes lacked a clearly articulated rationale,
44 future vision and effective planning. Employees felt that managers failed to justify the
45 necessity of quick change and were not upfront. Even managers discussed how they
46 tried to *"sugarcoat things"*. Further, employees felt the use of cartoons in the
47 communication strategy to be infantilizing, negatively influencing perceptions of
48 GovDept and sending cues that the organization was not trustworthy.

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3 In sum, cognitive bridging involved practices that facilitated organizational
4 members to cope with uncertainty and vulnerability by developing their understanding
5 of the present situation in an open, honest and respectful manner, and provided a
6 positive future vision so that the question *"Who will we be as an organization in the*
7 *future?"* could be answered positively, in a way that highlighted continuity in the
8 organization's core purpose and values.
9

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 *Emotional embodying*

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21 Emotional embodying involves prioritizing emotions triggered by the jolt by creating
22 spaces for emotions to be shared, worked through and shifted. It includes individual
23 and collective efforts to create social environments where employees feel cared for
24 and where their emotional responses take priority.
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32 In the three trust preserving organizations, this was actively supported by
33 concrete actions. For example, a RetailCo partner recounted how her *"diary was just*
34 *cleared"* as affected partners became her priority over *"every other appointment"*.
35 Senior managers recognized that shifting organizational members' negative emotional
36 states to more positive ones would require considerable time and support: *"Let's make*
37 *time to care for them. Don't expect them to make the emotional leap at the same pace*
38 *they're making the intellectual leap."* (M7RC). Importantly, for those who had concerns
39 about RetailCo's communication, the emphasis on personal support helped to balance
40 the perceived negative effects: *"The support you got within the local branch was*
41 *excellent. If you weren't happy, you could speak to your [line manager] or personnel.*
42 *People were easily accessible."*
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3 At CityCouncil, the budget cuts and subsequent transformational change
4 program evoked worry and cynicism amongst organizational members who were
5
6 concerned about job losses and occupational retraining. In response, senior managers
7
8 created conversational platforms for people to share their concerns and work through
9
10 defensive feelings, in recognition that unresolved feelings could lead to withdrawal.
11
12 They also welcomed critique on the proposed changes: *"I've got to take it on the chin*
13
14 *and I've got to listen"* (M2CC). This approach set the foundations for more cooperative
15
16 interaction. Employees also frequently referenced the support and coaching they
17
18 received on the SWITCH program. Many had been employed in their respective roles
19
20 for a large part of their careers and were concerned about their ability to fulfill new
21
22 responsibilities. Coaching allowed them to shift from uncertainty to believing in their
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24 capabilities.
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35 Yet, while many employees on the program experienced the new role as an
36
37 opportunity, *"It's just absolutely been the most exhilarating experience of my life."*
38
39 (E10CC), some were more cynical suggesting that senior managers used SWITCH as a
40
41 PR strategy to cover up redundancies and *"save face"* (E9CC). For these interviewees,
42
43 SWITCH was mainly politically motivated: *"they don't want to be seen to be failing"*
44
45 (E9CC) as local *"politicians didn't want any redundancies"* (E11CC), also because the
46
47 council was an important employer in the city. Nevertheless, there seemed to be a
48
49 general consensus that generating significant savings was an economic necessity and
50
51 not easy. Many proposed that despite possible criticism, overall decision-makers at
52
53 CityCouncil had good intentions, *"at least they're trying to do something"* (E12CC).
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3 Some even concluded that the program provided direct evidence of CityCouncil's
4 benevolence: *"SWITCH has provided the evidence that they do actually care."* (E15CC).
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8 Another employee suggested:
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11 *"I wouldn't be here if the Council hadn't done what was done. So, to me, as much*
12
13 *as I might not like everything else that the process goes through, fundamentally*
14
15 *the Council are doing the best they can for its employees."* (E13CC)
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19 EnCorp's commitment to supporting staff emotionally during the disruptive period
20 was manifested in the financial resources dedicated to support employees who faced
21 displacement and redundancy. Many of EnCorp's workforce were local breadwinners
22 and concerned about their ability to find alternative employment in the region. To
23 reduce ambiguity, senior managers communicated their positive intentions to all
24 employees at the outset: *"Right from day one, we said 'if you're displaced as a result of*
25 *this, we will support you'. We will put a considerable amount of investment. We're talking*
26 *hundreds of thousands of pounds were spent on outplacement support."* (M1EC).
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40 However, some employees also criticized senior management's communication of
41 redundancies prior to Christmas as lacking in care and compassion:
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45 *"When you've got adults crying in front of you, it's hard to try and console them.*
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47 *But you know, we wouldn't criticise the company on the fact that they did get the*
48
49 *job center in, they did get people's CV's [..] The only thing I've criticised the*
50
51 *company about, is when we let 50 people go at Christmas. We had a bit of a row*
52
53 *over it."* (E7EC)
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3 At the same time, employees recognized that redundancies were a time of hardship
4 and suffering for those being let go, regardless of how well management handled it,
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9 *"We thought it was done correctly but, obviously if you're losing your job, nothing's done*
10
11 *correctly."* (E7EC).

12
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14 By contrast, in GovDept, emotions were largely ignored, even denied. For
15
16 example, HR staff did not think it right to *"mollycoddle people too much"* and put the
17 focus on process rather than people. GovDept's emphasis on a quick change process
18 also meant that people *"never actually had a chance to grieve"* (M1GD). Further,
19 managers were willing to *"take a hit for the team"* only if it was linked to performance
20 outputs, *"if I can actually see a deliverable coming out the other end of the machine"*,
21 but rejected the idea of working through emotions at a personal level, *"[I won't] just*
22 *stand there and be someone else's emotional punch bag."* (E2GD). The outcome was
23 that many employees at GovDept became increasingly cynical.

34 35 36 37 38 *Inclusive enacting*

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40 This practice describes attempts to involve organizational members in decisions, giving
41 them voice throughout the disruption, as well as create processes that were fair and
42 consistent. These were important for reducing employees' sense of vulnerability by
43 enabling collectivity and enhancing a sense of personal control (Kasten, 2018). As a
44 result, people felt they had a say in how the organization was changing, and perceived
45 principles of fairness and integrity were being enacted.

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The trust preserving organizations set up robust consultative structures and
processes to involve people. Leaders understood that different stakeholder groups

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3 had a legitimate right and need to be heard. One EnCorp manager suggested: *"It's all*
4 *about the involvement that you have with the people. You listen to them and they*
5 *actually feel that they're having some influence on that outcome."* (M2EC). In
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11 CityCouncil, senior management also initiated frequent discussions with employees,
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13
14 constructing the workforce (generally via their representatives) as active participants
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16
17 in the organization's response to the disruption, even if they did not always act
18
19 according to their suggestions:
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22 *"We've not just imposed anything. They've occasionally argued with the process*
23 *and sometimes when we've looked at it, we've reviewed it and we've changed it.*
24
25 *Sometimes we've said no, we need to stick to it for this reason."* (M2CC)
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29
30 This sense of empowerment increased employees' belief in their capability to cope
31
32 with uncertainty. In RetailCo this manifested itself in a two-way relationship: senior
33
34 managers had responsibilities, but so did the workforce. One HR Manager described
35
36 it as an *"adult/adult relationship"* of *"sharing responsibility for your future"* (M7RC).
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40
41 By contrast, in GovDept decision-making around organizational responses to
42
43 the funding cuts was centralized. Employees were neither involved in the process, nor
44
45 had control over its timescale: *"From our point of view, there's a very general feeling of*
46 *'being done to' by the corporate center. You hadn't really been involved in sorting out*
47 *the process."* (E3GD). The decision to use external consultants to manage the difficult
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52 aspects of the change reinforced this passive feeling. This removed leaders'
53
54 responsibility, effectively bypassed staff representatives and ultimately emasculated
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59 the workforce.
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Inclusive enacting also involved a deliberate focus on consistently applying standards and principles. For example, in RetailCo every employee facing redundancy was offered redeployment, with policies in place to maintain their pay: *"We have a really consistent approach which means that everyone is treated fairly... that's really important in terms of trust."* (E16RC). Further, in EnCorp, everyone, regardless of hierarchy, had both shorter working hours and an associated 25% pay cut. This was generally judged as a fair approach because it meant that fewer workers lost jobs: *"It could have been worse. Although we lost a number of people, we could have lost a lot more but, as a shop floor, we all agreed to do a four day a week, short-time working."* (E5EC).

In addition, every worker had to go through an assessment process to determine whether their job was to be made redundant or not. Union officials were involved in this process, they had *"seen people's assessments"* and through that involvement made *"sure that they were scored correctly"* (E7EC). These actions created an environment of solidarity and reinforced principles of integrity and consistency which contributed to the preservation of trust.

Likewise, at CityCouncil, the design of the internal labor market program SWITCH sought to uphold principles of fairness through the assignment of roles. First, they stopped all external recruitment, prioritizing options for internal staff and hence creating a more secure employment environment. When a job vacancy arose, job matching software helped fit current employees with existing capabilities and experience to the vacancy. Designed to be as objective as possible, the process was

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3 judged positively by employees and trade unions *"I think the principle of the system is*
4 *pretty much sound."* (E13CC), resulting in high participation: *"it got a lot of trust...I*
5 *volunteered to join Switch. A lot of people did"* (E20CC). It was broadly perceived as
6 leaving little room for favoritism and individual agendas of managers: *"Managers*
7 *cannot interfere with it, and they cannot 'cherry-pick' either; it's an objective process,*
8 *which was seen as a real plus by the trade unions"* (M2CC). However, some employees
9 disagreed. They suggested that individual middle-level managers used SWITCH for
10 their own interests, *"managers are manipulating that process because they are using*
11 *the SWITCH officers to cover up their job. That's supposed to be an absolute no-no."*
12 (E14CC), challenging perceived trustworthiness of some of CityCouncil's managers and
13 processes.

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16 In contrast, a curious trade-off was observed at GovDept where line managers
17 defied principles of fairness and integrity. There were several instances of line
18 managers misusing the rating systems as a means of pursuing their own agendas and
19 favoring their own teams, which undermined the fair implementation of this policy.
20 These actions made it a *"disruptive process"* creating *"huge challenges around*
21 *convincing staff that it really was fair and transparent"* (M2GD). The impact on trust was
22 clear as an HR Manager reflected: *"There was a lot of breakdown of trust because people*
23 *were applying different standards."* (M3GD).

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Enabling mechanisms

Our analysis revealed two enabling dynamics that supported the preservation of trust.

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3 The first, *mobilization of the organization's established trust foundations*,
4 describes how managers identified the central elements through which trust had been
5
6 constituted in the past, and enacted, adapted and amplified these through active trust
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8 preservation practices, to bring a sense of familiarity into the uncertain present and
9
10 future. These trust foundations are informed by the social practices, processes and
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12 structures, values and principles, stories and rituals, formed through (past) interactions,
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14 that constitute trust between employees and the organization, and its (re)constitution
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16 over time. As such, these established trust foundations inform members' expectations
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18 of the organization in relation to trust.
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27 The second, *managers' understanding of role during disruption*, describes how
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29 managers perceive their role during the period of disruption. We observed that in the
30
31 three successful cases, managers saw themselves as guardians, protectors and
32
33 stewards of the organization first, and change actors second. We found that these two
34
35 mechanisms were interrelated in how they enabled trust preservation practices.
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40 At RetailCo, one of the key trust foundations was Principle #1 which outlines
41
42 the purpose of the partnership as the collective "*happiness of all its members, through*
43
44 *their worthwhile and satisfying employment in a successful business.*" Leaders were
45
46 aware of the importance of Principle #1 and it was frequently referred to, signaling its
47
48 relevance and amplification during the period of disruption. Leaders actively
49
50 connected this principle to the need to shift from the present '*paternalistic*' to a future
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52 '*adult-to-adult*' culture to ensure long-term sustainability:
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3 *"Principle #1 talks about a successful business as one which generates sufficient*
4
5 *profit for the next generation. So, everything that you do, the way you operate*
6
7 *has to be to create a sustainable business."* (M1RC)
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11 For trust to be preserved, the partnership ethos had to be protected at any cost:

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13 *"The nature of co-ownership - there is a trust that those principles will be upheld. That's*
14
15 *where trust is hugely important."* (M4RC). However, senior managers also recognized
16
17 that given the changed external environment, RetailCo needed to transform. Yet, they
18
19 were clear that this transformation needed to protect the organization's legacy,
20
21 viewing the past as a positive legacy that required adaptation: *"We're trying to build*
22
23 *from what we had into the right form of new."* (M7RC). Importantly, given the
24
25 organization's history, employees expected senior leaders to exercise benevolence,
26
27 caring about the well-being of its members, even in the context of redundancies. Those
28
29 in charge were aware of this and combined their communication with an explicitly
30
31 caring approach, to amplify their benevolent orientation. This became known as
32
33 *"loving partners over the line"* (M2RC).
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43 EnCorp's established trust foundations were different. Here, a unionized culture
44
45 and strong personal relationships between line managers, workers and trade unions
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47 at the local plant level were important elements that constituted trust. EnCorp
48
49 Management understood this and explicitly used existing communication and
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51 consultation practices with the unions to facilitate proposed actions:
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3 *"It's a strong union culture [...] I am 100% committed to having a weekly meeting*
4 *with the shop stewards in my area, telling them what's going on, how things are*
5 *progressing, listening to their gripes and having that rapport with them"* (M2EC).
6
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10
11 Being involved made union officials feel valued by senior management. Further,
12
13 throughout the crisis, senior EnCorp leaders adopted a protective role, *"We're here to*
14 *support the business, that's what we see our role as."* (M3EC), a pledge they took
15
16 seriously, *"EnCorp is still fully committed to the UK"* (M1EC). Despite the challenging
17
18 circumstances, they managed to safeguard EnCorp's image as a successful regional
19
20 employer, which employees appreciated.
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26
27 An important foundation of trust at CityCouncil was the explicit recognition and
28
29 belief in the value of each individual. The SWITCH initiative could have challenged this
30
31 because it relocated employees into new roles, potentially reducing the value of their
32
33 skills and knowledge. However, senior leaders sought to mobilize and amplify a
34
35 strength-based approach in their trust preservation practices: *"We took a decision that*
36
37 *we would stop recruiting externally [...] you have to find what we've got internally and*
38
39 *grow them into the role."* (M2CC). Importantly, for employees who felt they realized
40
41 personal aspirations through SWITCH, it reinforced trust in senior managers: *"You get*
42
43 *a lot of trust. I feel a lot like they've looked after us."* (E4CC). However, those employees
44
45 who did not feel developed in their reassigned roles felt more equivocal.
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54 Although CityCouncil's leaders understood the need for cuts, they saw it as an
55
56 opportunity to protect staff and community interests. Historically, CityCouncil had
57
58 acted with integrity and care towards the city's inhabitants. This *"authentic CityCouncil*
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1
2
3 *style*" was a source of pride for employees, providing an anchor during uncertain times,
4
5
6 with employees reporting the organization had preserved this positive image through
7
8 the disruption. This was achieved because leaders perceived themselves as guardians
9
10 of the organization's values of being *"proud, decent and together"*, which they
11
12 mobilized in their practices: *"The council is choosing to manage that change in a*
13
14 *particular way which I believe, reinforces those values of being decent and together in*
15
16 *particular."* (M1CC).
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22 In contrast, leaders at GovDept failed to identify that trust in the civil service
23
24 organization had been built on fairness, integrity and respect for individuals'
25
26 competency. This was reinforced by senior management who led people to *"believe*
27
28 *we should expect it to be fair"* because *"it's part of what we do, it's public sector"* (E6GD).
29
30 Yet, this critical trust foundation was not enacted. Rather, employees felt that *"people*
31
32 *who lost their jobs didn't lose them for a fair reason"* and that senior managers had little
33
34 concern for *"people's lives"* (E6GD). Further, many council members had considerable
35
36 professional expertise and experience, yet, senior government officials started to
37
38 question these abilities and engaged in monitoring behaviors: *"You tend to get*
39
40 *micromanaged by them if they don't trust you to work properly."* (E1GD). As a result of
41
42 these failures to recognize, draw on and enact established foundations of trust during
43
44 the disruption, employee trust suffered. This approach was informed by senior
45
46 managers' understanding of their role as *"corporate"* change leaders who were
47
48 required to *"demonstrate their active behavioral leadership strongly"* (M1GD). They
49
50 interpreted the crisis as an opportunity to transform the way things were done at
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3 GovDept by *"being corporate"* and acting *"fast and furiously"*, with little concern for
4
5 preserving GovDept's collective legacy. Instead, managers were described as focused
6
7 on protecting their personal legacy and future.
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9

10 11 12 **Preservation of organizational trust**

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14
15 Through these three interactive components (conditional factors, trust preserving
16
17 practices and enabling mechanisms), trust preservation was accomplished in RetailCo,
18
19 EnCorp and CityCouncil. Trust *"didn't change significantly"* (M1EC), *"remained high"*
20
21 (E4CC), *"I've not lost my trust"* (E7RC) and in some cases even increased:
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23

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25
26 *"On our partner survey, during the year where we had the Branch of the Future*
27
28 *Program, which made a significant number of partners redundant, the scores*
29
30 *increased on the [trust] questions."* (M1RC).
31
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34 This was in contrast to GovDept, where the general view was *"most people completely*
35
36 *lost trust"* (E7GD).
37
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39
40 Importantly, trust preservation had both familiar and transformational aspects.
41
42 The familiar aspects were achieved by drawing on, adapting and amplifying
43
44 established foundations of trust in the enactment of trust preservation practices. The
45
46 transformative aspects represented the new practices, stories and relational history
47
48 created through the process of navigating the disruption.
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52
53 Following the disruption, in RetailCo and EnCorp trust in the organizations'
54
55 ability to steward the workforce through difficult situations was more robust. Partners
56
57 in RetailCo agreed that the changes were *"right for the business"* and suggested that
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1
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3 *"because it was handled so well, you felt even better after"* (E4RC). There was also a
4
5
6 sense that RetailCo had managed to safeguard its concern and care for each individual.
7
8 Similarly, even employees who had challenged managerial decisions agreed that trust
9
10 had not changed for them: *"My querying of some of the decisions and some of the things*
11
12 *that are going on have made me step back and look. But I don't think the overall trust*
13
14 *has changed. No, my trust hasn't changed."* (E8RC). There was a sense of hope and
15
16 anticipation among employees at EnCorp who moved from uncertainty in response to
17
18 the disruptive events into a safer space: *"I've seen morale's up from what it was. I think*
19
20 *people know that the business is secure."* (E6EC).
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26
27 Many CityCouncil employees suggested that going through the SWITCH
28
29 program had positively influenced and reinforced their trust with the council, leaving
30
31 them feeling valued: *"I don't think trust levels were ever low. I always thought they were*
32
33 *quite high to be honest. From my point of view, it's worked out perfectly."* (E9CC) and *"I*
34
35 *trust the organization as a whole one hundred per cent. My health and well-being went*
36
37 *up one hundred per cent as a result."* (E10CC).
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43 While in GovDept, ignoring established trust foundations, over-emphasizing
44
45 change at the expense of guardianship, and failing to effectively engage in any of the
46
47 trust preservation practices, led to the breakdown of trust instead of its preservation.
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51 --- Insert Figure 2 here ---
52

53 **Discussion**

54
55 Organizations are increasingly operating in disruptive environments that pose a threat
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57 to organizational trust. This study aimed to understand how organizational members
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1
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3 accomplish the preservation of employees' trust during disruption. This is theoretically
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5
6 valuable because despite the long-standing interest in practices of organizational trust
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8
9 building and repair, understanding of trust preservation remains limited. Our study
10
11 makes three contributions to trust theory.
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13

14 First, we contribute to trust theory by advancing a conceptual understanding of
15
16 trust preservation. We define it as *active practices to preserve established trust in the*
17
18 *relationship, triggered by a jolt that heightens uncertainty and vulnerability in the*
19
20 *relationship*. This conceptualization distinguishes trust preservation from trust building
21
22 and trust repair based on its aim, context and relationship history, emotions,
23
24 and trust repair based on its aim, context and relationship history, emotions,
25
26 cognitions and practices (see Table 1). Specifically, trust preservation aims to protect
27
28 existing trust and avoid a loss of trust, rather than building trust to a future higher
29
30 state, or restoring damaged trust to a past level after a violation. In contrast to trust
31
32 building scenarios where there is no or insufficient trust in the relationship, trust
33
34 preservation occurs in the context of established trust within a personalized
35
36 relationship. Trust preservation is triggered by a jolt that changes the *context* in which
37
38 this trusting relationship is embedded. This jolt disrupts familiarity, heightening the
39
40 trustor's sense of vulnerability and uncertainty in the relationship, and creating
41
42 conflicting cognitions and emotions due to the co-existence of a positive lens from
43
44 established trust and a negative lens from the uncertain and disruptive context. In this
45
46 changed context, trustors find themselves in a state of suspension seeking reassurance
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48 that trust continues to be warranted in the relationship.
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3 We do not suggest that trust preservation requires maintaining trust at exactly
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6 equal levels throughout the disruptive period. Rather, our data shows that trust evolves
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9 during preservation, sometimes wavering, then steadying, at times strengthening or
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11 remaining constant. We envision trust preservation as operating within a range in
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13
14 which trust can vary somewhat in strength. Importantly, unlike trust repair scenarios,
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16
17 in trust preservation contexts a breach in the relationship has not occurred and is still
18
19 avoidable – only the context of the relationship is disrupted by the jolt, not (yet) the
20
21 relationship itself. Our case materials highlight that leaders often frame trust
22
23 preservation in terms of what they perceive is best for the sustained survival of the
24
25 organization overall. Despite attempts to act with integrity and care, individual
26
27 employees may suffer during disruptive times, particularly during redundancies.
28
29 Organizational members will also vary in how they perceive trust preservation efforts
30
31 leading to different responses. As such, we contend that in trust preservation scenarios,
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33
34 organizational members seek to preserve trust at the collective level for the majority
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37 by engaging in active and conscious practices that aim to avoid the erosion of
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39
40 organizational trust as a result of a jolt.
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46 By laying this conceptual foundation, we shift theoretical attention beyond the
47
48 traditional focus on trust building and repair (e.g. Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Kramer &
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50 Lewicki, 2010; Lewicki et al., 2006; Rousseau et al., 1998) towards a potential third
51
52 dynamic – trust preservation. Whilst our empirical focus is on the preservation of intra-
53
54 organizational trust, we frame our definition and conceptualization of trust
55
56 preservation broadly in line with our view that this concept and phenomenon occurs
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3 across levels and types of trust relationships. Another important aspect to clarify is the
4
5 role of internal versus external jolts. Our empirical cases focused only on external jolts,
6
7 specifically a sharp reduction in revenue due to the global financial crisis. There are
8
9 reasons to expect that if employees had attributed the jolt to internal causes, it may
10
11 have been experienced as a trust breach by management. Future research is required
12
13 to examine how an internal attribution for the jolt may influence trust preservation
14
15 scenarios.
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22 Our second contribution is the development of a conceptual model of trust
23
24 preservation, which provides a first understanding of *how* trust preservation is
25
26 accomplished in organizations facing disruption (Figure 2). We identify three distinct
27
28 components important for trust preservation: conditional factors, trust preservation
29
30 practices and enabling mechanisms. Trust preservation is triggered by a jolt – a
31
32 significant event that can vary in size and magnitude that threatens established trust
33
34 by disrupting organizational members' sense of familiarity, and making vulnerability in
35
36 the employee-organization relationship salient (*conditional factors*). This prompts
37
38 more conscious awareness of the need to engage in *active trust preservation practices*
39
40 - cognitive bridging, emotional embodying and inclusive enacting – which collectively
41
42 reduce vulnerability and uncertainty.
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51 In contrast to trust building and trust repair strategies, these practices have
52
53 been largely undertheorized. We show that trust preservation practices are socially
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55 embedded involving relational exchanges between organizational members, and
56
57 represent organizational attempts to create 'access points' for interaction between
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1
2
3 management and employees (Giddens, 1990). For employees, these practices
4
5 demonstrate ability, benevolence and integrity (Mayer et al., 1995; Whitener et al.,
6
7 1998). As such they may not be exclusive to trust preservation but could also be drawn
8
9 on to build and repair trust. However, these practices are particularly important in trust
10
11 preservation contexts for several reasons. First, cognitive bridging enables
12
13 organizational members to shift attention from the current uncertainty resulting from
14
15 the disruption towards a more positive view of the future that builds on the
16
17 organization's legacy. Second, emotional embodying facilitates employees to cope
18
19 emotionally with the uncertainty and ambiguity triggered by the jolt by creating
20
21 spaces, structures and support that help them work through emotions and develop
22
23 coping capabilities (Kasten, 2018; Oreg et al., 2018; Sloan & Oliver, 2013; Williams,
24
25 2007). Third, inclusive enacting is important in contexts of vulnerability and uncertainty
26
27 because it enables collective sensemaking and exchange by giving voice, sharing
28
29 control and ensuring fair procedures (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; Korsgaard et al., 2002;
30
31 Holland et al., 2012).

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43 Further, our model shows how trust preservation was supported by two
44
45 interdependent *enabling mechanisms*: mobilization of the organization's established
46
47 foundations of trust and leaders' understanding of their role. We found that the core
48
49 foundations of trust in the organization need to be protected, enacted and amplified
50
51 in times of disruption for trust to be preserved. These foundations are resources that
52
53 organizational actors can mobilize to create a sense of familiarity in contexts of
54
55 uncertainty (Luhmann, 2017). Honoring and protecting these trust foundations signals
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1
2
3 predictability and constitutes a process of familiarization that supports trust
4
5 preservation. Mobilization requires actors to be reflexive and knowledgeable in
6
7 identifying the specific trust foundations in their organization (i.e. principles, values,
8
9 practices, and/or structures that underpin organizational trust), skillful in assembling
10
11 these foundations (Weick, 1993) and able to enact them in a way that is reflective of
12
13 the complexity of a changing context. Organizational members' understanding of their
14
15 role during the disruption forms an important part of this reflexive practice. In the trust
16
17 preserving organizations, managers perceived themselves as guardians and protectors
18
19 of the organization during disruption who understood the need to safeguard the
20
21 organization's legacy, rather than as change agents. As such, managers had agency in
22
23 how to respond: they could preserve, breach or even sacrifice, trust.
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33 Our findings further show that power and political dynamics shape the
34
35 accomplishment of trust preservation (Grey & Garsten, 2001; Siebert et al., 2015). Trust
36
37 preservation practices were typically initiated by actors in power, mostly managers.
38
39 Viewed critically, trust was a source of managerial power used to advance
40
41 organizational agendas (Siebert et al., 2015). For example, managers at both
42
43 CityCouncil and RetailCo used powerful scripts and rhetoric that drew on employees'
44
45 internalized organizational values and identity to influence them to follow the change
46
47 agenda (Grey & Garsten, 2001). Nevertheless, our findings show that trust preservation
48
49 requires the active acceptance, involvement and legitimization of employees in non-
50
51 managerial roles. Employees have agency to withdraw their trust by interpreting
52
53 situations and actions as unworthy of continued trust. This was apparent in some
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3 CityCouncil employees who become cynical when they did not feel their skills were
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5
6 appropriately recognized during job reassignments (see also Culbert & McDonough,
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8
9 1986). These employees needed further evidence to continue to trust the organization.
10
11 As such, we suggest that organizational members across hierarchical levels influence
12
13
14 whether and how trust preservation is accomplished.
15

16
17 Third, by conceptualizing trust preservation as both a manifestation and
18
19 extension of active trust, our study advances understanding of active trust practices
20
21 with implications for the literature on active trust (Child & Möllering, 2003; Giddens,
22
23 1990, 1994; Luhmann, 1988, 2017; Möllering, 2006, 2013). By attending to the
24
25 conditional factors that trigger the need for trust preservation, we highlight the
26
27 importance of the broader context in which organizational trust preservation is
28
29 embedded. Active trust scholars have acknowledged the instability and uncertainty
30
31 characterizing modernity (Giddens, 1990) but have not investigated these conditions
32
33 or theorized their impact on trust (see Grrimpe, 2019 for an exception). We propose
34
35 that for active trust preservation to be required (as opposed to routine trust
36
37 maintenance), a significant disruption is needed, akin to a 'jolt' (Meyer, 1982). We
38
39 theorize that jolts disrupt employees' familiar ways of thinking about and trusting their
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41 organization by heightening vulnerability and uncertainty in the employment
42
43 relationship, which in turn triggers proactive and conscious attempts to preserve trust.
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54 Importantly, while the notion of active trust generally emphasizes habitual trust
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56 engagement, privileging established structures and interactions that reintroduce
57
58 familiarity (Luhmann, 2017), we argue that preserving trust in the context of salient
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3 vulnerability and uncertainty requires both the *mobilization* and *transformation* of
4
5 familiar established foundations of trust: that is, habitual ways of reconstituting trust
6
7 are no longer sufficient in times of disruption. Rather, adapted meaning systems and
8
9 relational practices need to be created and enacted to reassure and enable employees
10
11 to uphold confident positive expectations of the organization's future conduct (Weick,
12
13 1993). Hence for trust to be preserved, organizational members need to develop and
14
15 enact practices which *draw on but also adapt and amplify* the organization's existing
16
17 trust foundations to the context of the jolt, possibly even creating new modes and
18
19 bases of trust (Luhmann, 2017). Hence, these practices are shaped by the social context
20
21 of the relationship. We propose that the manner in which intra-organizational trust
22
23 was constituted both *enables* and *restricts* trust preservation practices. For example, to
24
25 preserve trust at RetailCo, leaders arguably would always have to protect core
26
27 principles of the Partnership model because it is a foundational element of employees'
28
29 trust. Hence, an implication of our model is that an organization's unique set of
30
31 established trust foundations influences the specific form that trust preservation can
32
33 take. In sum, we suggest that while familiarization is important for intra-organizational
34
35 trust to be preserved, so is transformation of existing trust practices.
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48 **Boundary conditions and future research**

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51 Our study revealed boundary conditions which suggest avenues for future research.
52
53 Our data were collected when disruptive events were still recent but had largely been
54
55 navigated. While this retrospective case study design was effective for identifying
56
57 suitable cases of trust preservation, and has been recommended to overcome
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1
2
3 difficulties of field research access during crises and disruption (Gillespie & Dietz,
4
5
6 2009), we recommend future studies adopt a longitudinal and processual design that
7
8 enables the 'real-time' examination of trust preservation (Möllering, 2013; van der
9
10 Werff & Buckley, 2017). This would capture the perspective of employees who leave
11
12 the organization during the disruptive period and inform understanding of trust
13
14 preservation dynamics. Second, we studied trust preservation at the organizational
15
16 level and the extent to which our model and the dynamics and practices identified
17
18 translate to other levels and referents requires investigation. However, there are
19
20 reasons to suggest that some dynamics may be relevant across levels. For example, a
21
22 trust preservation scenario at the interpersonal level could be a manager telling a
23
24 subordinate that s/he was passed over for promotion. To preserve trust in the context
25
26 of this 'jolt', the manager could mobilize and reaffirm the pre-existing relationship and
27
28 use practices such as explaining the outcome respectfully, supporting the recipient
29
30 through the distress by enabling emotions and inclusively exploring future career plans
31
32 and paths.
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43 **Conclusion**

44
45
46 Managing trust in contexts of disruption is a process fraught with challenges, as
47
48 evidenced by the fact that employee trust is often lost during such periods. Given the
49
50 increasing rate and pace with which organizations are facing disruption, it is important
51
52 to deepen understanding of how trust preservation can be accomplished. Our case
53
54 study findings and conceptual model show that intra-organizational trust can be
55
56 preserved through a set of active trust preservation practices, combined with
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1
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3 mobilization and transformation of the organization's established trust foundations,
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5
6 which collectively serve to reduce salient vulnerability and reintroduce familiarity in the
7
8 employee-organization relationship, despite the disrupted context. Our study
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10
11 advances trust theory by extending the notion of active trust and identifying how trust
12
13
14 preservation is conceptually distinct from trust building and repair.
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Biographies

Stefanie Gustafsson is a Lecturer in Organisation Studies at the University of Bath, School of Management. She also holds an Honorary Visiting Position at Cass Business School. Her research investigates professionals' work and career experiences in a changing world of work, trust in organizations and qualitative, multimodal methods. Her current work focuses on the experiences of paraprofessionals, particularly paralegals in law firms.

Nicole Gillespie is the KPMG Chair in Organizational Trust and Professor of Management at the University of Queensland Business School, Australia, and International Research Fellow at the Centre for Corporate Reputation, Oxford University. Her research focuses on the development, preservation and repair of trust, particularly in challenging contexts such as after trust failures, during organizational transformation and technological disruption, and in contested situations.

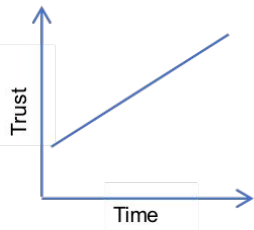
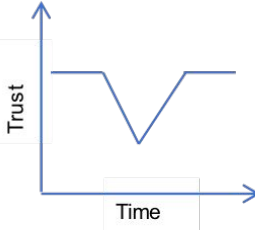
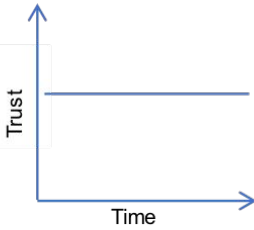
Rosalind H. Searle holds the chair in HRM and Organisational Psychology at the Adam Smith Business School at the University of Glasgow. She is a chartered occupational Psychologist and a Fellow of the British Psychological Society (BPS). Her research focuses on organisational trust and HRM, trust and controls, change and counterproductive work behaviours. Her research appears in leading international

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3 journals and in commissioned research for regulators, government and private
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11 Professor Veronica Hope Hailey is the University Vice President of Strategic External
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13 Engagement at the University of Bath and holds a Chair in Management Studies. She
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15 has also been elected into the Academy for Social Sciences in recognition of her
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17 contribution to Social Sciences. Her research focuses on the link between trust,
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19 strategy and Change Management. Her most recent work has focused on horizontal
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21 trust across complex systems, specifically working with the NHS.
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30 Graham Dietz was a Reader in Human Resource Management at Durham University
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32 Business School. His primary research interest was trust at work, with a particular
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34 interest in how trust is built and enhanced and sustained among colleagues, and
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36 between leaders and their followers. He also conducted research into the impact of
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38 HR policies and practices on trust. He very sadly passed away in 2014.
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Table 1. Conceptual distinctions between Trust Building, Trust Repair and Trust Preservation¹

	Trust Building	Trust Repair	Trust Preservation
Aim	Change trust: Build trust to a future positive state (gain trust) 	Change trust: Restore trust to a past positive state (repair damaged trust) 	Retain trust: Preserve trust in the context of a 'jolt' (avoid a loss of trust) 
Context and relationship history	No, limited or insufficient trust established in relationship Opportunity for enhanced exchange	Trust established then breached Damaged relationship Disequilibrium in relationship	Trust established in relationship Jolt poses threat to trust by heightening uncertainty and vulnerability
Emotions	Informed by context but mainly neutral or positive emotions	Vulnerability salient from breach Strong negative emotions typically including anger, cynicism, wariness, blame, guilt or defensiveness	Vulnerability salient from the jolt Triggers 'anticipatory' negative emotions, including anxiety, worry, and insecurity
Cognitions	Cumulative evaluation of trust-warranting cues	Paranoid cognition: Negative cues given greater weight than positive cues	Conflicted cognition: Positive lens from established trust, mixed with negative lens from heightened uncertainty and vulnerability
Key Strategies	Demonstrate trustworthiness (ABI), align interests and values, clarify expectations, delegate control, communicate effectively, show concern, enable employee voice etc.	Apology, denial, penance, social accounts, introducing new/revised formal and informal controls to constrain future violations etc.	Limited insight

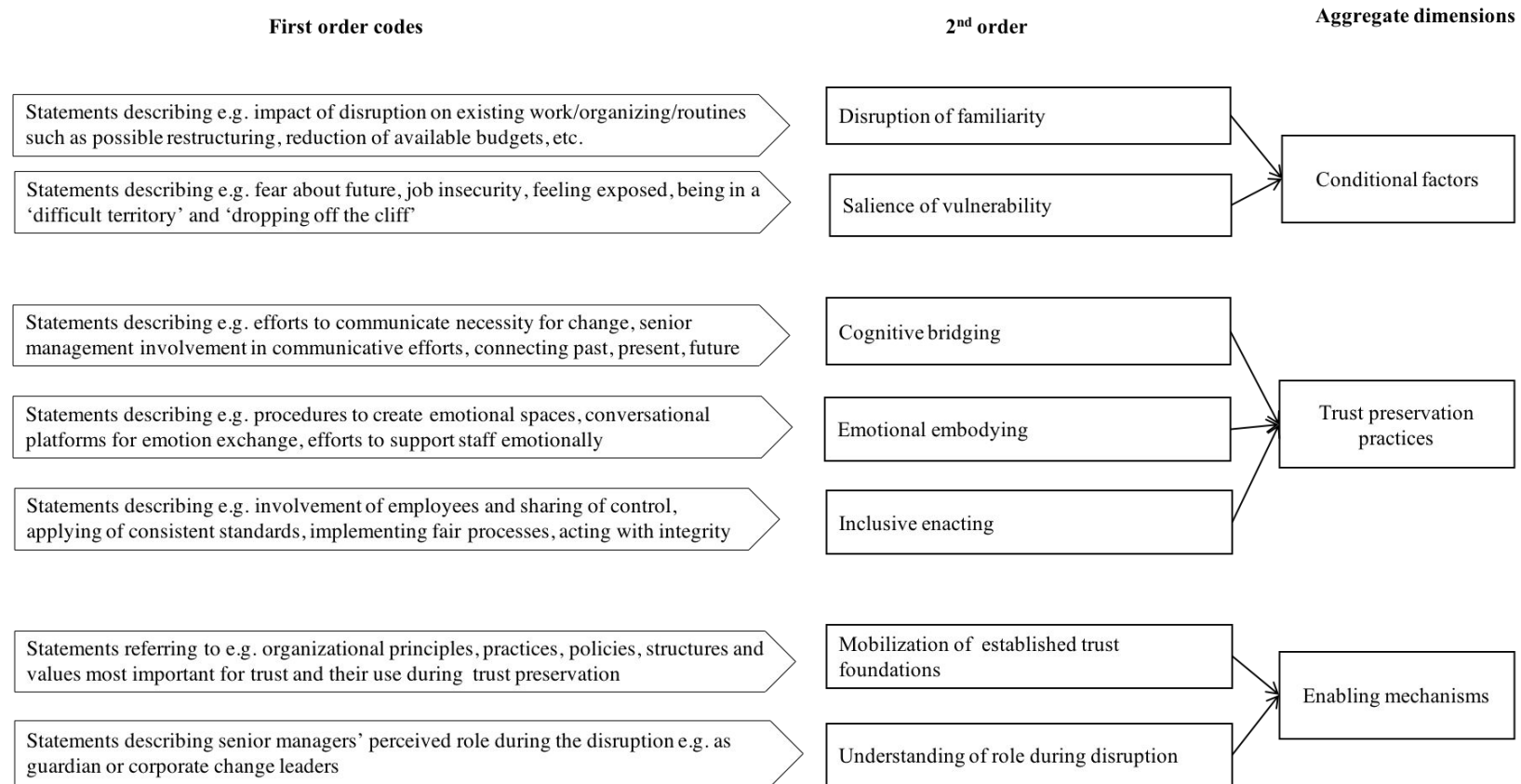
¹ This characterization is necessarily illustrative, and does not attempt to represent the full complexity of the processes of trust building, repair and preservation. We also note that in practice, there is likely to be some overlap in the processes, practices and mechanisms that build, repair and preserve trust.

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Table 2. Overview of case organizations

Case	RetailCo	EnCorp	CityCouncil	GovDept
Industry	Retail	Manufacturing	Public Services	Public Services
Size	38,000	55,000	7,000	2,500
Nature of the jolt	Major strategic review identified need for change in internal processes, back-office redundancies and pay cuts to maintain viability	Dramatic decline in revenue leading to plant closures, redundancies and workplace transfers and pay cuts	Significant budget cuts resulting in major change programme and fear of redundancies	Significant budget cuts leading to changes in work processes, job cuts to front-line staff and removal of responsibility
Informants	27 informants (74% non-management) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 non-managerial focus groups (n = 20) • Managers (n=7) from Operations, Sales, Development and HR 	14 informants (64% non-management) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 non-managerial focus groups (n=9) • Managers (n=5) from Operations and Purchasing 	34 informants (88% non-management) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 non-managerial focus groups (n=30) • Managers (n=4) from Senior mgt, Development, HR and Change 	19 informants (74% non-management) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 non-managerial focus groups (n=14) • Managers (n=5) from Senior mgt, Change and HR

Figure 1. Data structure



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Figure 2. Model of Organizational Trust Preservation

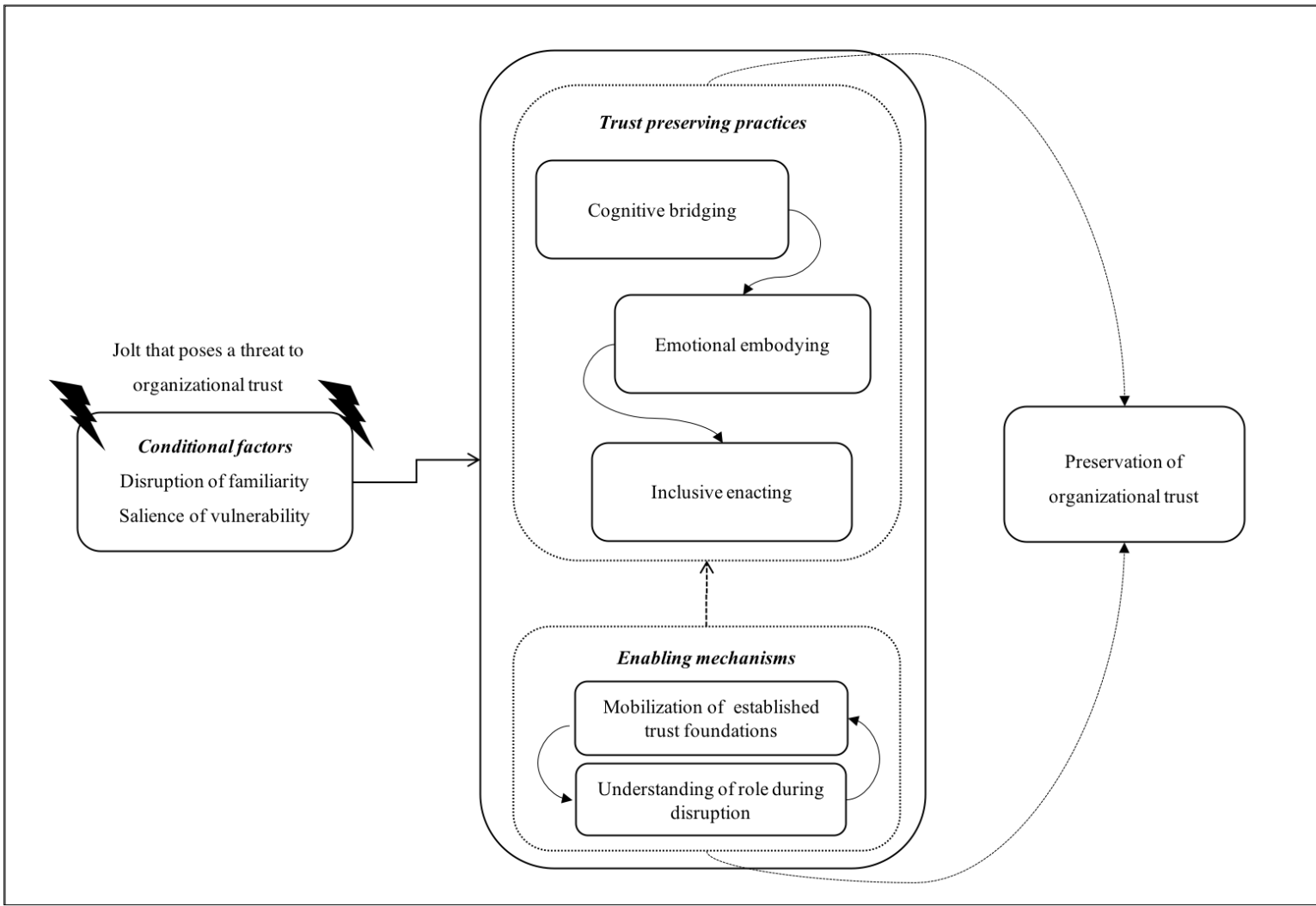


Table 3. Data supporting Conditional factors

RetailCo	EnCorp	CityCouncil	GovDept
<i>Disruption of familiarity</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major strategic review identified need for greater efficiency and flexibility to maintain viability • Back-office redundancies and pay cuts <p>“You knew that the business needed to move forward and there needed to be changes.” (E5)</p> <p>“We started to notice the fact that you needed to be a lot more open to invite the public in.” (M2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dramatic drop in revenue • 60% of work force affected by plant closures, redundancies and/or workplace transfers • 25% pay cuts <p>“We went through a huge decline very quickly and very rapidly within the automotive sector. We lost 60% of our volume in the UK.” (M1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutback of £58 million from £745 million annual budget • Potential redundancies • Transformational change programme <p>“We knew that whichever government got into power, public sector funding was going to be a target for cuts. [..]” (M1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £3 billion in cost cutting over 3 years • Focus on efficiency, stripping out processes, cuts to front-line service affecting 75% of jobs • Removal of responsibility <p>“With the change in government, you almost have to start again.” (E8)</p> <p>“We can't deliver with so much less resource by just then going back to the old ways we used to work.” (M2)</p>
<i>Salience of vulnerability</i>			
<p>“There was a great deal of nervousness and anxiety amongst partners generally about the economic situation.” (M1)</p> <p>“That 40%, the group of people I'm talking about, there were 3,600-odd people affected. They weren't all made redundant, but [..] they probably did have a feeling of shock.” (M5)</p> <p>“You're kind of wondering, are we ever going to go over to that, at that stage?” (E9)</p>	<p>“I think there was a massive fear of the unknown.” (E1)</p> <p>“Just before we fell off the cliff, I was thinking, ‘oh, we do look quite sound here’, you know, it looks like we will be employed for a long time yet, and then it just came out of the blue.” (E6)</p>	<p>“I think 99 per cent of people would be thinking, ‘God, my future depends on this [..] A lot of people panicked.’ (E2)</p> <p>“A lot of people were wondering what was going to happen, uncertain about the future.” (E5)</p> <p>“I felt quite vulnerable...I didn't know what was in the future” (E24)</p> <p>“The council were trying to do the best it could. On the other hand there's obviously likely to be cuts and you couldn't tell how you were going to be affected” (E14)</p>	<p>“The government came in, we took the biggest hit in terms of the financial cuts. So there was uncertainty about that.” (M4)</p> <p>“There's a general thing about our political masters using us as the whipping boys when they want to show to the public to be doing something.” (E1)</p>

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Table 4. Data supporting Trust preservation practices

RetailCo	EnCorp	CityCouncil	GovDept
<i>Cognitive bridging</i>			
<p>“It was a very civilized way of doing it [roadshows with senior and local management] and I had total trust that there was all the information.” (E2)</p> <p>“We used to shelter some partners from some of the details of what our business was about but actually to get absolute engagement from people its being scrupulously honest with everything [...] I think [...] as long as I remained true to doing the best for them, balancing that with the needs of the business, being honest and transparent, I think we maintained a level of trust.”(M3)</p>	<p>“We termed it a Centre of Excellence to give a vision of something that was going to be sustainable for our employees and give them a commitment to a longer term future in the UK, which was very important in terms of trust.” (M1)</p> <p>“It was mostly by the trade union and we had a few briefing sessions. And then it was by management – so management would brief their areas.” (E4)</p> <p>“I think [what] was important, that part of the rollout of the communications was that very senior people, the divisional chief exec, the HR director and the operations director, all came into the three facilities to give those announcements.” (M1)</p>	<p>“We have a council chamber as you would expect it holds, 100 or so people, we did briefings for those people, where we actually sat them down and said right, ‘here’s the challenge we are facing, this is what it looks like, this is what the organization is currently committing to do [...] we think we can achieve this’, but that means we have to all work together. [...]” (M1)</p> <p>“We quite often had everyone coming in, it was open to staff and do question and answer sessions on Switch and how it would work, and that happened on two or three occasions that I was aware of.” (E8)</p>	<p>“We kept being told we want everyone to be in the same boat and this is how it’s going to work and blah blah blah. And the real reason was they needed to save x amount of money but they wouldn’t tell you that until you really, we had this meeting with them and we really, really pushed them when they finally admitted that it was actually only to save money.” (E7)</p> <p>“I think we sugarcoat things and treat people like children, like they can’t take sort of the truth for us to be honest about [...] I suppose the sugarcoating is then people expect that they will get the job of their dreams in the brave new world of CGD, you know, without sort of having some sort of personal responsibility for adapting.” (M3)</p>
<i>Emotional embodying</i>			
<p>“I was always available. If somebody had decided within an hour they wanted to be in my office telling me what they thought, whether it be good, bad, ugly or indifferent, then I made sure I was there. Never turn anybody away. If people needed time, they were given time.” (M3)</p>	<p>“We had full support [...] at the end of the day, people are treated correctly as far as we’re concerned.”(E5)</p> <p>“I took him aside with the shop steward and I sat down with him and explained it all to him and he was upset, a lot of emotions flying, and he’s now back here and he</p>	<p>“The council really thought about the pastoral side and that some people would be coming to Switch really anxious and angry. Some people don’t need a lot of support and help but some people do and it depends on your character and I think they identified that people</p>	<p>“What was lost in the process was that people at the end of it who would stay were possibly the ones mattered for the future of the organization. And that for a long time just seemed to be forgotten or not the priority. And that’s the sad part of it.” (E1)</p>

<p>“It’s around individual care. We really try hard to put that individual care into this.” (M6)</p>	<p>works fantastic with me and the rest of the team. I’d say he wouldn’t have had that kind of, where I could sit down, face up to him and say, look I don’t want you walking out of here thinking something’s that not true, you’re well respected, well thought of and I will take your number and we will be contacting you if the volumes recover.” (M2)</p>	<p>taking on new roles needed a bit of extra support.” (E6) “The internal emotional response is defensive; when defensive gets very strong it can become aggressive. So the important thing for me is when someone says something which criticizes or feels like a criticism, I’ve got to take it on the chin and I’ve got to listen. [..]” (M2) “They’ve faced the choice and they’ve taken the opportunity that was about employees, really looking after employees.” (E29)</p>	<p>“I think people are very busy and settling into new teams and are probably only now coming to terms with some of the emotions that they went through.” (M2)</p>
<p><i>Inclusive enacting</i></p>			
<p>“It was a discussion. This is the way we’re going to run this stream and that stream. It’s not like, right, as of next week, all you lot in the call centre, you’re all being made redundant. It wasn’t done like that at all. [..] all along the way, everybody was being involved.” (E3) “The first part of our process will be you work in this job, we think this is the right vision, but what are the things we’re missing? They might say, “It’s fine to say it’s centralized, but actually, there’s this, this and this and where are our customers going to do that?” And we say, “Well, that’s a really good point and we need to factor that in. So actually, maybe we can’t be quite like that. It needs to look a bit more like this.” (M6)</p>	<p>“As long as it’s fair and you can behave with a level of integrity and you can be consistent and fair with your approach, I think it can be done in a, the most positive way possible. It’s never going to be a good thing, but it can be done as fairly and in a good way as possible.” (M2) “It seemed to have been managed fairly. I can’t remember an instance where my team raised an issue saying that supply chain are doing something different to us, why are they allowed to work on Fridays and you know we have to have the time off.” (M5)</p>	<p>“As part of redesigning services you need to engage with people, you ask the people doing the job how it can be done better.” (M1) “You’re always trying to find that balance in between ensuring that staff are engaged, they’re fully informed, they get the opportunity to contribute.” (M3) “I’ve got a lot of trust and I think all the things that have happened the council has dealt with them as best they can because I think it’s been a really, really challenging time and I think throughout all of it they have tried to do the moral and ethical things to look after the workforce.” (E6)</p>	<p>“A lot of the time, we did have to be very directive about what we did.” (M2) “The score was shown to you. You were not entitled to dispute it, but you were entitled to know what it was.” (M1) “The conversations that we’re talking about is changing our culture and how we can work with less resources. We weren’t involved in the process.” (E5)</p>

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Table 5. Data supporting Enabling mechanisms

RetailCo	EnCorp	CityCouncil	GovDept
<i>Mobilization of the organization's established trust foundations</i>			
<p>Key established trust foundations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle #1 and Partnership organization (trust in fellow partners) • Existing image of RetailCo as a successful and sustainable business • Behaving benevolently and with mutual care • Trusting leadership <p>Reflecting on the partnership structure: "Because the business is what we're here for and we are the business. And that's fundamental to the way I approach things. We are the business. Without us, there wouldn't be a business. Without an amount of trust, there wouldn't be [each other]. So we trust everybody that we are doing the right thing for ourselves. So it's the business doing what's best for the business." (E1)</p> <p>"We recognize that we are playing a bit of a long game and there is some trust that the leadership of the business will equally lead us to better times as well." (M4)</p>	<p>Key established trust foundations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unionized culture • Being a successful local employer • Personal relationships at local plants • Effective communication practices <p>"The systems and procedures that we already had in place with the level of communication and employee involvement and discussions with the trade union, these monthly processes, PCI, the meeting with the trade union, the information consultation group. [...] There were enabling structures already in place prior to the downturn. [...] Having that dialogue with the trade union. All these kind of things support that culture." (M1)</p> <p>"We'd spent a lot of focus and energy fixing the gripes that the operators had got on the shop floor and working to improve their environments. By the time this kicked in, there was a decent level</p>	<p>Key established trust foundations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enacting organizational values: 'proud, decent, together' • High standing in community • Recognition of individual employees • Practices supported by strong internal structures <p>"There's a lot of people live in Sunderland that work in Sunderland and Sunderland's always focused on the community, the businesses and they do value the staff and the residents." (E5)</p> <p>"We've had exceptional financial management in this organization. [...] what it has meant is that we're financially very strong. Probably as strong as any local authority that there is. That has enabled us to use some of that legacy to take a bit more time to make the changes." (M3)</p> <p>"It was really about understanding what council's about, what people are like within the council and trying to be appropriate to that. Rather than going, oh that looks</p>	<p>Key established trust foundations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil service culture built on fairness, honesty and integrity • Recognising and respecting professional expertise and seniority <p>"It was felt that there wasn't consistency across the board. I think the process in itself was painful but it was made worse." (E7)</p> <p>"When the process started, there were great talks of 'stop it' and things like that. And I certainly sat in at least a couple of ministers' meetings where they broached the subject of stopping doing stuff. I certainly didn't feel at the end of that meeting that there was any resolution." (E8)</p> <p>"There's a reputational issue about having the cartoons in the foyers, where we were getting people coming in externally, you know... and you have these ridiculous cartoons. And people are looking at them going "What kind</p>

<p>“We are a long-term business.” (M6)</p> <p>“I’m talking about the nature of co-ownership. There is a trust that those principles will be upheld. That’s where trust is hugely important.” (M4)</p>	<p>of trust between my level in the business and the shop floor level in the business.” (M2)</p>	<p>nice on the shelf let’s just use that.” (M2)</p>	<p>of organization are we working with?” (E1)</p>
<p><i>Understanding of role during disruption</i></p>			
<p>“Principle 1 defines it as a successful business [...] It talks about a successful business which generates sufficient profit to hold the business safe for the next generation. So everything that you do has to be to create a sustainable business.” (M1)</p>	<p>“We’re here to actually support the business, that’s what we see our role as.” (M3)</p> <p>“I think there’s a number of policies, and asking people on a regular basis, the employee surveys that have been around for many years; and acting upon those employee surveys.” (M1)</p>	<p>“We recognized we had to make the downturn but we went straight away to the mission to shield the city as best we could, to shield our employees as best we could and to shield the council itself as best we could from the impact of the financial downturn [...] the focus was on the values of the city” (M2)</p> <p>“We said [...] if we recognize that it is going to be based on our joint values and our individual strengths and our commitment to you is: work with us and we will work with you. Then we will get through this.” (M1)</p>	<p>“I think we have broken the mold [...] we went through the first phase of change so fast and so furiously and requiring our senior managers to demonstrate their active behavioral leadership so strongly, being corporate.” (M1)</p> <p>“My personal view is that, in terms of change, what we’re saying is ‘there’s no going back now just to business as usual’. It’s not like you went through a restructure and now just get on and do your job just the way you were doing it before. [...] What we’re saying is ‘the way you work needs to be different’. I mean – you know, it’s a change of culture.” (M2)</p>

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Table 6. Data supporting the Preservation of organizational trust

RetailCo	EnCorp	CityCouncil	GovDept
<i>Preservation of organizational trust</i>			
<p>“I think, overall, trust is either maintained or, indeed, improved because the benefit of working for an organisation that operates differently become a little bit heightened when other businesses operating slightly differently have problems.” (M4)</p> <p>“With the Branch of the Future announcement, because it was handled so well, you felt even better after. Because you'd think, wow, that was handled really well. You've got to go through challenging times, to have those amazing times.” (E4)</p> <p>[Reflecting on the impact of the changes on trust]: “I look at my team, I really think I trust them and they trust me. And that's really important. And when I look up to the Senior Managers in the business, I also trust the way they're leading the business, which is really important. So I'm really engaged with what we're hoping to deliver in the future as well.” (E5)</p> <p>“It dipped slightly you know, the initial announcement but I would say it's not really changed since. It's up there - the trust is up there - always has for nearly 21 years.” (E9)</p>	<p>“It [trust] didn't change significantly, it didn't go up but it didn't go backwards, it was almost neutral” (M1)</p> <p>“Levels of trust, believe it or believe it not, I think have improved.” (M2)</p> <p>“I've seen morale's up from what it was. I think people know that the business is secure.” (E6)</p> <p>“It's a better position for us. We've gone through the crap and now we wanna grow the business and we wanna be proactive and we wanna make it better.” (E2).</p>	<p>“Trust levels are high with me. I've got nothing but praise for the council and how they have looked after me personally. As I said, trust levels remain high.” (E4)</p> <p>“My trust has been high all along. I just think now I've got the evidence of what's happening you just – it's just really high.” (E8)</p> <p>“Now it's fine. I do have trust in them but I didn't then.” (E2)</p> <p>“My trust hasn't really altered since I started working at the Council. Yes, it's been battered around a little bit but I'm still as trusting or not as I was when I started.”(E13)</p>	<p>“People don't trust.” (E1)</p> <p>“I think most people completely lost trust in their direct line management, in their ability to assess your performance. I think that's fundamental. I think that was a real problem.” (E7)</p>