"Digital Trust":
How team leaders view trust in global virtual teams

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Abstract

Global virtual teams may be a new phenomenon to many people, but they are quickly becoming commonplace within companies and organisations (Brahm & Kunze, 2012). With this increase in the use of global virtual teams it is important that educational institutions prepare students for work within global virtual teams by facilitating projects where participation in global virtual teams occurs (Picherit-Duthler, 2012).

Trust is a key component of global virtual teams and has been a prominent focus of research (Jaakson, Reino, & McClenaghan, 2019). However, the literature to date has not specifically looked at how global virtual team leadership understands and uses trust in interactions with team members.

This study is based on interviews with team leaders who participated in the annual international problem-based learning project Globcom (Gordon, 2017) and sought their perceptions of how trust operates within a global virtual team.

The eight student team leaders were asked about their expectations of working in a global virtual team, before being asked about their experience of trust within a global virtual team, and finally they were asked for their reflections on how they would have developed trust in their team.

The results showed that in a global virtual team the leaders saw the development of trust as the responsibility of the team leader. Further, the leaders believed that trust is important in the development of the team and is connected the action of an individual team member. The results also stressed that trust within a global virtual team changes over time and is dependent on an individual's involvement. Therefore, relationships were built with those individuals who were more active because the leader had greater trust in them.

Upon reflection, team leaders highlighted the importance of getting to know team members better and earlier. The leaders believed this would have led to improved delegation and greater trust development.

These results are significant as they emphasise how team leaders view their team members, and how they link trust to an individual's actions. These results also draw attention to the importance for team leaders of learning who individual team members are as this leads to early delegation and develops trust within the team.

This study is significant for anyone involved in global virtual teams in their organisation. The study underlines key aspects of global virtual teams that are necessary to be aware of, whether one is leading a global virtual team, participating in a global virtual team or managing a global virtual team. It is also significant for pedagogical projects and online learning.

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Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

Signed

Dated: 15th June 2020

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A Personal Note

In June of 2017, I was in the middle of Bangalore, India, travelling with friends in the back of an auto rickshaw. We were there for the Globcom symposium, and it was the first time we had met in real life. We had been interacting online for the three months prior as part of a global virtual team collaboration, creating a global communications plan for a client based on a online brief they had given ourselves and eight other teams. Our team, like the other eight, was comprised of university students from all around the world. I was the only student from New Zealand on my team.

In the months preceding that trip to Bangalore, we had conversed online through Skype, through WhatsApp, through Facebook Messenger, via email, and via the in-built messenger service of Google Drive and Google Docs. For someone in New Zealand, those meetings often meant staying up until 11pm or through to 1am or alternatively, waking up just before a 5am meeting. While I was about to start my day, others in my team were finishing theirs and others were getting a broken night's sleep, with the meeting ending at 2am for them. It was intense, tiring, terrifying, and exciting all at the same time.

Bangalore represented the reward of getting the communications plan completed and submitting it to our lecturers for evaluation. As we travelled along the bumpy roads, weaving around stationary cars and trucks, laughing and chatting like we'd been life-long friends, I couldn't help but wonder what it was that made this unlikely bunch of people want to squeeze into the back of an auto rickshaw. We were on our way to dinner after the first day of the symposium.

I was reflecting on that day and the observations I had made. Many of my team had met each other the night before with hugs and delight. There was a palpable excitement I had thought that all the teams were experiencing. But the morning of that rickshaw ride I had noticed that others who were there for the same symposium were sitting with others from their countries of origin and only spending time with their global virtual team members when they had to.

So in the back of that auto rickshaw, as I laughed and enjoyed the great conversation of my team members, I couldn't help but ask myself why we were like this? What had drawn us together so well that we were hanging out as friends? What had united us through our global virtual team experience?

It was those lingering questions that started me down this road of research. Through sitting and reflecting on those questions, I began to wonder if trust had played a part. I felt the only way to truly do the research justice was to ask the leaders of different global virtual teams for their reflections and thoughts. The following research paper is the result of those initial musings in the back of an Indian auto rickshaw.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

Global virtual teams (GVTs) have become prevalent in companies as globalisation and use of the internet impacts on day to day business (Brahm & Kunze, 2012). They have developed from a "somewhat 'exotic' niche phenomenon" (Breuer, Huffmeier, & Hertel, 2016, p. 1151) into an established common practice within businesses. The trend of using these GVTs for particular projects (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013), has also sparked an interest in "associated structural, operational and human asset management problems" (Lee-Kelley & Sankey, 2008, p. 51).

Trust has been identified as a key component of GVTs and has been a prominent focus of research in this area (Jaakson et al., 2019), in large part "because it is believed to be significantly associated with team performance" (p. 31). However, as Gordon (2017) observes, little has been done on understanding the leadership of GVTs. Moreover, despite urgency required on GVT leadership, the current research is "largely retrospective" (p. 1) and often focuses on understanding the influence of virtuality on the team rather than looking into how performance can be improved (Gordon, 2017).

Whilst trust has often been studied (Breuer et al., 2016; Gilson, Maynard, Jones Young, Vartiainen, & Hakonen, 2015; Jarvenpaa, Knoll, & Leidner, 1998) and understanding how leadership works within GVTs is beginning to be addressed (Gordon, 2017), a search of the literature did not reveal any existing research that looked at how GVT leadership understands and uses trust in their interactions with their team members.

1.2 Aims of the study

The study will seek impressions on trust from the team leaders from the Global Communication Project (or Globcom), "an international public relations project run by various universities from across the world" (Picherit-Duthler, 2012, p. 138), where students participate in GVTs to prepare a strategic public relations plan based on a

client brief. The aim of this paper is to discover how leaders discern and understand what trust is and what role it could play in GVTs.

This study takes the form of six chapters including this introduction chapter (Chapter one). Chapter two outlines the key themes of current GVT literature, starting with what is meant by the terms 'virtual teams' and 'global virtual teams'. A comparison of GVTs with face to face (FtF) teams is conducted before looking at how a GVT functions. From there the study looks at the role of trust within GVTs, leading to discussions of the idea of swift trust and the relationship between trust and normative behaviours. Defining what trust actually is and looks like is important to this study so a psychological perspective of trust is outlined before moving into a discussion into the importance of student-led GVTs to the literature. Chapter two concludes with the framing of GVTs within five social theories: Social Information Processing Theory; Embodied Social Presence Theory; Commitment-Trust Theory; Expectancy Violation Theory; and Uncertainty Reduction Theory.

Chapter three outlines the design of this research paper. Beginning with an understanding of what Globcom is, the chapter moves into the epistomology of constructionism which underpins this research, before moving into the methodolgy of this study. A detailed description of the data collection process is provided, including a justification for the choice of interviews, the limitations of this type of data collection and how it compares to other forms of data collection. Finally the chapter explains the data analysis process.

Chapter four details the results of the study. The results are divided into three sub-questions – trust expections, results of the leaders' experiences and the results of the leaders' reflections on how they would do things differently. The breakdown of the research question into three sub-questions is detailed later in this chapter.

 Chapter five outlines the discussion that emerges from those results. The discussion continues the structure of the results chapter, with the discussion being broken down into three sections – trust expectations, the experiences of trust within a GVT and the reflections from leaders of how things could be done differently to improve the GVT experience.

Chapter six summarises and concludes the entire study. It also looks at the limitations of the study, before discussing the implications of this study and the avenues for further research that have emerged from this study.

1.3 Significance of the study

To investigate the link between leadership and trust within GVTs, this study proposes the following research question:

> **RQ: What are the perceptions that leaders of GVTs have of the role trust plays within those teams?**

To answer this research question, thought was given to the lifecycle of a GVT and particularly the three time periods of a lifecycle that a leader will experience:

1. Before leading a GVT
2. Leading a GVT during the time the team existed and functioned
3. Post leading a GVT

The aim of the research was to investigate the leader's journey through leading a GVT and see how their perceptions, understandings and experiences affected how they saw trust in a GVT. As a result of this journey through the three time periods of a GVT's lifecycle, the RQ was broken up into three sub questions to reflect the time periods mentioned above:

> **RQ1:** What was the leader's perceptions of trust prior to their expereince in a GVT?
>
> **RQ2:** What was the team leader's actual experience of trust in a GVT?
>
> **RQ3:** Based on their personal experiences, what do leaders feel are the possibilities of how trust works within a GVT?

1.4 Research questions

This research aimed to explore how leaders of GVTs understood and saw trust manifested in their teams. The purpose of the questions (Figure 6) and the order in which they were asked was to take the participants from a broad definition of trust and narrowing that to very specific questions on how their teams dealt with trust. The justification for this lies in the way constructionism theorises that systems of behaviour and trust are constructed to allow teams to function. Because constructionism also acknowledges we all have our pre-conceptions that we bring to our experiences, i.e. we bring something that exists already and apply it to the new experience (Crotty, 1998), it is important to get an understanding of how the team leaders see trust and then consider how leaders' perceptions of trust were realised in the GVT setting.

RQ: What are the perceptions that leaders of GVTs have of the role trust plays within those teams?		
RQ1: What was the leader's perceptions of trust prior to their expereince in a GVT?	**RQ2:** What was the team leader's actual experience of trust in a GVT?	**RQ3:** What are the possibilities of how trust works within a GVT?

Figure 1: Overarching research question with sub-categories.

Given the aim of this research was to provide a voice for the team leaders and their perceptions of the role trust played in their experience of GVTs in the Globcom context, the interview questions were created with the aim of encouraging reflection and going deeper into the ways trust may or may not play a part and how it functions in real-life scenarios. Not only was it important to understand a leader's perceptions of the role of trust, discovering the ways leaders began to use trust within a GVT environment was also key. Finally as part of seeking good reflection from the team leaders, this research sought their ideas on what things they would do differently if given the opportunity to lead a GVT again. This last question proved to be very fruitful as it gives insight into participants' experiences whilst also providing clear avenues for future research.

To allow for reflection without overwhelming the leaders with a multitude of interview questions, the author settled on six interview questions as listed below:

- How do you define trust?

- In your opinion, what does trust look like in a GVT?

- Was trust important or unimportant within your GVT and how did you decide to extend trust to team members?

- What changes, if any, occurred to trust within your GVT during the time you were together?

- Based on your observation, what connection was there between the level of trust (or non-existence of trust) and the dynamics of your team?

- Would you do anything differently if you were to lead another global virtual team?

An emphasis was placed on asking questions that drew the leaders' focus on their actual experiences within a GVT during the lifecycle of their Globcom 2017 GVT in order to elicit any insights they may have gained. The intersections between the over-arching RQ, the three sub RQ's and the interview questions are illustrated in Figure 6:

Overarching research question	WHAT ARE THE PERCEPTIONS THAT LEADERS OF GVT'S HAVE OF THE ROLE TRUST PLAYS WITHIN THOSE TEAMS?		
	EXPECTATION	EXPERIENCE	REFLECTION
Research Sub-Questions	What was the leader's perceptions of trust prior to their experience in a GVT?	What was the team leader's actual experience of trust in a GVT?	What is the potential for how trust could work within a GVT?
Interview Questions	*How do you define trust generally, that is in a FtF team?*	*Was trust important or unimportant within your GVT and how did you decide to extend trust to team members?*	*Would you do anything differently if you were to lead another GVT?*
	In your opinion, what does trust look like in a GVT?	*What changes, if any, occurred to trust within your GVT during the time you were together?*	
		In your observation what connection was there between the level of trust (or non-existence of trust) and the team dynamics of your team?	

Figure 6: Relationship of interview questions with RQs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

GVT, whilst still new to many people, are quickly becoming commonplace (Breuer et al., 2016; Gilson et al., 2015; Gordon, 2017, p. 704). Globalisation of trade and economics mean businesses have clients the world over. This move to globalisation has seen the need for teams to work virtually move from being a niche phenomenon to entering the mainstream during the past fifteen years (Breuer et al., 2016; Gordon, 2017; Jimenez, Boehe, Taras, & Caprar, 2017) as businesses see the importance of grouping staff together based on skill sets regardless of their geographical location (Gordon, 2017). GVTs also allow global organisations to be truly international and be present around the clock (Picherit-Duthler, 2011).

The rapid improvements in information and communication technology allow global organisations to virtually break down boundaries, connect employees regardless of their location (Martins, Shalley, & Gilson, 2009), and increases the ease of engaging in global virtual teams (Brahm & Kunze, 2012). These technological advancements mean that GVTs have become firmly established in the day-to-day operations of international organisations and this means research is required to keep apace of the changes in order to stay current (Großer & Baumöl, 2017).

But what is meant by the term 'virtual team'? A virtual team is a grouping of two or more people brought together for the undertaking of a specific task with geographical distance preventing them from meeting face to face, resulting in team interactions having to occur through some form, or forms, of communication technology (Avolio, Sosik, Kahai, & Baker, 2014; Brahm & Kunze, 2012; Ford, Piccolo, & Ford, 2017; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Lee-Kelley & Sankey, 2008; Malhotra, Majchrzak, & Rosen, 2007). The addition of the word 'global' means that dispersement occurs across national and cultural boundaries, which might lead to cross-cultural communication issues (as well as different understandings of leadership, risk, and uncertainty) becoming a factor (Davision, Panteli, Hardin, & Fuller, 2017; Harvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). Added to the complexity of GVTs is the issue of time differences, where team members exist in multiple time zones so that one member's day might be another team member's night (Davison et al., 2017).

This chapter reflects on the relevant literature on GVTs, focussing on the key topics for this research. These include what the dynamics of a GVT look like and how they differ from their face-to-face counterparts; what trust looks like within GVT s; and the role student-led teams have played in GVT research. Finally, this chapter will consider some of the social theories that have been used to frame virtual teams.

2.1 Defining face-to-face (FtF) teams

This research starts from a position of seeking the leaders' experiences of trust within face-to-face (FtF) teams prior to working within a GVT. As this experience has shaped how each of the leaders perceives what trust is and how it operates within a team it is important to initially define what is meant by the term FtF team.

The term face-to-face team refers to what was seen as a traditional or conventional team (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Branson, Clausen, & Chung-Hsein, 2008; Gera, 2013; Purvanova & Bono, 2009; Warkentin, Sayeed, & Hightower, 1997), with Bell and Kozlowski (2002) highlighting that the team members work in "close proximity to one another" (p. 22). As Gera (2013) puts it, FtF or traditional teams "work under the same roof having face to face interactions" (Gera, 2013, p. 2).

Through researching the differences in group style between virtual and FtF teams, Branson et al. (2008) conclude that FtF teams are more constructive in style. Their research revealed that FtF teams tended to foster an environment where team members were optimistic, interested, creative and encouraging whilst also desiring to see their team members grow and develop and generally achieve high quality decisions. FtF teams, according to their research, also created an environment where members communicated openly, treated each other well and had cohension in decision making.

In contrast to Branson et al. (2008), Warkentin et al. (1997) highlighted that despite FtF teams reporting greater satisfaction in their interactions with one another, the effectiveness of FtF teams was no different to that of GVTs. They conclude that

despite "no statistically significant difference" (Warkentin et al., 1997, p. 987) occurring between the effectiveness of communication in both types of teams what was different was the effectiveness perception. "The traditional teams have more positive perceptions of the interactivity and the results" (Warkentin et al., 1997, p. 987). This perceived quality of interaction is due to opportunities "to utilise increased verbal, non-verbal and back channelising cues to promote efficient turntaking, immediate feedback and confirmation of conceptual consensus" (Gera, 2013, p. 2).

As well as the spatial proximity that FtF or conventional teams have, Bell and Kozlowski (2002) also stress the significance of how information, data and personal communication occurs within FtF teams. The use of computer mediated communication is seen as either not required or as being supplementary to the operation of the team due to the team primarily communicating in person (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002). This face-to-face interaction allows for the use of social cues for social intelligence gathering, building trust and friendships (Branson et al., 2008).

2.2 Defining virtual teams

GVTs are different from FtF teams in a number of ways. The inherent reliance of GVTs on computer mediated communication means that the socialisation processes within the team is affected, thus making effective team bonding more challenging (Branson et al., 2008). Research conducted by O'Neill, Hancock, Zivkov, Larson, and Law (2016) show that decision making frames within FtF teams cannot be extrapolated into virtual team environments. This finding highlights the differences between the two team environments and shows that "practitioners might not be able to assume that the FtF research showing the superiority of solve frames will generalise to VTs [virtual teams]" (p. 1014).

One of the key ways that these differences are exhibited is in social cues. The research by Branson et al. (2008) demonstrate that GVTs were "less able to minimise the negative effects of teaming on good decision making" (p. 68), were more superficial in their interactions, had reduced social cue awareness and generally came together in ways that resulted in difficult decision making. Whilst their

results showed that GVTs were less able to create healthy and positive decision-making processes for the group and were less likely to be as constructive in style than FtF teams, they conclude that GVTs have to be conscious of the communication problems of not being face-to-face and that they "can form trusting relationships, but it takes extra effort and skill to do so" (p. 69). For Branson et al. (2008), the development of effective strategies is key to conquering these challenges.

In comparison, Purvanova and Bono (2009) sought to directly compare GVTs and FtF teams using transformational leadership as a key focus. They examined the consistency level of the transformational behaviours of team leaders in both types of teams to determine whether the two modes of operation had an effect on those behaviours. Their research highlights "... considerable variability in leaders' behaviour across face-to-face and virtual teams" (p. 352). Their research findings showed that team leaders in FtF and GVTs act differenty and that, perhaps surprisingly, transformational leadership behaviours in leaders were more apparent and clear in GVTs and were more strongly connected to performance. Having defined transformational leadership as "comprised of idealised influence (also referred to as charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration behaviours" (p. 344), Purvanova and Bono (2009) conclude that because communication is reduced and room exists for increased uncertainty, transformational leadershup is a style that is more conducive to GVTs. The emotional and social form of transformational leadership certainly helps in this regard. Purvanova and Bono (2009) also found that having a transformational leader was important for team satisfaction, regardless of whether the team was GVT or FtF. In their data, team satisfaction and a transformational leadership style were more instrumental in virtual teams, having a stronger effect than in FtF teams. This in turn points towards greater team performance in GVTs with more successful outcomes. These findings stand in stark contrast to Branson et al. (2008), who found that FtF ourperformed GVTs in most categories. This highlights a need in the literature for further research.

O'Neill et al. (2016) examined team decision making processes in both GVTs and FtF teams and explored how the framing of that decision making affected the

behaviours of team members in the different team environments. Their study considers three psychological states that the authors felt were important: competitive interdependence, which refers to always seeing a problem in a win-lose framework; relationship conflict, where frictions and personality clashes influence the decision making process and outcomes; and finally team potency, which focuses on "the collective confidence of team members to perform tasks at a high level" (p. 999). Their findings show that, despite the anonymity of tools like instant messaging, complex decision making remains a challenge and something that GVTs need to become better equipped at handling. O'Neill et al. (2016) also highlight the greater propensity for relationship conflict and competitive interdependence that occurs within GVTs compared to their FtF counterparts, meaning that members of GVTs have a worse team experience than members in FtF teams.

2.3 Teamwork in the digital space

Utilising a heuristic lifecycle model, Hertel, Geister, and Konradt (2005) identify five phases that a GVT goes through (see Figure 1). Their model was designed to help leaders or managers set the foundation for succesful team collaboration and guide teams through the various team functions.

The first phase is called 'preparation' and sees the general purpose of the team defined as well as who will be in the team and how the team will interact with one another. The key elements for the second phase, which launches the GVT, are goal clarification and acquainting the team members. During the performance management phase (phase 3) it is important for the GVT to maintain motivation and clear communication for the satisfaction of the team, while the fourth phase of team developmemt looks at what individual members or the team needs (for instance additional training), and assesses how that training impacts on the GVT. Finally, the end of a project is marked by the disbandment of the GVT, which involves assessing of the success of the team and looking at the lessons learned as well as the celebration of achievements before individual members re-integrate into their normal roles.
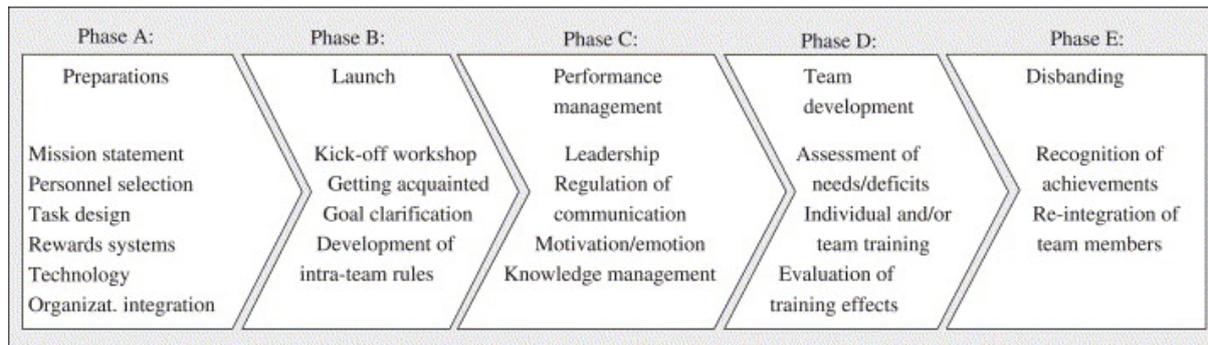
Figure 2: Lifecycle of a GVT. Source: Hertel et al. (2005, p. 73)

Mukherjee, Lahiri, Mukherjee, and Billing (2012) used Hertel et al.'s (2005) lifecycle of GVTs to identify the key leadership abilities for each stage as leadership is key to GVTs succeeding. They conclude that "it is essential for VT [virtual team] leaders to use skills that go beyond the project related tasks and occasional interpersonal conflicts associated with traditional teams" (p. 284). This highlights the need for VT leaders to receive special training and support to help them run a successful team. In particular, support for VT teams and their leaders should be provided through targeted training programs which include cross-cultural training to help overcome the geographical, cultural and lifestyle disparity.

Their research argues that GVT leaders should adopt and use transactional capabilities focussed around monitoring, goal setting, the achievement of those goals and the rewarding of achievements. In addition to those transactional capabilities, VT leaders should adopt and utilise transformational capabilities such as risk taking and experimentation.

Mukherjee et al. (2012) also highlight the importance of social skills for GVT leaders in order to develop relationships with their team members. They observe that it is important to create commonality within the team when aspects like geographical dispersion of members as well as differing backgrounds and cultures could hinder the work of GVTs.

Recognising that research into the unique set of skills required to lead a GVT through challenging tasks was limited, Malhotra et al. (2007) explored key practices of successful GVT leaders. The aim for this exploration was to create a platform from

which training and developing the next generation of GVT leaders could take place. In identifying those key practices, Malhotra et al. (2007) also highlight key challenges that are unique to GVT. For instance, since opportunities for physical observation of team members are significantly limited, if not non-existent, for GVT leaders, they have to create ways that provide for observation being done virtually. The GVT leader can not assume all members are properly prepared. The GVT leader also can not assume that non-communication equates to inattention or that every team member's unique knowledge and skills are being fully employed.

In order for those unique challenges to be overcome, Malhotra et al. (2007) propose six leadership practices that should be utilised.

1. Establish and then maintain trust through the communication technology. This includes the creation and constant reviewing of team norms, or rules of behaviour, which set out the parameters within which the GVT will function.
2. Team diversity must be understood, appreciated and utilised for the team's ability to successfully innovate.
3. Leaders of GVTs must manage virtual work cycles and meetings, establishing regular whole team meetings to build togetherness and commitment.
4. Virtual monitoring of progress must occur to help with activity participation and the prompting of members where required.
5. A leader must become a vocal champion of the GVT they are managing and its individual members, keeping the team in the corporate spotlight and ensuring rewards for work well done.
6. Individual benefits in participation must be of importance to the leader. The leader must ensure that every member feels they have grown as people as a direct result of their participation in a GVT.

2.4 What is trust?

The question of what trust is and how it works lies at the heart of this research. But before looking at the literature around trust and the role it plays within GVTs, it is important to define what is actually meant by the term 'trust'. How do we define trust? What does trust look like? How does trust work? In its most primitive form, the

need to trust another person suggests that you are vulnerable and that "the ability to satisfy your needs or obtain the outcomes you desire is not entirely under your control" (DeSteno, 2014a, p. 1). It underpins all social relationships (Dunning, Fetchenhauer, & Schloesser, 2012), from intimate partner connections, through friendships and work relations and on to the relationship between a governmemnt and the population it governs. Trust is "essential within any given collective of individuals" (Dunning et al., 2012, p. 687) and can be the foundation for social structures and frameworks that benefit everyone.

2.4.1 Trust is economic

The traditional view of trust is "economic in nature" (Dunning et al., 2012, p. 687) which implies that an individual's trust of another comes with the expectation that reciprocity of that trust will occur. Pillutla, Malhotra, and Murnighan (2003) state that trust and reciprocity "are intimately related" (p. 448), with a mutually trusting act in the initial stages of a relationship potentially leading to a growing profitable cycle of "increasing trust and reciprocation" (p. 448). Likewise, a situation where trust is not reciprocated can damage a budding relationship, meaning continuing exchanges are less likely.

This economic understanding of trust comes through clearly with the *prisoner's dilemma* – a problem where "the essence of the trade-offs are inherent in many decisions to cooperate by showing how loyalty can lead to better outcomes than simple self-interest" (DeSteno, 2014a, p. 9). An alternative is the Trust Game, which showcases the vulnerability involved in the act of trusting another (Pillutla et al., 2003).

The research of Pillutla et al. (2003) reveals that trusting actions are foundational for future reciprocity that mutually benefits all parties. Conversely, Pillutla et al. (2003) show that "problems arise because trusting requires risks prior to the receipt of potential gains" (p. 454). This means that in order to trust a person, one must take risks before any benefits are apparent. This could result in negative implications.

Thus, trust and reciprocity dynamics can pose "serious interpersonal dilemmas" (p. 454) around early stage trust signals as:

> "relatively small acts of trust may minimise chances that the trust will be reciprocated, but large acts of trust leave trustors extremely vulnerable" (p. 454).

Pillutla et al. (2003) conclude that clearly conveying their viewpoint allows a trustor to off-set some of those risks.

Dunning et al. (2012) highlight that trust as an economic act is inherently selfish. Concern about outcomes and reciprocity remove any altruistic aspects of trust, reducing it to an expectation of benefit for the person trusting. "People do not decide to trust as an end in itself, but rather as a means toward some goal (e.g. more money) they would like to attain" (p. 688). This raises the question of whether an individual is actually trusting someone or whether they are simply using a person for their own personal gain. Therefore, reducing trust to only being an economic act appears problematic.

Within in the GVT literature, the economic view of trust (based on actions and tasks) comes through with academics (Brahm & Kunze, 2012; Breuer et al., 2016; Ford et al., 2017; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Jarvenpaa, Shaw, & Staples, 2004) often citing:

> "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectations that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995, p. 712).

This idea of expectation is key to the economic model of trust. A person expecting their trust to be honoured is risking the potential of being disappointed. However, the economic model of trust assumes that the risk of disappoinrment and potential loss of face is outweighed by the potential benefits.

2.4.2 Trust is dynamic

The economic view, however, does not seem to take into account the dynamic nature of trust. Dunning et al. (2012) highlight that trust as a concept is greater than an economic equation and that economic concerns, whilst valid, are less significant than traditionally thought, with "variables that can be considered to be *economic* in nature playing a much more minor role in decisions to trust than one would expect" (Dunning et al., 2012, p. 687). A decision to trust someone is made based on a number of influences, factors and considerations (Dunning et al., 2012) as well as the circumstances (DeSteno, 2014b). Society has narrowed the ways trust has been interpreted:

> "Decades of scientific research show that people's accuracy in deciding if another can be trusted tends to be only slightly better than chance. But this isn't because trustworthiness is completely unpredictable. It's because the guidelines most of us use to make such predictions are flawed. We place too much emphasis on reputation and perceived confidence, ignoring the fact that human behaviour is always sensitive to context and can often be better assessed by our own intuition" (DeSteno, 2014b, p. 113)

Feelings and emotions contribute to our trusting others as much as the rational calculation we make in our minds (DeSteno, 2014a, 2014b). As DeSteno (2014b) aptly describes it, "our minds come with built-in trust detectors. They also reinforce how valuable intuitions, or gut feelings, can be." (p. 115). The challenge, as DeSteno et al. (2012) see it, is that attempts to identify trust-relevant signals are often done in isolation or by looking at those cues individually. They argue that if we can find reliable trust cues in people,

> "they will likely emerge dynamically and be processed intuitively within the context of interpersonal situations between individuals who are unfamiliar with one another" (p. 1550).

The research by Dunning et al. (2012) accentuates that trust "appears to hinge on any number of dynamics" (p. 692) and that a narrow analysis of trust "would be

misplaced" (p. 692). Whilst acknowledging their work is only the beginning of identifying those dynamics, three factors are apparent in their research: that trust is an economic act; that trust is an emotional act; and finally that trust is a social act. With most of the literature focusing on trust as an economic act, which has been discussed in detail above, it is to trust as an emotional and a social act that we now turn.

2.4.3 Trust is emotional

There are two ways that emotion plays a part in the choice to trust another. Firstly, decisions to trust are based on the way a person "will feel once they know how their partner has repsonded and the outcome of their decision is known" (Dunning et al., 2012, p. 687). These anticipated emotions, as (Dunning et al., 2012) put it, heavily influence our decision to trust. "We feel first and decide whether to trust afterward" (DeSteno, 2014a, p. 37). We anticipate or forecast how our trust will be received – will it be honoured or violated? – and then use that anticipation "as an input into whether [we] should make [ourselves] vulnerable to that other person" (Dunning et al., 2012, p. 690).

Secondly, decisions to trust are based on the way one immediately feels about "the decision options in front of them at the moment they consider whether or not to trust" (Dunning et al., 2012, p. 690). These immediate emotions are the feelings one experiences directly before committing to the decision to trust or not. Does one feel nervous or excited as one contemplates to trust someone else? Does that person experience feelings of calmness or guilt as they decide to withhold their trust or not? As DeSteno (2014a) describes it,

> "if you enter a new situation angry or nervous, you've already unwittingly constrained your ability to trust ... Similarly, if you enter a situation feeling exceedingly calm, you might just trust someone you shouldn't" (p. 60).

2.4.4 Trust is social

Trust permeates all of our interactions (DeSteno, 2014a). Every part of our lives is impacted by the need to trust one another. From major financial transactions, to

lifelong relationships down to the mundane day to day feelings of well-being and how we interact with technology, trust "determines the quality of information we can access and how secure we can feel in doing so" (DeSteno, 2014a, p. 238). Dunning et al. (2012) suggest that social norms (ie what is viewed as acceptable behaviour in a society) play a role as to why people choose to trust another. These social norms have been developed as "a crucial ingredient in the rise of more-complex societies" (Henrich et al., 2010, p. 1480) to promote and aid trust, fairness and cooperation. This allows the society to most productively utilise skills, knowledge and resources that are unevenly distributed whilst also creating greater cooperation in exchange, public goods and warfare (Henrich et al., 2010). In other words, we trust because we live in a social grouping where trust allows for greater cooperation and fairness and allows us to function in ways that we could not on our own. Without the norms that we all adhere to, the social grouping cannot function properly.

We also choose to trust in order to send signals. "A decision to extend or withhold trust also provides an immediate host of signals, to both self and other, about the personality and character of the person making the decision" (Dunning et al., 2012, p. 691).

We trust in order to convince others and ourselves that we are moral and altrustic and we may choose to trust in order to achieve or maintain a "reputation among others as a reliable and cooperative person" (Dunning et al., 2012, p. 691). DeSteno (2014b) notes that this signalling of one's trustworthiness can prove problematic, as, "contrary to common belief, integrity isn't a stable trait: somone who has been fair and honest in the past won't necessarily be fair and honest in the future" (DeSteno, 2014b, p. 113). DeSteno (2014b) suggests that the use of signalling is important in interactions as people are more willing and more likely to trust someone who is confident-looking and therefore would choose to use the information from that person rather than someone less confident. However, there is a catch as:

> "too often we mistake people's self-confidence for true ability. If someone can back up his or her bravado with consistent performance, there's no harm done. If you fall for empty (or deluded) posturing, however, it's a problem" (DeSteno, 2014b, p. 114)

In other words, bravado in and of itself can do more harm and create trust issues. Trust in this situation is reduced. Being confident-looking may help initially but it must be backed up by actions.

Trust is also impacted by social relationships. A decision to trust in a hypothetical scenarios that involves no other person is completely different when that scenario becomes a real opportunity (Dunning et al., 2012). This finding "completely contradicts a long lineage of past research" (p. 691) with the suggestion that in hypothetical situations people portray themselves in the best possible light. Attempting to answer this contradiction the authors hypothesise that hypothetical situations lack the strong immediate emotional pull that occurs when the situation presented is real. Dunning et al. (2012) highlight that,

> "the presence of a social relationship between two people must be in place for high rates of trust to be observed – even if that relationship is minimal, fleeting, and involved people who will never learn the identity of one another (p. 691).

Ongoing relationships are important for trust to occur more regularly and for that trust to go deeper.

2.4.5 The impact of power on trust

The final factors that impact our decisions when it comes to trust, are power and authority. As DeSteno (2014b, p. 114) suggests, "when deciding whom to trust, you have to consider power differences, including new and temporary ones" (DeSteno, 2014b, p. 114). Is the person you are trying to trust your boss? Your employee? A politician? A priest or religious leader? A teacher? A member of the dominant social grouping? All of these authority roles can impact on ones ability to trust. DeSteno (2014b) concludes that "a person's honesty depends on his or her relative feelings of power – or vulnerability" (p. 113). Such feelings of power or vulnerability are in part determined by cultural norms, which raises the question of whether we truly trust

someone who is not like us. "Both trustworthiness and the willingness to trust others will ebb and flow as a function of how we feel we compare to those around us" (DeSteno, 2014a, p. 145).

2.4.6 Trust Summary

Trust is an essential part of our social organisation but the exact reasons why we may choose to trust some but not others are difficult to explain. As has been shown by the literature, trust can be economical, emotional and social. It is impacted by the power or authority of one party in the relationship to the other. However, at the heart of trust is the need to make oneself vulnerable and rely on another in order to satisfy needs or succeed in obtaining outcomes that are out of reach of the individual. But as has been shown, trust is not static. It ebbs and flows in life. Trust "depends on circumstances" (DeSteno, 2014b, p. 114).

2.5 Trusting someone you cannot touch

Trust is an often studied aspect within GVT literature (Gilson et al., 2015) as researchers seek to understand what role it plays (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). The building of trust within a virtual setting can been seen as complex (Alsharo, Gregg, & Ramirez, 2017) given the geographical dispersion of members. This dispersion has the potential to create ambiguity and affect team function (Gilson et al., 2015; Gordon, 2017), but the seminal work of Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) highlights the essential nature of trust in helping prevent physical or geographical distance becoming psychological distance. Their analysis found GVTs either had high levels of trust or low trust. They also pinpoint certain behaviours and strategies that were common to those high trust teams but were lacking in low trust teams. These behaviours and strategies can be broken into three key areas of role, interaction and task. The area of roles included the rotation of leadership, where members share the responsibility of team leading. Another aspect of this category is role division and specificity, which is characterised by work being divided up equally but being conducted interdependently with regular feedback among high trust groups. The area of interaction includes a proactive approach from team members highlighted by initiative and commitment; a positive team culture with encouragement and praise of

each other's work occurring frequently; clear time management, including good awareness of deadlines, schedules and milestones, as well as a greater awareness of time zone differences; healthy feedback loops, to encourage each other to create the best work they possibly could; and a consistent and frequent pattern of interaction. The final area of task encompassed task-orientated communication, but with empathy and support paramount to the interaction; and task goal clarity, where communication clearly highlighted the different goals and each team member was clear on how their personal goals worked towards the team objectives.

Based on this model for high trust teams Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) argue that, "trusting action is as much an antecedent of trust as an outcome of it" (p. 57), and that the relationship between the two is recursive. This notion is echoed by Brahm and Kunze (2012), whose study into the moderating role of trust climate concludes that high trust-climate teams provide enough emotional security that team members feel safe enough "to invest in social relationships and actions with other team members" (p. 606). Trust also creates greater cohesion and "… allows people to engage in risk-associated activities that they cannot control or monitor" (Daim et al., 2012, p. 206). In other words, trust in a GVT allows people to step outside of their comfort zones. A team where trust is high has good cohesion due to members feeling secure enough for social relationship investment with their fellow team members. This cohesion reduces uncertainty, allowing for the team to be more willing to take risks. This in turn, led to a greater team performance (Brahm & Kunze, 2012).

Not only is trust key to the success of GVTs, it is also important in how a GVT functions. Breuer et al. (2016) observe that cooperation and interactions should be enhanced by team trust. They suggest that: 1) trust is a key element to seeing teams sharing and learning together; 2) trust is important to members feeling satisfied and in sync with their team; and 3) trust was positively connected to members commitment to the team and to team effort.

Trust within a GVT also allows room for members to discuss information more readily and openly. Penarroja, Orengo, Zornoza, Sanchez, and Ripoll (2015) highlight that having a healthy trust culture prevents members fearing negative backlash or recriminations over mistakes. Another key aspect their research draws

out is that a high trust climate opens GVTs to new aspects of learning. They argue that high trust allows the individual to receive feedback and constructive criticism and act on it in a positive way.

The literature highlights the importance of trust in the effectiveness of a GVT (Breuer et al., 2016) as trust be seen as the "glue" that creates relationships within GVTs (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Sarker, Ahuja, Sarker, & Kirkeby, 2011).

2.5.1 Trust and Normative Behaviour

According to Crisp and Jarvenpaa (2013), trust does more than simply "mediate performance" (p. 53), it also plays a critical role in allowing team norms to emerge and operate. "Normative actions regulate behaviour and promote predictability in team actions, yet are flexible enough to adapt to an emerging situation" (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013, p. 47). These agreed to and shared team values can prove problematic in GVTs due to the self-managing environment they operate in and members' diverse cultural backgrounds (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013). However, because these normative actions can be significant in GVTs, they are worth the time investment required to set them up properly. They set the behavioural foundation that advises both the group and the outsiders how the team will act and sets the boundaries of what is acceptable within the team. These norms can be both a guide on how team members conduct themselves and treat each other as well as how the operational work flow will be executed.

Significantly, research by Crisp and Jarvenpaa (2013) shows that swift trust is built through normative actions rather than "in lieu of them" (p. 53). Their research shows that, as trust occurs, team members gain the confidence to engage in normative actions. This, in turn, enables trust to grow. Additionally, and equally significant for the literature, Crisp and Jarvenpaa (2013) show that there is a link between swift trust and normative behaviours leading to higher levels of "late trusting beliefs" (p. 54). They do caution, though, that this occurs only if the team has good structuring of work and higher levels of monitoring which supports and helps them adapt and adjust to emerging scenarios.

2.5.2 Swift Trust

Swift trust is a key aspect in GVTs literature (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). The term refers to the way trust is quickly built in teams that are short-lived and temporary in existence. According to Crisp and Jarvenpaa (2013), swift trust provides the initial confidence that allows a GVT to act as if trust already exists. Despite this confidence, trust is also highly fragile because the foundations it needs have not had time to develop. This means that trust "requires verification that the team is able to manage vulnerabilities and expectations" (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013, p. 46).

Because no shared history exists amongst GVT members and members are globally dispersed, trust takes on huge importance (Sarker et al., 2011). Swift trust becomes key to the team reaching cohesion and being effective, with Crisp and Jarvenpaa (2013) highlighting that trust plays a crucial role in how normative actions emerge and are then executed in GVTs. For them:

> "high early trusting beliefs give members the necessary confidence to engage in normative actions, and these normative actions become a sustained basis of trusting beliefs and subsequent performance" (p. 53).

This progression from early stage trust to normative actions to late stage trust and the performance of the team shows the underlying and crucial role that normative actions play in ad hoc groups like GVTs and the findings also highlight "a postive link between the componnents of swift trust and team performance" (p. 53). With information flow being limited in vts in the early formation stages, team members place a lot of stock in small actions. This leads to Ford et al. (2017) stating, "There is some merit in the old truth that members get only one chance to make a first impression" (p. 27). Brahm and Kunze (2012) further emphasize this importance of the first impression by concluding that any manager using GVTs must encourage the development of swift trust if they desire to see the team succeed.

2.6 The role of student-led teams in research

Whilst a sizeable amount of the literature on GVTs looked at how they compared to FtF teams, Flammia, Cleary, and Slattery (2010) started their research from the viewpoint that almost all teams are virtual in some way so the more appropriate question to answer is the degree of virtualness of a team. Answering that question gives us with a deeper understanding of how a team functions.

Flammia et al. (2010) conclude that the division of project roles in line with the strengths and abilities of the team members created greater satisfaction with the overall process and experience. The team process was also significantly influenced by having strong socioemotional communication and the earlier this socioemotional communication was established the more cohensive and united a team was. This communication created a "strong sense of ownership of the project" (p. 98) and enhanced the satisfaction.

Flammia et al. (2010) observed that teams who had a healthy team culture developed a good balance between socioemotional communication and task-related communication. Those teams also favoured chat tools in communication due to the feedback occuring in real-time. The findings of the research drew Flammia et al. (2010) to conclude that high group cohension, strong trust and individual satisfaction is possible in GVTs, even if the team is only working together on a project for a short period of time.

With GVTs more of a common practice in the business world, Picherit-Duthler (2011) notes that it is important for educational institutions to expose and prepare students for such an online working environment by facilitating projects where the students have to participate in GVTs. Providing opportunities to experience GVTs allows students to be exposed to the diveristy of cultures, time zones and geography. How a GVT handles these differences can be a strength or a weakness, so helping students understand the importance of diversity and working virtually provides them with significant skills when heading into the workplace.

Picherit-Duthler (2011) reveal that students were more focused on what commonalities they had with other participants rather than the differences that they faced. This focus on commonalities allowed the students to better connect with their team members, which eliminated stereotypes and potential barriers. With no barriers in the way, "students listened to each other's contributions and ideas" (p. 137), meaning that the team benefited from the utilisation of "different opinions and the larger pool of skills" (p. 137).

The findings of Picherit-Duthler (2011) highlight that diversity creates strength in a project "because people were approaching it [the task] from different perspectives" (p. 142). Having open-minded team members was seen as a way to overcome the differences in culture and it created an environment where diversity of opinions and thoughts was able to occur. The creation of mechanisms or group norms to allow for differences helped members know "what was expected of them but also that everyone had a chance to participate" (p. 143). Not only was diversity seen as a strength for a project but leadership was also seen as a significant success factor, often because "the main communication conduit ran through the global team leader" (p. 143). Key to that communication was the use of technology. The use of technology for communication "was a mediating factor in their [the students'] perception of similiarity and differences" (p. 143), meaning the techonology enhanced the GVT's capabilities, making them more effective.

Whilst research into student-led GVTs has provided significant insights (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998), as Davison et al. (2017) note, there has been considerable criticism around student-led teams. They observe that the most prominent criticism centres around how student-led GVTs tend to have different power dynamics compared to teams in organisationally orientated GVTs. The concept of equal status is one such example used by critics of research around student led teams.

To counter that criticism, Davison et al. (2017) focus on the similarities between organistionally orientated GVTs and their student-led counterparts, noting that "GVTs are suitable exemplars of ad hoc teams that lack any prior experience of working together or otherwise engaging in technology-mediated interactions" (p. 318) with regard to issues of language, time management, dealing with the technology and

different cultures. The research by Davison et al. (2017) also shows that trust is possible within longer term projects with that trust being of significant benefit to a team's well-being during the project. Their research also highlighted a link between the team's efficacy and swift trust, where an individual's perceptions of the team's abilities were related to trust. The research also showed a link with efficacy and the success of the team. Davison et al. (2017) conclude that team efficacy is important to GVTs. They see it as a combination of the skill function of team members, a function of team cohesion and a reflection of task appropriateness.

A longitudinal study by Gordon (2017) uses the experiential "problem-based learning project" (p. 53) Globcom to explore leadership interactions of GVTs. Analysing interactions across two levels of leadership (firstly, within the supervisory GVT of lecturers, and secondly, between the student GVT leaders and their mentor), Gordon focuses on the improvement of interactions within the student-led GVTs where sufficient support from the project mentor and the different lecturers is provided.

Gordon (2017) extends the knowledge of GVTs in a multitude of ways. Thus, the study's exploration of how leaders elicit actions from the team members highlights that whilst six different styles occurred and that each team stage required a different leadership style, the most effective way for this to occur was with a "directive and explanatory style" (p. 201). However, the findings also show that adopting such a style alone is not enough and instead needs to be coupled with more relational styles of leadership for the creation of the interactions necessary for team awareness and healthy feedback.

Gordon (2017) also examined the question whether FtF team roles could be applied equally to GVTs and the results reveal that the roles apparent in FtF teams are interpreted differently in GVTs. This means that FtF role definitions are not compatiable with the GVT environment, which highlights the need for GVT research to stay seperate to that of FtF teams. Gordon's (2017) findings further demonstrate that the combination of a directive leadership style coupled with relational processes can also lead to a greater team cohension and team satisfaction. The issue of trust also plays a central role, with participation being of key import to all the leaders in the study. Gordon (2017) analysis shows that, as the team grows from its tentative

beginnings, accomodation or leneincy by the leader towards non-engaged team members reduces. This results in a smaller, more produtive team where trust has been proven through productivity. It is this last area from which this research explores and builds.

Much of the current literature shows both trust and leadership are important aspects of GVTs. However, one facet of GVTs in relation to these two aspects that is missing are the perceptions and thoughts of those leaders who have led GVTs. What are their thoughts on trust and what role it plays in their GVTs? Do they embrace trust as a part of their team leadership? Based on these considerations, this study seeks to investigate what experienced GVT leaders think of trust as an aspect of their experience. Do their previous experiences influence how they look at trust in GVTs?

2.7 Framing GVTs within social theories

Having reviewed the current literature around GV Ts as well as trust, and considering the research questions, a few key communication theories could play an important part in this research: Social Information Processing Theory, Embodied Social Presence, Commitment Trust Theory, Expectancy Violation Theory and Uncertainty Reduction Theory. These theories either deal with computer-mediated communication or the challenges relationships must overcome to allow team members to work together effectively. All of these theories accentuate important areas for GVTs. It is to these theories that we now turn.

2.7.1 Social Information Processing Theory

The rise of computer-mediated communication (CMC) was initially met by many communication scholars with skepticism (Griffin, Ledbetter, & Sparks, 2015) and the prevailing thinking concluded that "as a place to bond with others, cyberspace seemed to be a relational wasteland – stark and barren" (p. 138). CMC was perceived as only being applicable for task-orientated purposes.

However, this conventional wisdom was countered by Social Information Processing Theory as developed by Joseph Walther and colleagues, which

> "... Asserts that communicators using any medium experience the similar needs for uncertainty recuction and affinity, and to meet these needs CMC users will adapt their linguistic and textual behaviours to the solicitation and presentation of socially revealing, relational behaviour" (Walther et al., 1994).

Whilst CMC has its limitations, Walther et al. (1994) noted that individuals adapted to text-orientated messages and behaviours used in the virtual environment, resulting in social information exchanges being, " ... potentially just as potent over time" (p. 465) as that of FtF teams. Key to the theory is the idea that relationships between individuals grow only to the extent that information of the other party is gained through first impressions. Based on those first impressions, an individual then forms ideas and suppositions about the other party. Those ideas and suppositions are then tested, assessed and either confirmed or dismissed through future interactions (Griffin et al, 2015).

Social Information → Impression Formation → Relationship Development
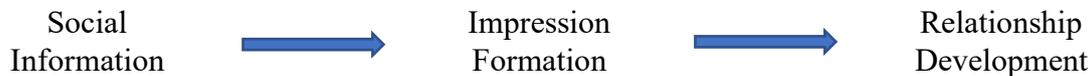
Figure 3: Understanding relationship development through Social Information Processing Theory. Source: Griffin et al. (2015, p. 118).

This concept of initial relationship information being confirmed or dismissed through future interactions is important for GVTs and any investigation into the impact or significance of trust within those teams. Individuals must gather information about their new team members or teammates, form impressions of those individuals and then test those impressions or change them as the relationship develops. These stages and their progression are captured in Figure 2 above.

Social Information Processing Theory also suggests that affiliation is a human need that is just as present online as it is in the physical world and that both verbal and non-verbal cues "can be used interchangeably" (Griffin et al., 2015, p. 124). In other words, people adapt and adjust their communication to whichever media they are using at the time for connection. Griffin et al. (2015) use the example of letters sent

to soldiers in World War II as a clear historical example of this adaptation to a cue-limited media. The reality of life is that every relationship a person has is multimodal, meaning that the relationship is constantly maintained through a multitude of media. This is an important factor for a member of a GVT, and with the advances in technology, communication for them is not limited to one media form but, like real life, is multimodal. Communication can be via text (either on a text based platform like Facebook Messenger or in a text received on a smart phone), via voice or via video. Admittedly, all the media modes come through a digital device, but the communication forms are different.

According to Walther (1996) the crucial variable for any CMC is the time required to send a message (Griffin et al., 2015). Over the period of a longer term project, "the issue is not the *amount* of social information that can be conveyed online; rather, it's the *rate* at which that information mounts up" (Griffin et al., 2015, p. 125). Text messages, whether in the form of a WhatsApp message, an email or sent via Facebook Messenger, take longer to compose than verbal conversations. Walther's research suggested that these written messages take four times longer to communicate than a spoken message. As a way of providing balance to earlier experiments where CMC was seen as task-orientated and impersonal, Walther compared ten minutes of FtF time with forty minutes of text-based computer-mediated communication. This resulted in discovering that interactions in these two modes did not result in a "difference in partner affinity" (Griffin et al., 2015). This is an important finding for GVTs as it shows that, given time, relationships in the team can be more than just task-orientated. Walther (1996) suggestion for team members where computer-mediated communication occurs frequently is to send messages more often in an effort to overcome the rate difference. The increase in messages provides opportunities for the relationships to move from an impersonal, more task-orientated relationship towards interpersonal relationships. This is especially true if the users expect a longer term association, elevating CMC to the same level as FtF (Walther, 1996). Longer term associations create space for impression formation in individual relationship but, "it's also reassuring to virtual group partners who naturally wonder who their colleagues are, what they're thinking, and if they're going to do the work they've promised" (Griffin et al., 2015). Any member of a GVT, but particularly the leaders, should be aware of this communication difference and come to terms

with the rate of written interactions opposed to spoken ones, including ensuring the rate difference time is factored in to the project.

2.7.2 Embodied Social Presence Theory

As technology use increased and more people began spending more time online, some researchers (Mennecke et al., 2011) sought to address the high levels of "perceptual engagement that users experience as they engage in activity-based social interaction in virtual environments" (p. 413). With communication requiring two indidviduals and a sense of presence, possessing the ability to be aware of self and others, pick up verbal and non-verbal cues, and recognise the space and the context become key to managing virtual collaborative spaces where team members interact with one another.

For Mennecke et al. (2011), place is relevant to frame the context which allows for shared activities within a virtual setting. For them, "place-based features in virtual environments are similar to those features we associate with real-world places" (Mennecke et al., 2011, p. 416). Figure 4 represents the relationship between
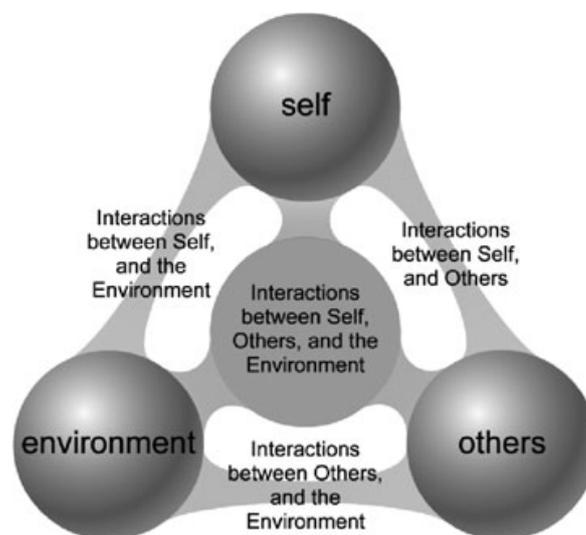
Figure 4: Factors influencing the meaning of place from Mennecke, Triplett, Hassall, Conde, and Heer (2011).

oneself, others, and the environment and highlights how each part interacts with the other and when applied to both virtual and real-world settings (Mennecke et al., 2011). For them, "place identity offers an important framework for understanding how and why place is relevant in more than just the geographical sense of being a

physical (or virtual) space" (p. 417). Place takes on meaning due to this interaction between self, others and the environment.

One of the key findings of Embodied Social Presence Theory is that "users experience a great sense of engagement, arousal and task performance when they experience ESP" (Mennecke et al., 2011, p. 439), leading to the author's conclusion that "ESP theory offers a richer, more comprehensive framework for examining the role of embodiment in social communications" (Mennecke et al., 2011, p. 440). In GVTs this would mean that if team members feel embodied in the social presence within the team interactions online, then their engagement with both the rest of the team and with the tasks themselves will take on a greater meaning. Since people are fundamentally social by nature (Mennecke, Triplett, Hassall, & Conde, 2010), relating to others is one of the ways we define ourselves. As Mennecke et al. (2011) show, embodied social presence can be used to create better collaborations through CMC and the spaces within which those collaborations can occur, for "when ESP is achieved, collaborators are more engaged in the conversation and the team's shared activities" (p. 441).

2.7.3 Commitment-Trust Theory

In their exploration of relationship marketing, (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) highlighted something that has become known as the Commitment-Trust Theory. The basis of their theory is that when both commitment and trust are present in relationships, "they produce outcomes that promote efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness" (p. 22). Part of building that commitment and trust is to continually share knowledge. This is because "it requires willingness from both parties (e.g. knowledge seeker and knowledge contributor) to give and accept knowledge" (Hashim, Hashim, & Tan, 2015, p. 146). Commitment and trust within the theory can also provide important insights into the discontinuation of knowledge from users. The theory further "maintains that those networks characterised by relationship commitment and trust engender cooperation" (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 34).

When the Commitment-Trust Theory is applied to online communities as shown by Hashim et al. (2015), individuals are either seen as satisfied (where their participation is likely to continue after they have observed the behaviour of the online community) or reluctant (where their participation is unlikely to continue if they belive that promises are being broken or individuals within the community are being opportunistic). This link between satisfcation and the sharing of knowledge is highly valuable for GVTs where knowledge sharing is essential to the success of the team.

2.7.4 Expectancy Violations Theory

One of the first theories to examine non-verbal adaptation (Berger, Roloff, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2010), Expectancy Violations Theory (EVT) posits that, "there are circumstances under which violations of social norms and expectations may be a superior strategy to conformity" (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Those expectations can either be predictive or prescriptive and derive from one of the following three sources (Berger et al., 2010; Griffin et al., 2015):

1. Personal or communicator characteristics: age, gender, birthplace, physical attributes, personality and communication style.
2. Relational characteristics: relative status, similarity of the parties communicating, the familiarity of the communicators with each other.
3. Contextual characteristics: cultural norms and interactional situation.

A violation of expectations is a deviation from the norm and those deviations can influence communication outcomes (Burgoon, 1978). These violations are either positive or negative and lead to reward valence or value. As Griffin et al. (2015) highlight:

> "... The reward valence of a communicator is the sum of the positive and negative attributes that the person brings to the encounter plus the potential he or she has to reward or punish in the future" (p. 91).

In regard to virtual teamwork this theory has been used to postulate that communicators who use CMC will "regularly exploit CMC's reduced nonverbal cue

environment for the purpose of selective self-presentation" (Ramirez & Wang, 2008, p. 24). By tailoring outward facing communication, a sender can create impressions that mask the reality (either positively or negatively), "thereby facilitating relationship formation, but also elevating expectations" (Ramirez & Wang, 2008, p. 24). This exploitation of CMC's reduced nonverbal cues is an issue that members of GVTs must overcome. Trust is one possible way that this could occur.

2.7.5 Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Every new relationship or interaction starts out in a state of uncertainty. Who is this person? What are they like? Can I trust them? Are they friendly? We simply do not have the information to make an informed decision on what to expect. In an attempt to look at how communication is used to gather knowledge and help us understand one another (Griffin et al., 2015), Charles Berger formed the Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT), at which heart lies:

> "... The assumption that when strangers meet, their primary concern is one of uncertainty reduction or increasing predictability about the behaviour of both themselves and others in the interaction" (Berger & Calabrese, 1975, p. 100).

The reduction of uncertainty, according to Berger (1986), is key to any interaction and to accomplish this "individuals make numerous predictions about the behaviours and attitudes of their interaction partners" (p. 35-36). Berger (1986) also posits that, because relationships exist in a constant state of flux and fluidity, the reduction of uncertainty is never complete but exists in an ongoing status "even within established relationships" (p. 37).

Berger (1986) theorises that participating in meaningful communication with another person requires the ability to "reduce their mutual uncertainties about each others' past, current and future actions" (p. 35) in order to respond in such a way that allows the interactions to continue. Berger suggests that individuals are consistently predicting the behaviours and attitudes of the person they are interacting with and it is the cognitive uncertainty that URT addresses. As (Griffin et al., 2015) explain:

"... when you first meet a person, your mind may conjure up a wild mix of potential traits and characteristics. Reducing cognitive uncertainty means acquiring information that allows you to discard many of these possibilities" (p. 127).

Understanding how reducing uncertainty in a relationship has the potential to be helpful for individuals "who find themselves in a wide spectrum of unfamilar situations" (Berger, 2011, p. 216). It is this aspect of helping individuals understand and deal with a multitude of unfamilar situations that could speak into working in GVTs. Initial interactions with people can be intimidating and generate anxiety, but moving that interaction into a digital space and then adding the complexity of different cultures, time zones, genders and attitudes and those interactions has the potential to make things infinitely harder. Utilising URT in GVT research has the potential to provide explanations for observed violations, issues, challenges and uncertainities that are clear and plausible.

2.8 Conclusion

Having drawn attention to the key aspects arising from current literature including the differences between both FtF teams and GVTs, as well as the importance of trust to how GVTs operate; we turned to the subject of some potenial key theories that could speak to issues faced by GVTs where CMC is the primary channel of communication for teams. Many of the theories deal with issues related to CMC or to relationship maintenance and could play a significant role in the success of a GVT. All of these theories can speak to this research. However before the results and discussion chapters we must look at how the research was designed including the methods and methodology. We turn to that now.

Chapter 3: Research design, methods & methodology

This chapter outlines the design of the research conducted as well as the theoretical framework used to answer the research question "what are the perceptions that leaders of GVTs have of the role trust plays within those teams?". Given that the previous chapter has highlighted some shortcomings of the literature, it is the aim of this research to target the shortcomings identified. What is not yet clear from the literature is the impact of trust from the team leader's perspective. This gap will be addressed by the present research study. In order to elicit those perceptions from the team leaders, the research question was broken into three segments: 1) What was the leader's perceptions of trust prior to their expereince in a GVT?; 2) what was the team leader's actual experience of trust in a GVT?; and 3) what are the possibilities of how trust works within a GVT?

Because each GVT must work out the ways that they will function together, a theoretical basis of constructionism was adopted. Seeking to have the team leaders from the 2017 Globcom cohort share their experiences and reflections, the author undertook a qualitative approach to the research. Data gathering took place through online interviews (using Skype or Facebook Messenger) or via an emailed questionnaire for those who were unable to commit the time to an interview. Thematic textual analysis was used in order to systematically capture common themes in the accounts of team leaders. This chapter will explain and discuss the theoretical framework underpinning this research, provide details on the data collection methods and finally look at the questions posed to each GVT leader.

3.1 Project case: Globcom and participants

The Globcom project is an international "problem-based learning project" (Gordon, 2017, p. 53). Over one hundred senior public relations students from fifteen universities in fifteen countries are brought together to work within GVTs. The project "requires a competitive and creative communications solution that could be applied to the current world market, developed under real-time challenges" (Gordon, 2017, p. 53).

Established in 2003, Globcom runs annually during a three-month long semester at the beginning of the year, and culminates with a symposium hosted by one of the participating universities. The symposium gives students the opportunity to finally meet their team members, present their strategic proposal to industry professionals, and hear from conference speakers. In addition, the top three teams present their proposals to all the conference delegates, a winner is selected and a client representative advises how the organisation will implement the winning proposal into their communications strategy. That proposal has been prepared by each GVT prior to the symposium as they act as international public relations agencies competing to win the client. This comes with the challenges that all GVTs face, including cultural barriers, time zone differences and recognising the strength that comes from cultural diversity (Picherit-Duthler, 2012).

The students who participate in Globcom each year are senior public relations students and as such are encouraged to "form their own learning through independent study" (Gordon, 2017, p. 53), working individually and collaboratively in the teams they have been placed into. The teams are newly formed every year with a fresh cohort of students and the teams are selected to give the broadest spread of cultures in the teams as possible. As Picherit-Duthler (2012, p. 139) observes, "the Globcom project provides a platform to train public relations students to be a part of a multicultural team in a real international situation." The Globcom project was started in 2003 and sees the senior public relations students involved come from a diverse range of backgrounds, with fifteen universities from fifteen countries on multiple continents participating (Gordon, 2017; Picherit-Duthler, 2011). The participating countries range from Europe (Spain, U.K., Germany, Portugal, Italy, Russia) to Asia (U.A.E., India, Malaysia, Thailand), Africa (South Africa) to Oceania (Australia, New Zealand), to the Americas (USA). The diversity is not just limited to geographical spaces and time zones. As noted by Picherit-Duthler (2011), the diversity extends from demographic (age, gender and ethnicity), through to what she calls "deep level diversity" (p. 137) (attitudes, values and preferences), functional diversity (experience, knowledge and skill sets) and resource diversity (accessibility to and use of resources).

As observed in the previous chapter, the literature to date has not specifically looked at the leaders' perceptions of trust within GVTs. A GVT leader is the primary influence source for how the team interacts, how team members conduct themselves and how the cohesiveness of the team directly affects the team's productive output. The leaders' reflections on how trust works within a GVT will reduce the gap within the literature. Due to the importance of leaders for the effectiveness and success of GVTs as highlighted by the current literature, for the purposes of this research the author sought the reflections of the leaders of all teams of the 2017 Globcom cohort.

The 2017 Globcom cohort consisted of nine teams with nine team leaders, and all leaders agreed to participate in this study. The nine team leaders, as well as the team members, were senior public relations students at the time of the study, either in their final year of undergraduate study or in postgraduate study. The author was able to obtain interviews with eight out of the nine team leaders. As outlined by Gray (2018), interviewing was the favoured approach because the basis of this research was to understand the experiences of the leaders, seek their opinions and understand their decisions and processes. All of these goals are explorative and require the collection of data that reflect the full scope of participants' perspectives. All of the participants were involved in the leadership of their teams with seven of the eight elected as leaders by their teams from the beginning, while the eighth was originally elected as a deputy leader but was elevated to the leadership position when the team's original leader quit the Globcom project. The views of the deputy leaders were not sought in this research as it was decided that the focus should be on the reflections of the leaders themselves, due to the significant role they had in the way the teams functioned and developed.

This research used the following Globcom project schedule captured by Gordon (2017, p. 167) to plan the timeline of this study.

Date	Functional stage and activities
Febraury – March 4	**Enrolment**
	Students meet and socialise and work out procedures and wait for all students to register owing to the differences in the academic years.
Stage 1	**Research and processes**
March 4-24	Develop project timeline
	Research and create a situation analysis
	Elect team leader, deputy, country leaders and develop team processes and roles
	Identify team goals and norms
Stage 2	**Framework of proposal**
March 25 – April 15	Develop objectives, strategy, publics, concepts
Stage 3	**Body of proposal**
April 16 – April 29	Confirm strategy, implementation, action plans
Stage 4	**Proposal finale**
April 30 – May 6	Develop budget, proposal evaluation and submit presentation

Figure 5: Globcom student team stages & activities (Gordon, 2017, p. 167)

The division of team development stages and the tasks related thereto reflects the four stages of team development proposed by Tuckman (1965), which he labelled as: *forming; storming; norming;* and *performing*. In reviewing the literature since Tuckman first proposed the stages of team development, Tuckman and Jensen (2010) discovered "the existence of a final discernible and significant stage of group development – termination" (p. 47).

The students are encouraged to begin participating with their new GVT members from the outset. This first stage of forming the team is designed for the students to meet and socialise online as a way of learning about each other and how the team will be operate. It is during this phase that the teams elect their own leaders. The leaders are the key connection point between the student GVT and a team mentor who is also part of the Globcom supervising lecturer team (Gordon, 2017). The

student team leaders are expected to encourage and develop participation from all of their team members. This reliance on each other means that the student participants have to collaborate, which teaches them real world communication and interactions for the sake of the team. The team, with the newly elected team leader, constructs processes and rules of cooperation to complete the project. This constructing process links the student GVTs, in the sense of Tuckman (1965) team development stages, to the underlying epistomology of this study, which will be described in the following section.

3.2 Constructing rules of cooperation (constructionism)

The underlying epistomology for this research is one of constructionism. Constructionism sees that,

> "... All knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42).

The implication of constructionism is that what we know and understand of the world around us, including ourselves, other objects or people and the relationships between those three groups, is produced through the systems we find ourselves in (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Not only is our understanding of the world and our place in it constructed but that construction is also in "a constant state of revision" (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). It stands in contrast to the concept of objectivism, which assumes that there is an absolute truth somewhere out there waiting to be discovered (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2016; Crotty, 1998). Constructionism is based on the assumption that we, as human beings, create meaning as we engage with the world and interpret it (Crotty, 1998). For the constructionist, "there are *knowledges*, rather than knowledge" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 30). There is no one truth.

However, constructionism does not simply see meaning or truth as subjective (Crotty, 1998). We do not create meaning. Instead we construct it. There exists something already and we take that which already exists and attach meaning to it

(Crotty, 1998). "The knowledge of how things are is a product of how we come to understand it" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 30). Equally important to constructionism is the way that objects are viewed. As Crotty (1998) highlights, an object cannot be viewed in isolation, neither can an experience. "We are born into a world of meaning" (Crotty, 1998, p. 54) and therefore we inherit and are raised into society where a system of understanding and interpreting already exists. Through that system "... *All* meaningful reality, precisely as meaningful reality, is socially constructed" (Crotty, 1998, p. 54). Through constructionism, an object or an experience must be seen within the context it exists in. It is influenced by what is around it, and it influences everything around it.

The idea of culture can be viewed in the same way. "Instead of seeing culture as an external reality that acts on and constrains people, it can be taken to be an emergent reality in a continuous state of construction and reconstruction" (Bryman, 2016, p. 30). Culture is therefore not viewed as the outcome of the thinking and behaviours of humanity but rather the source of that thinking and those behaviours (Crotty, 1998). Context plays a significant role. As Griffin et al. (2015) put it, "our view of reality is strongly shaped by the language we've used since we were infants" (p. 43). This idea that culture is the source of our thinking and behaviours means that research results can only be understood if we "understand something about how they're constructed and about the context in which they occur" (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 11).

Conceptualising facts as socially constructed ideas is a central concept (Silverman, 2014) among constructionist researchers taking interest in the ways in which a person or group of people continually construct, manage and sustain their realities. As Crotty (1998) states, "constructionism embraces the whole gamut of meaningful reality. All reality, as meaningful reality, is socially constructed. There is no exceptions" (p. 54).

This concept of reality being socially constructed plays a significant part in the teams within the Globcom action research project. As mentioned in the description of Globcom above (see section 3.1.), the project incorporates multiple student-led teams that are newly formed each year with new student leaders selected by the

group at the beginning of the project. The team, as a social entity, must also construct the rules of interaction, the ways in which they communicate, trust, discipline, and involve each other. How people are seen as being involved becomes a question that each group must answer for themselves. This construction of meaning within the Globcom groups is of compelling interest to this research as it seeks to discover the construction (or lack thereof) of trust within the teams and how important that was to the way the teams interacted and the way those teams completed the tasks required of them. The participants of this research were all leaders of the Globcom teams in the 2017 cohort and their understandings and interpretation of trust within their groups is paramount to this research due to the heavy influence they would have had in the construction of trust and what it would mean for their teams.

Crotty (1998) draws a distinction between constructionism and constructivism, which is important to note here as it has a significant bearing on the research conducted. Crotty (1998) proposes to restrict the use of the term *constructivism* to that of the individual and the term *constructionism* to refer to collective groupings. For him, the former "suggests that each one's way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other" (Crotty, 1998, p. 58), while the latter "emphasises the hold our culture has on us" (p. 58). In this research, despite the focus of data collection on the team leaders, the main research question looks at the role trust plays within the collective. Asssuming that the culture we find ourselves in shapes how we see things (Crotty, 1998), then it follows that the created collective that is a GVT shapes the way the collective functions and interprets everything, including trust.

3.3 Research methods

3.3.1 Qualitative methodology

Through this research the author sought the impressions and reflections of participants who had been team leaders within a GVT context, meaning a qualitative approach to the methodology was undertaken. As Gray (2018) notes, qualitative data "can provide rich descriptions and explanations that demonstrate the

chronological flow of events as well as often leading to serendipitous (chance) findings" (p. 684) as the researcher looks to understand events and experiences within the context that they occur (Gray, 2018; Silverman, 2014). At its core, qualitative research focuses on an individual's lived experiences, on the broader society and culture or on the language and communciation used by members of the society (Marshall, 2011). In researching the lived experiences of an individual, personal interactions with those connected to their study allow the researcher access to up-close information that would not be possible in an artifically manipulated situation (Creswell, 2014; Gray, 2018). This personal access to the participants requires the researcher to seek a more collaborative approach with the participants of the research (Creswell, 2014) and allows for interpretation of processes and meanings (Creswell, 2014; Gray, 2018; Marshall, 2011; Silverman, 2014). The highly contextual nature of qualitative research means that it gives more than a vignette of events, allowing for an issue to be explored in depth while also giving insight into new, scantly researched phenomena and providing fresh insights into phenomena that have previously been neglected (Gray, 2018).

Given that the key focus of this research is "... to obtain insights into particular practices that exist within a specific location, context and time" (Gray, 2018, p. 173) and given that the research into trust within GVTs is still an emerging field, this research is exploratory in purpose, where the aim is to find new insights into phenomena and identify significant groupings of understanding (Marshall, 2011; Palys & Atchison, 2008). This is in line with the definition of an exploratory study by Gray (2018) in that it seeks to "explore what is happening and to ask questions about it" (p. 36). The way this research accomplishes this is through the reflections of GVT leaders. These reflections of leaders is something that has not occurred much within the field for, despite an awareness of the importance of improving involvement through socioemotional and task-related interactions, "there is no distinct recognition of how these are defined in a [global] virtual team, or when they are most effective" (Gordon, 2017, p. 52).

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Interviews

Because interviews can be viewed as being contrived and a departure from naturally occurring data (Silverman, 2014), this study will draw on Silverman's recommendation for the researcher to justify the use of interviews. Silverman (2014) refers to four main methods of data collection "used by qualitative researchers:

- Observation
- Analysising texts and documents
- Interviews and focus groups
- Audio and video recordings" (p.43)

Whilst each has its strengths, can be used in combination with each other and can also be used either in quantitative or qualitative research, Silverman (2014) notes that it is the overall nature of the research methodology that shapes the use of each method. Given that the aim of this study is to probe for meaning and seek to understand the reflections of GVT leaders, it is "concerned with the *meanings* that people ascribe to phenomena" (Gray, 2018, p. 378-379). In addition, a major advantage of an interview is that it allows participants "an opportunity to reflect on events without having to commit themselves in writing, often because they feel the information may be confidential" (Gray, 2018, p. 379). This idea of reflection is important to this study because the participants are asked to comment about their experiences at Globcom 2017 retrospectivey. It is this retrospection and reflection that enable the researcher to better understand the role that trust may play in GVTs.

Authenticity is another factor that played a significant role in deciding on interviews as the method for data collection. Silverman (2014) highlights that research is not about sample size but about gathering "...an 'authentic' understanding of people's experiences ..." (p. 44). This includes the necessity for the researcher to be "aware of the multiple voices contained within the data, and the subtle, sometimes conflicting realities within it" (Gray, 2018, p. 185). Owing to a small sample size of participants (with only nine teams involved in the 2017 Globcom cohort, meaning

that only a maximum of nine leaders could be recruited) this consideration of authenticity takes on high significance in this research. With eight of those possible nine leaders responding, it was important to be authentic to their experiences, even if the information given seemed contradictory in nature. This meant that open-ended questions were used where the participants were encouraged to share honestly. The use of phrasing like: 'in your opinion ...'; 'tell me about ...'; and 'in your observation ...' openly invited the participants to share their experiences in a frank manner.

Another major advantage of open-ended interviews, closely connected to authenticity, is the issue of rapport. How best to present oneself, gaining and maintaining trust and attempting to view the world through that participants' eyes (Silverman, 2014) are key to building a rapport with participants. It is an understanding established "on the basis of respect and trust between the interviewer and respondent" (Gray, 2018, p. 388). The researcher in this case had participated in the same Globcom cohort as the leaders and had been a deputy leader, meaning he felt he had a strong connection with the participants, with a greater sense of understanding of their worldview. This connection and familiarity with the leader's situations may have helped with mutual respect and trust from the beginning as the researcher understood the teams and the situations those teams faced, which allowed him to improvise when necessary through probes, "follow up questions that arise 'in the moment' in response to the answers being given by respondents" (Gray, 2018, p. 390). This improvisation is part of what Gray (2018) calls "semi-structured interviews" (p. 381). This non-standard interviewing is a helpful one for the qualitative researcher as it creates a space where "additional questions may be asked, including some which were not anticipated at the start of the interview, as new issues arise" (p. 381). The flexibility in semi-structured interviews "allows for probing of views and opinions where it is desirable for respondents to expand on their answers" (Gary, 2018, p. 381). The open-ended questioning and additional clarifying questions were used by the researcher to explore "new pathways which, while not originally considered as part of the interview, help towards meeting the research objectives" (Gray, 2018, p. 381).

The final benefit of interviewing as a method is that it links well with the epistomological approach of constructionism. The research question of leader's

perceptions of the role trust plays in the teams they lead suggests a phenomenological approach is best with the research seeking "to explore, describe and analyse the meaning of individual lived experience" (Marshall, 2011, p. 19). As Braun and Clarke (2013) argue, interviews "are best suited to exploring understandings, perceptions and constructions of things that participants have some kind of personal stake in" (p. 81). Marshall (2011) notes that this approach is based on an assumption that an "essence" (p. 20) exists in an experience that can be learned from. In analysing the experiences of GVT leaders, this research is investigating the essence of their experiences with trust and the role it plays in the GVT world. With constructionism asserting that social phenomena are both produced and constantly revised through social interaction (Bryman, 2016), interviewing provided the best opportunity to seek individual reflections of their experiences of trust and the role it played in a GVT.

3.4.2 Limitations of interviews

Despite the strengths of interviews for this research, and in particular responsive interviews, it has to be acknowledged that there are limitations to using this research method. Questions of reliability and validity are important and necessary issues to consider (Silverman, 2014). For the qualitative researcher "reliability usually refers to the extent to which an experiment, test or measurement yields the same result or consistent measurements on repeated trials" (Silverman, 2014, p. 83). In order to guarantee reliability of the data, the researcher maintained consistency in the data collection by asking the same questions of all participants resulting in a standardisation of questions (Gray, 2018). This was done to ensure that "each respondent understands the questions in the same way and that answers can be coded without the possibility of uncertainty" (Silverman, 2014, p. 87).

Another limitation that the researcher had to be aware of was the reliability of conducting interviews over the internet with the use of Skype and Facebook Messenger, both of which have the capacity for audio and video calls. Virtual interviews "are no longer regarded as (poor) substitutes for FtF interviews but as different *types* of interview method" (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Just like face-to-face

interviews, virtual interviews also have their advantages and disadvantages, and whilst the use of video and audio data was more conducive to undertaking responsive interviews, the researcher was aware of challenges akin to telephone interviews. As noted by Gray (2018), one of those challenges is that "repsondents tend to talk for shorter bursts of time, providing slightly less depth and elaboration" (p. 399). Another challenge Gray (2018) noted was a higher refusal rate from potential participants. In addition, (Silverman, 2014) highlights the issue of reliability when conducting transcript interpretation. He notes that the transcription "may be gravely weakened by a failure to transcribe apparently trivial, but often crucial, pauses and overlaps" (p. 88).

3.4.3 Why Interviews and not another method?

Interviews are not the only method for gathering data. Despite previously highlighting the strengths of selecting interviews as the method for this research, it is still important to touch on other methods. This section will briefly look at four other methods and explain why each was rejected for this research. The methods looked at are the focus group, ethnography, documents and naturally occurring talk.

3.4.3.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups involve a small group of people meeting and the researcher "encouraging an informal group discussion (or discusssions) 'focused' around a particular topic, or set of issues" (Silverman, 2014, p. 206). For this purpose, the researcher tends to use a question schedule and, similar to interviews, uses follow-up questions to explore individual respondents' answers in greater depth. However, unlike interviews, the researcher does not ask questions of each participant individually but rather seeks to facilitate group discussion with encouragement for each participant to get involved (Silverman, 2014). Like interviews, focus groups are still "manufactured data in a sense that they only arise through the intervention of the researcher" (Silverman, 2014, p. 226).

The reasons why this method was not appropriate for this research was twofold. Firstly, the key research question sought the opinions of participants. The researcher

felt that the best method of obtaining open and honest responses from individuals was to interview individually. Each person could then feel safe and relaxed in having to deal with just one person rather than a group. The second reason is related to logistics. Each participant (team leader) came from a different country and for a number of the participants English was their second language. The researcher felt that attempting to coordinate eight individuals from different time zones with different levels of English would reduce the ability for all to participants to be involved and share their perspectives freely.

3.4.3.2 Ethnography

Ethnography is the study of human groupings as a way of "seeking to understand how they collectively form and maintain a culture" (Marshall, 2011, p. 19). It is the observation of "what people are *doing"* (Silverman, 2014, p. 230) rather than what they are thinking. Observation is conducted with the aim of understanding social processes by actively participating in them over long periods of time (Gray, 2018). This method of researching people in their natural setting is not like surveys and interviews, which usually take place over a short period of time, but requires an extended time period where interaction with the research subjects occurs naturally, relationships are built, and the researcher participates in community life.

Whilst it can be argued that this researcher was in some way a participant observer in GVTs, since he participated in the same GVT setting for half a year, the purpose of researching trust within GVTs and in particular the leader's perceptions of the role trust plays in those teams had not yet occurred to the researcher. The idea of conducting this research was birthed after this researcher had completed his involvement in a GVT environment and occurred as he was personally reflecting on the experience. Likewise, all the participants of the study had completed their involvement in a GVT environment so one would not be able to observe GVTs as they were working. Building on from that, another reason why ethnography was not chosen as a method is that the duration of the study was not long enough to allow ethnography to take place.

3.4.3.3 Documents

Documents can refer to a number of data pieces and can include an interview transcription, which is the written form of a spoken piece of data (Silverman, 2014). For the purpose of this study, the author has used Silverman's definition of documents, who views documents as "data consisting of words and/or images which have become recorded without the intervention of a researcher as happens in an interview or focus group" (p. 276). Documents can be divided into two different types: running records and episodic records (Gray, 2018). Running records tend to be in the public domain and include things like organisational documents, financial documents, public records, and judicial records, while episodic records are more likely to be private, like diaries, and mean access is likely to be more difficult for a researcher. Both types of documents can be defined as unobtrusive research methods as opposed to interviews and focus groups, which are seen as obtrusive, interactive, and open for bias and questions around reliability (Gray, 2018).

The use of documents as a research method would have proven difficult since leader's perceptions of trust within GVTs are unlikely to be documented without intervention by the researcher . Whilst documents have the capacity to offer rich data where appropriate (Silverman, 2014), the research focus of the curent study seems to require more interactive methods.

3.4.3.4 Naturally Occurring Talk

Naturally occurring talk is usually used for either conversation analysis or discourse analysis. Whilst some debate exists regarding the differences between the two (Silverman, 2014),a comparison does highlight some differences in focus. Conversation analysis tends to focus on investigating everyday conversations as it seeks to "specify the formal principles and mechanisms with which participants express themselves in social interactions" (Gray, 2018, p. 704). It is concerned with three features of talk: turn-taking and repair; distribution of speaking rights and institutional talk (Silverman, 2014). Meanwhile, discourse analysis focuses more on "how both spoken and written language is used in social contexts" (Gray, 2018, p. 704), rejects the concept of language reflecting reality but pinpoints the focus on "recognising the regularities in language in terms of patterns and repertoires" (Gray,

2018, p. 704) and being aware that the repertoires are rooted in the social context they are constructed in.

Whilst both conversation and discourse analyses would have been of interest to this study and would have provided great insight to the research question, both were rejected. This rejection was primarily based on the focus of this study in understanding the meaning of what the participants said. Both discourse and conversation analyses tend to look at the talk itself while this study wanted to focus on the meaning behind that talk. However, the author of this study does cede that in doing the analysis of the interviews conducted, he may have made use of some conversation analysis and discourse analysis.

3.5 Thematic textual analysis

This research follows the steps of thematic textual analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic textual analysis is best described as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Identifying themes in the data is important in analysis because it "represents a level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data" (Gray, 2018, p. 692). In their book, Braun and Clarke (2013) argue that analysis needs to produce observations that go deeper than a cursory or surface-level interpretation. They highlight that "a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82) and that requires going beyond the obvious.

As the following table shows (Figure 5), Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest a six-step approach to textual thematic analysis: familiarising oneself with the data; generating initial codes; theme searching; reviewing those themes; defining and naming those themes; and finalising the analysis including the writing of the report.

PHASE	THEMATIC ANALYSIS
1.	Data Familiarisation
2.	Generation of initial codes
3.	Search for themes
4.	Review of themes
5.	Defining and naming themes
6.	Finalising the analysis

Figure 6: Braun and Clarke (2006) phases of thematic textual analysis coding

A major advantage of textual thematic analysis is that it can be conducted well within the constructionist paradigm that is the epistemology of this research. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that "the research epistemology guides what you can say about your data, and informs how you theorise meaning" (p. 85). With the constructionist epistomology, meaning and experience are in a constant state of being produced and reproduced within groups. This results in thematic analysis not seeking to "focus on motivation or individual psychologies, but instead seeks to theorise the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 85). Whilst this research is asking for participants perceptions of trust within GVTs, it is for the purpose of attempting to understand what group dynamics are affected and enhanced by trust.

Having outlined the research design of this study, showcased the epistemology of constructionism and the importance this has for studying trust within GVTs, and having worked through the qualitative nature of this research and how these have all combined to guide the creation of the research questions, we turn now to the results of the research in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

The previous chapter dealt with the design of the research that was conducted. It highlighted the epistomology of constructionism for this research. This epistomology is an important one given that GVTs have to construct their own rules and social norms, their own ways of being within the GVT. This research is qualitative in nature as it examines the impressions and reflections of the leaders of GVTs from the 2017 Globcom cohort. The way data was gathered was through interviews, conducted either through Skype or Facebook messenger or via written responses in email form. Given the global spread of the leaders it was not feasible to sit down face to face with each one for an interview so Skype, Facebook messenger, and email became important tools for the research. In analysing the data, textual thematic analysis was used to identify key themes that reoccured in the data. This chapter will present and the discuss the results obtained through data collection and analysis.

The overarching research question is "What are the perceptions that leaders of GVTs have of the role trust plays within those teams?" This was divided into three research sub-questions in order to understand how trust was defined, how team leaders expected it to be and how they wished it could be.

- *RQ1: What was the leader's perceptions of trust prior to their expereince in a GVT?*
  This relates to their expectations of trust within FtF teams and how the leaders would define trust in a general sense.

- *RQ2: What was the team leader's actual experience of trust in a GVT?*
  This relates to the actuality or real experience of working in a GVT and how trust manifested itself in the team. It also captures whether the leaders felt it was an important or unimportant feature for their teams.

- *RQ3: What are the possibilities of how trust works within a GVT?*
  This relates to the leader's reflection of their experience within a GVT and asks what they would do differently if they were to lead another GVT.

These three research questions look at the team leaders' expectation of trust; experience of trust and reflection of trust in their GVT in order to get a better understanding of the role trust plays within GVTs for the leaders of those teams.

The third research question provided the participants with an opportunity to reflect on their expectations and experiences of working in a GVT. This final question explores where the leaders believed their teams did well and where they saw need for improvement. Reflecting on experience and then how improvements can be made allows for the participants to consider how the team culture was constructed. This flows out of the constructism epistomology that lies at the foundation of this research.

Furthermore, reflection feeds into the exploratory nature of the research. The team leaders first shared their ideas on their expectations and then their experience of trust in their team. This them allowed them to reflect on how things could be done better. Finally, the reflection also provides clear avenues for future research.

These three RQs therefore focused on expectation, experience and reflection. Interview questions were developed to elict answers that addressed these RQs. These interview questions are listed alongside the relevant RQs in Figure 7 below:

	EXPECTATION	EXPERIENCE	REFLECTION
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	What was the leader's perceptions of trust prior to their expereince in a GVT?	What was the team leader's actual experience of trust in a GVT?	What is the potential for how trust could work within a GVT?
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	*How do you define trust generally, that is in a FtF team?*	*Was trust important or unimportant within your GVT and how did you decide to extend trust to team members?*	*Would you do anything differently if you were to lead another GVT?*
	In your opinion, what does trust look like in a GVT?	*What changes, if any, occurred to trust within your GVT during the time you were together?*	
		In your observation what connection was there between the level of trust (or non-existence of trust) and the team dynamics of your team?	

Figure 7: Relationship of interview questions with RQs

The team leaders were interviewed between February and March 2018, nine months after they had all worked in GVTs during the 2017 globcom public relations project.

There were nine team leaders in the 2017 Globcom cohort and all were invited to particpate in this resesarch. All nine agreed to be participants with eight of the team leaders actually being involved in the research. One leader did not participate because, after initial email contact and despite multiple attempts at further communication, no further contact could be made by the researcher.

The aim was for all interviews to be audio in format but whilst the interviewees who participated in written interviews were keen to be involved, their involvement via audio format was not possible. With multiple time zones being a factor, arranging times that an audio interview could be undertaken did not always work. A couple of the interviewees expressed their preference for a written interview and whilst audio was preferred for the research, having data from all the interviewees was considered more important. Therefore, half of the team leaders participated in an audio interview with the researcher over Skype or through Facebook Messenger. The remaining four participated through written interviews via email. All participants answered the same questions. [1]

The interviews that were conducted via Skype or Facebook Messenger took place over a thirty to forty minute duration. Whilst all participants were asked the same interview questions listed in Figure 7, the audio interviews conducted were unstructured so further open-ended clarification questions were asked (e.g. 'just to expand on that definition, are there certain ways that you see trust occurring?'; '"How did it, how did that work? Do you think it worked?'; 'Can you sort of expand on that a little bit?') with the aim of encouraging participants to go deeper in their reflections and answers.

Once data gathering had been completed, all audio interviews were transcribed. The data was then merged together according to the interview questions asked and each response was given a code. For example, interview question 1 was given the code Q1 and the responses were coded A1 = Answer 1, A2 = Answer 2. After all answers were grouped together under each interview question, the researcher began the data analysis, looking for key words and phrases, and comparing answers to reveal if those key phrases occurred across all answers, thereby highlighting a theme.

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[1] NOTE: In reporting these results the researcher has sought to make all language gender neutral as part of an attempt to keep participants and those they may mention anonymous. Therefore when directly quoting a participant, any gender-specific language has been changed to a gender-neutral equivalent.

For each interview question, the open coding method (Gray, 2018) was employed where recurrent concepts and words were identified to draw out themes within the data. Recurrent themes were grouped into categories - defined by Gray (2018) as 'a classification of concepts' (p. 695) – and when new instances of a category occured it was 'compared with previous instances' (Gray, 2018, p. 696) to make sure there was a consistency in the pattern. These patterns or themes were reviewed constantly to ensure "the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). Having explained the process, we turn now to the results themselves.

4.1 Trust expectations

The first interview question asked team leaders about their perceptions of how trust in a FtF team works. This interview question aimed to gain a baseline of a FtF team and to compare that with a GVT.

The second interview question asked the leaders to reflect on their initial expectation of working in a GVT prior to the commencement of the Globcom project. This question asked team leaders to recall their perceptions of trust in a GVT, that is how they expected it to be manifested.

Both of these questions can be considered as retrospective reflection (Konradt & Hoch, 2007), asking the team leaders to remember back to their perceptions before they had started to participate in a GVT.

It is important to note that the team leaders had already worked in a GVT at the time of these questions and therefore their recall may have been influenced by their experience.

Their answers showed that team leaders had different expectations on how trust would appear within FtF teams and in a GVT. A clear division between the team leader and the perceived team member responsibilities became apparent. In addition, team leaders defined trust as associated with either actions or emotions.

FtF teams:

Regarding working within a FtF team, half the team leaders believe the responsibility to develop trust within a FtF team was the sole responsibility of the **team leader** as reflect in some of their responses:

> A2: *"you do not have to control what someone did"*
>
> A5: *"I can rely on someone without second thoughts"*
>
> A7: *"putting my faith into someone"*
>
> A8: *"you can rely on someone no matter the terms and the situation"*

The other half of the team leaders said that the responsibility to develop trust within a FtF team was the responsibility of all the **team members**, e.g.,

> A1: *"connection between two people"*
>
> A6: *mutual agreement"*
>
> A3: *"somebody is reliable"*
>
> A6: *"respect each other"*

GVTs:

In contrast, all the team leaders stated that they expected the team leader to take sole responsibility for the development of team trust. The following answers reply to this question from the perspective of a leader e.g.,

> A7: *"I can put my faith in them"*
>
> A5: *"I figured who are reliable workers"*
>
> A6: *" you give them a chance to prove themselves and that you believe they will deliver what they promise."*
>
> A1: *"it was scary, the fact that you don't know who you are going to work with, it's difficult … you don't know if the other ones are going to put the same motivation and effort in."*

This difference between the responsibilities of team leaders and team members in both FtF and GVTs created a category of leader versus team member. This category creation fits with the definition that categories are a 'classification of concepts' (p. 695) as defined by Gray (2018).

FtF teams:

When team leaders were asked how trust appeared in FtF teams, six leaders perceived it as an emotion and two leaders described trust as an action, e.g.,

> A1: *"the reliance on the goodness or ability of another person … based in confidence."*
>
> A5: *"if I can rely on somebody without second thoughts."*
>
> A7: *"putting my faith in somebody else and hoping that they would do something with the best of intentions with my faith."*

Two team leaders described trust in action terms, e.g.,

> A2: *"you do not have to control what someone did or how someone did something."*
>
> A3: *"the ability to depend on that thing or person to perform or behave how you would expect."*

GVTs

Conversely, when asked about their perceptions of a potential GVT (team leaders were asked to recall their perception of trust before working in a GVT) all team leaders described trust in a GVT as being connected to action. Thus, A2 links loss of trust to a member's non-adherence to a deadline, as expressed in the following comment:

> A2: *"if a team member says they will do the task until a defined date, and then the work is not done on this day, one quickly loses trust in this team member."*

A4's and A6's responses further reflects the connection between trust and a team members' degree of dedication and commitment to the work, saying that in a team everyone should want to submit the best work they can,

> A4: *"having a group of people who work well together, and you are able to rely on them to get the work done to the best of their ability."*
>
> A6: *"a chance to prove themselves and that you believe they will deliver what they promise."*

This difference between what trust looked like in both FtF and GVTs created a category of emotion versus action.

Results from the first RQ were divided into two categories. Categories are a 'classification of concepts' (p. 695) as defined by Gray (2018). The two categories formed from the team leaders' responses were:
- Team leader versus team
- Trust described as either an action or a feeling

4.2 Results of experience

The second research question attempted to discover the team leaders' actual experience in the GVTs they led. This question was addressed by three interview questions that were exploratory regarding the importance of trust, team leaders' experience of trust with individuals, the development of trust, as well as trust and team dynamics:

1. *Was trust important or unimportant within your GVT and how did you decide to extend trust to team members?*
2. *What changes, if any, occurred to trust within your GVT during the time you were together?*
3. *In your observation what connection was there between the level of trust (or non-existence of trust) and the team dynamics of your team?*

4.2.1 The importance of extending trust

Overall, the results show that all team leaders saw trust as important. The following quotes from the leaders show this and show that the leaders felt extending trust played an essential role:

> A1: *"the key to everything was to trust everyone."*
> A4: *"trust played a massive part during the Globcom project."*
> A7: *"trust is the main principle of something like this."*
> A2: *"in our team trust was very important."*

A3: "I believe that the ability to invest in individuals as part of a global team is wholly important."

A5: "it was important for me."

A6: "trust was very important."

A8: "it was actually very important."

In addition to team leaders viewing trust as important, the results also showed that team leaders believed that trust was related to an individual's **actions.** Therefore, leaders would extend trust to more productive individuals and have reduced trust of less productive individuals.

For example, on extending trust to more productive individuals, one leader commented that:

A8: "I started to see who I could trust and who I can assign the more important tasks … and in the end I had like four people who I know I could trust."

Another leader also commented on extending trust to more reliable people, where people performed the tasks they said they would:

*A6: "You had to know which people you could rely on and you could trust to perform alongside you and commit with you to completing the projec*t."

A6: "trusted people more when they did what they promised, or they were committed and attended meetings or, as a team we asked them to do something and they delivered. That built the trust."

For one leader task completion was fundamental to their trust of a team member:

A3: "Completion of tasks like these were the main factor that affected my ability to trust and those that initially stood out were very reliable in this regard."

When referring to reducing trust of unproductive individuals, one leader said

A2: "*I lost trust in those members who did not do their tasks or did them wrong."*

Before adding that lack of response also impacted on trust:

A2: "lost trust in those team members who were not available for days and did not answer any email or WhatsApp messages."

A second leader observed that for them participation was linked to trust:

A6 "you can't really build that trust if you don't at least participate."

While a third leader mentioned the significance of time for trusting people

A7: "You don't have time to waste on those that aren't invested."

4.2.2 Trust does not remain static

Question 2: *"What changes, if any, occurred to trust within your GVT during the time you were together?"*

All leaders said that trust did change during the time that the teams were working together.

A1: "Of course it changed, the more you 'know' someone, the relationship changes."

A2: "Trust definitely developed in the team, especially when members worked together in sub-teams and got to know each other better."

A4: "The level of trust did change throughout the project."

A8: "I think in that aspect trust changed with time."

Team leaders changed their levels of trust depending on the level of the involvement of their team members, as this leader stated:

A7: "It was basically a filtration system. Over time those that were invested and were responsible, that showed that they were actually doing their projects, that had great communication skills, I began to rely on them more."

Another leader entered into a GVT with expectations of trusting most team members:

A8: "In the beginning I thought I could trust more people but with time I saw that really, I only could trust those three or four people that really stick around."

Reducing which team members they could trust consistently across the time their GVT was together was highlighted by this leader as being a way trust changed in their team.

> A7: "We found a lot of people, just in the beginning, were like social loafers or group loafers. They just were on the sidelines not really doing anything, they were extra weight."

> A7: "Those that are invested are going to be the ones that are going to be motivated and carry out the jobs and the duties and be responsible members and thase that are not ... We just don't pay attention to them or we just asked them to leave or to not really bother us."

4.2.3 Trust and the team

"In your observation what connection was there between the level of trust (or non-existence of trust) and the team dynamics of your team?"

All team leaders highlighted that there was a correlation between trust and team dynamics which affected team performance. For example, one leader talked about the use of team norms or rules in their team. They said:

> A6: "one thing my deputy was really good on was setting the team rules and that was another way where we said as a team that we should be very open with each other, we should respect each other and we should trust each other because the only way that, as a team, we were going to get this done is if we did trust each other."

This leader also commented:

> A6: "It helped because it meant that everyone saw it as the same page and everyone saw that 'ok, this is what's expected of me' and then you know this is what's not."

They went on to say that they were fortunate that most of the team followed those rules which resulted in a greater trust:

A6: "I did certainly trust them more as they showed that they abided by the general practices of respect and understanding and being fair and all those kind of principles."

This leader also noted that

A6: "A lot of the trust I tried to build was through actual friendship … we were actually people that genuinely cared about each other and genuinely wanted to speak to each other and be friendly … but the only way … that we're going to succeed when it's crunch time is if we're in this together and that we all care about each other and that we all wanted the same thing."

Another leader observed that they thought

A4: "There was a good connection with those who I trusted throughout the project. We were able to get things done and work together well as a team."

A third leader noted that

A7: "there was a warmth when people started doing their work. When people started seeing growth, they started seeing progress, it felt better. The team got warmer, people were friendly, people were happier."

This leader was from a team that had a deposed leader[*] (Gordon, 2017) and noted:

"I was actually the deputy leader and then I just became the higher global leader because the leader of my group had literally just stopped replying to messages, they had just stopped participating in the project … they were no longer a reliable person that we could put our trust and faith in … when your leader drops out the morale of the entire team is going to lower as well … we all have this common difficulty that was a form of empowerment in a way. I recognised that I needed them [the team] and they also recognised that they needed me in order to carry out this commonality that we shared which was the completion of this project. So, it was that stress and difficulty which further

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[*] A deposed leader is one who has been overthrown by the team. Normally this occurs when the team feel that the leader is not guiding the team within the parameters of what is expected. As (Gordon, 2017) states, "A leader needs to be consistently present and engaged through all the stages and even in the last stage" (p. 195).

created better relationships between us … I believe that further strengthened our working ties and relationships with each other."

This leader also mentioned how a deposed leader impacted on trust within their team and dynamics:

A7: "*Our team dynamic was, you know, collectively we were stressed. We were anxious. We all wanted to get this done.*"

A7: "*... No time left. No time to waste. We were so behind, so many things were happening, so little team members, so little dynamic, so few people doing their work.*"

4.3 Results of reflection

Would you do anything differently [to build trust] if you were to lead another GVT?

This question focused on getting the team leaders to reflect on their experience and discuss what they would have done differently knowing how trust was evident in a GVT. Of the eight leaders who participated in the research, seven answered this question. Five of those team leaders agreed they would do things differently, one team leader said they would lead in the same way and another was unsure.

4.3.1 It's not what you know it's who you know

The five team leaders who agreed they would do things differently (and the one who was unsure) stated they would improve their relations with team members with all six mentioning that knowing the members would be an important thing to focus on.

One leader suggested:

A2: "*I would contact more members in private … to learn more about them.*"

A second leader said:

A6: "*Getting to know each other really. You can't form as a team unless you know who's in your team, so getting to know each other, knowing what your strengths and weaknesses of your team members are.*"

While a third suggested everyone in the team getting to know each other:

> *A7: "A group conversation or some sort of way to get to know each other was something that needed to happen … Humans are all the same. They all are social creatures."*

One leader suggested they would give more autonomy to team members, while another mentioned they would focus less on the task and have stronger relationships at the beginning:

> *A3: "try and develop some friendly atmosphere in the initial stages of the project, initially focusing less on the work and more on getting to know one another."*

4.3.2 Dropping players

Two mentioned they would filter out those they did not trust, e.g., those who didn't care. One of those two leaders described it as:

> *A7: "I spent too much time wasted on people, on slackers that didn't care and didn't spend enough time on those that actually did."*

The other leader who mentioned filtering people out said that they would do this because:

> *A8: "I lost a lot of time in the beginning trying to get everyone on board and really worried about not leaving anyone on the outside."*

4.3.3 Roles and formation

Of the seven team leaders who responded, two highlighted the importance of delegation and having a healthy structure for the team. One of those two leaders said:

> *A8: "I didn't want to come across as a bossy person … that I sort of left out the part of the leadership where you really have to impose yourself and just know that you have to get things done."*

The other leader highlighted delegation:

> A5: *"I would delegate more tasks … not only [to] make me have a nicer life because I wouldn't feel restrained by work, but also it would give the participants a feeling of autonomy and that their contribution actually matters."*

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the team leaders of the 2017 Globcom cohort shared a number of observations across three areas: expectation; experience; and reflection.

Their answers showed that team leaders have different expectations on how trust would work within a FtF team and how trust would work within a GVT. Half the team leaders said that the responsibility to develop trust within a FtF team was the sole responsibility of the team leader. Half the team leaders said that the responsibility to develop trust within a FtF team was the responsibility of all the team members.

However, all the team leaders stated that the responsibility to develop trust within a GVT was the sole responsibility of the team leader.

- The leaders were equally divided about the development of trust within a FtF team being the responsibility of the team or the leader, but were unanimous in their thoughts that the leader of a GVT was responsible for the development of trust.
- Leaders said that trust within a FtF team was either related to action or a feeling but all saying that trust within a GVT was connected to action.

The leaders' experience of working within a GVT environment showed three key themes:

- Trust was important.
- Trust was related to an individual's actions.
- Leaders would extend trust to a more productive individuals and conversely reduce trust of unproductive individuals.

Upon reflecting on their actual experience of leading a GVT, the majority of the leaders said they would lead differently if given the chance to lead another GVT with relationship improvement within the team being referred to the most.

We turn now to discussing these findings and how they relate to the current literature and theories.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This research has sought to investigate what the perceptions that leaders of GVTs have of the role that trust plays within those teams. It has sought to do this through answering the following questions:

1. What was the leader's perceptions of trust prior to their experience in a GVT?

   This question relates to the expectations leaders had of how trust might operate in a GVT based on their experiences of trust within a FtF team as well as based on how they defined trust in a general sense.

2. What was the team leader's actual experience of trust in a GVT?

   This question relates to the actual experience leaders had and reported of how trust revealed itself in a GVT and how it operated. Included in this was whether a leader felt trust was an important or unimportant feature of their team.

3. How can trust be established in a GVT?

   This question relates to the reflections provided by the leaders of their experience within a GVT and whether there would be ways that they would do differently or seek to cultivate around the funcation of team trust.

The current study has presented team leaders' thoughts and observations on the role of trust with regard to their expectations; experiences and reflections on how it influenced team dynamics. How those observations compare to the current literature around trust and GVTs is the focus of this chapter.

5.1 Trust perceptions

Trust can be viewed as a concept with a dynamic trait. It is seen as greater than just an economic equation. However, rather than dismissing that economic idea of trust, the dynamism of trust encompasses the economic view as a valid part of a wider definition of trust (Dunning et al., 2012). By broadening the analysis of trust beyond a

simple economic definition, trust can be seen as equally economical, emotional and social (DeSteno, 2014a, 2014b; DeSteno et al., 2012; Dunning et al., 2012). The research undertaken in this paper highlights that leaders' concepts of trust are consistent with a dynamic view of trust. When asked about their definitions of what trust looks like generically, the leaders referred to it as either an emotional or an economical act. By stating that they can put their faith in someone, leaders in this research re-enforce the idea that trust is connected to anticipated emotions (Dunning et al., 2012). Regardless of whether the leaders saw trust as the responsibility of a leader or the team members, all of them drew on emotional aspects of trust. They talked about respecting one another, of placing faith in another person, relying on others without question. All of these comments imply anticipated emotions, or "how they think they will feel once they know how their partner has responded and the outcome of their decision is known" (Dunning et al., 2012, p. 690). These comments of faith, reliance, and respect are in line with both Dunning et al. (2012) and DeSteno (2014b), who observe that our emphasis on the economic nature of trust is disproportionate to the reality.

Despite classification of trust and its components, the data gathered in this study shows that trust is just as connected to gut feelings as it is related to a rational calculation made from a cost benefit evaluation. This raises a number of questions that should be explored. Does this override more quantitative aspects of trust? If trust is purely qualitative, how can an appropriate team leader be chosen and by whom? What about a deposed leader? Under whose power is this ratified and could this mean one could be deposed simply because one is not liked by the rest of the team? All of the team leaders who participated in this study were selected by the other team members (either as team leaders or deputy team leaders) and the question of how they were selected was not considered by this research. This is something that would be worthwhile researching further.

Equally, trust is a social act and this current study confirms that. Trust is connected to the social groupings we find ourselves in and creates greater cooperation and fairness (DeSteno, 2014a; Dunning et al., 2012; Henrich et al., 2010). The findings of this research are consistent with this, particularly around the leader's views about the trust development within FtF teams. Leaders talked about reliance, connection,

mutuality, and respecting one another. All of these terms are related to the concept of cooperation and fairness. DeSteno (2014b) and Dunning et al. (2012) also highlight the sending of signals to convince one another of our trustworthiness. DeSteno (2014b) in particular highlights that this signalling allows for a greater willingness to trust someone who is more confident-looking. The views of the leaders in this research are consistent with this. Leaders sought to rely on another regardless of the situation and put their faith in someone with the hope that the other will not violate that trust. Both these concepts suggest a need for the leaders to perceive trustworthiness in their team members. The leaders' use of words (reliance, connection, mutuality, respect) also imply a need to develop a social relationship that will be ongoing. Whilst trust can ebb and flow in any relationship and is highly dependent on the context (DeSteno, 2014b), the comments from the leaders did not specifically highlight this in their definitions or understandings of trust.

One interesting finding is that, while the leaders' views of what trust comprises of is generically consistent with the concept that trust is multi-dimensional (DeSteno, 2014a, 2014b; DeSteno et al., 2012; Dunning et al., 2012), when responding to the question of what trust would look like in a GVT, all the leaders focussed solely on the economical traits of trust. This is in complete contrast to how the leaders all defined trust as highlighted above and as the likes of DeSteno (2014b) and Dunning et al. (2012) define it. However, these perceptions of trust within GVTs are completely consistent with the wider GVT literature (Brahm & Kunze, 2012; Breuer et al., 2016; Ford et al., 2017; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Jarvenpaa et al., 2004) and consistent with the definition outlined by Mayer et al. (1995) of trust being one party willing to be vulnerable to another with the expectation that the vulnerability will be reciprocated. This expectation is key to the economic model of trust and it is clear from the leaders' comments that they expected a reciprocity of trust to occur. As one leader put it, they gave their team members *"... A chance to prove themselves"* with the expectation that the team member would deliver on their promise. These expected trusting actions are mutually beneficial to all parties and are central to the foundation of team trust (Pillutla et al., 2003).

Another interesting finding from this study was the emergence from the data of the negative ramifications of the economic trust equation. Leaders spoke of trust being

withdrawn if mutually agreed upon tasks where not delivered on time. With the non-delivery of tasks on time, trusting actions are damaged and the groundwork for a growing profitable cycle of reciprocity and trust is broken. This aligns with the conclusions of Pillutla et al. (2003), who saw that "the dynamics of trust and reciprocity pose serious interpersonal dilemmas with regard to initial trust signals" (p. 454). In other words, if a leader can only extend small trusting acts to their team, the likelihood is that that trust being reciprocated is reduced. Conversely, if the leader undertakes a large act of trust, they are highly vulnerable. If that trust is then broken, then the likelihood of a further large act of trust is minimised.

The leaders' generic perceptions of trust in relation to FtF teams and their perceptions of trust within a GVT revealed a dichotomy in their understanding of trust within the two types of teams. The dichotomy that emerged in this research is consistent with other GVT literature that highlight differences between FtF teams and virtual ones (Branson et al., 2008; Hearn, Turley, & Rainwater, 2017; Malhotra et al., 2007; O'Neill et al., 2016; Purvanova & Bono, 2009; Warkentin et al., 1997). On the surface, this dichotomy appears to suggest that knowledge of the working within GVTs is still in its infancy and that greater understanding is still required. This difference appears to fall along lines of what has already been known or experienced (in this case FtF teamwork) and what is yet to be experienced (virtual teamwork).

Whilst the perceptions of trust within a GVT in this research was conveyed through retrospective reflection, so that the leaders' experiences within a GVT may have affected the leaders' thoughts and memories, this dichotomy is still worth researching. Can trust in a GVT be anything other than economic in nature? Perceptions are also important to research around trust and GVTs as our experiences can be influenced by our perceptions. Research conducted by Pillutla et al. (2003) into trust and reciprocity highlight that "recipients' perceptions of trusting acts may create a difficult dilemma for potential trustors" (p. 453). The data suggests that this idea of perception influences how people experience GVTs and the need to trust within those teams. Further research into this is required.

5.2 Experiencing trust in a GVT

With respect to the second research question of how team leaders experienced trust within GVTs, three ways in which trust plays an important part in those GVTs emerged from the data: task; time; and team. All three play an important part in how a team operates and ultimately leads to the success or failure of a team. This research proposes the Trust Triangle, as illustrated in Figure 8, as a way of seeing the way that trust operates with these three aspects.
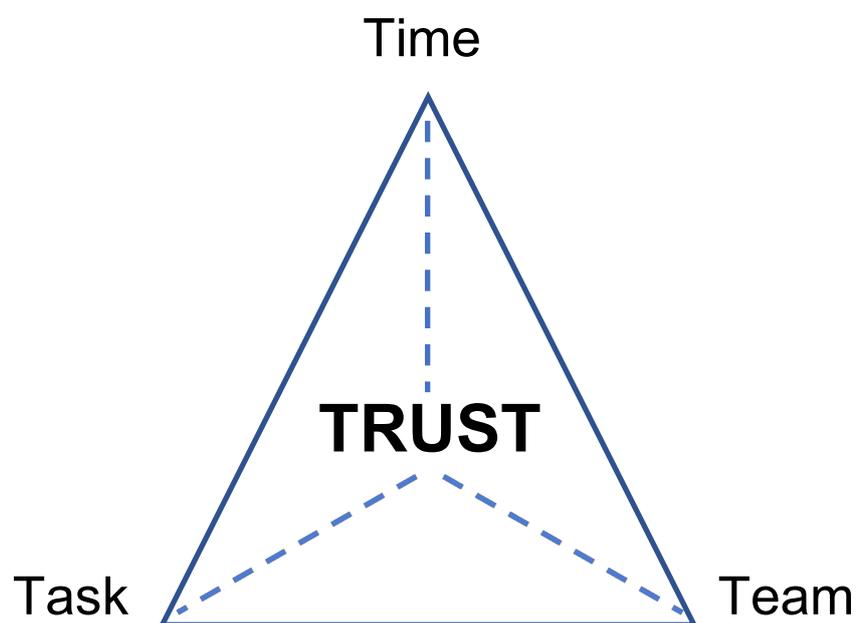
Figure 8: The Trust Triangle

We will now look at which aspects play what role based on the results of this research focusing first on task, then time and finishing with the team and specifically the dynamics within and functions of the team.

5.2.1 The importance of extending trust

A number of studies investigated trust as an aspect of GVTs with the aim of understanding how important it is to the way GVTs work (Gilson et al., 2015; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). The way that trust is built within a GVT has been seen as a complex task due to the geographical spread of team members, which can lead

to vagueness and uncertainty and negatively affect how the team functions (Alsharo, Gregg, & Ramirez, 2017; Gilson et al., 2015; Gordon, 2017). Research has shown that the action of trust precedes trust as well as follows it (Brahm & Kunze, 2012; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). In other words trust is a recursive circle where trust must be given and received.

In regard to this aspect of GVTs, the findings of this research confirm the idea that trust is important in GVTs and that for trust to be received it has to be given. The leaders stated that trust was very important for them as leaders, and that the extension of their trust was related to an individual's actions. The leaders stated that they extended trust to more productive individuals and reduced trust of individuals who were less productive.

This study also confirmed the theory of trust playing an economic role in GVTs. The economic role of trust is particularly evident in leaders' comments about extending and removing trust based on an individual's actions. The adoption of the definiton of trust proposed by Mayer et al. (1995) within GVT literature is confirmed by this research.

The vulnerability of one person to the actions of another founded on the assumption that an action important to the trustor will actually be performed by the trustee emerged from the data consistently, with leaders referring to the completion of tasks being the major contributing factor for leaders being able to trust their team members. Leaders also highlighted that the team members who stood out the most were the most reliable when it came to the completion of tasks. This confirms the findings of Brahm and Kunze (2012), whose research suggested that trust in a GVT allowed people to step outside of their comfort zones, thereby reducing uncertainty and allowing higher risk predilection, leading to greater team performance. This also confirms Breuer et al's (2016) conclusion:

> "... team trust was significantly related with both task and contextual performance of teams, in line with our theoretical rationale that team trust leads to higher risk-taking behaviours of team members, which in turn supports both team coordination and team cooperation" (p. 1157-58)

The results of this study also extends the literature around the economic role trust plays in GVTs by introducing the concept that trust is withdrawn, or removed, when the trustee does not perform the task expected of them by the leader. Leaders observed that they lost trust in people who did not perform tasks or who were unavailable without justification for periods of time and were not responding to communication. For the team leaders, trust was reduced when tasks went uncompleted or were completed incorrectly. This is summed up by one leader who stated "you can't really build that trust if you don't at least participate".

5.2.2 Trust doesn't remain static

With regard to the second aspect of time, swift trust has been considered an important aspect of GVTs in the literature (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Jarvenpaa et al., 2004; Sarker et al., 2011). The concept of swift trust was first proposed by the seminal work of Jarvenpaa et al. (1998). It refers to a situation where trust is high in the initial stages of a GVT. It provides a space where an allowance is created for cohesion, confidence and effectiveness at a time when many, if not all, of the GVT members are complete strangers. Swift trust helps a GVT overcome the initial stages of uncertainty and progress to the later trust stages of trust and performance (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013).

The results of this study indicate that the leaders had high trust of their team members initially but that the trust did not stay static during the span of time that the GVT was together. Leaders highlighted that trust developed, with one leader acknowledging that for them it was a case of "the more you know someone, the relationship changes". These comments suggest a deepening of trust within the team and that relationships within the team were strengthened as a result. This finding confirms the relationship between trust and time within the literature. The high level of trust that the leaders had of their team members initially can be explained by the Expectation Violation Theory (Burgoon, 1978) where the social norm of taking time to know someone is broken for the sake of expediency where time is a considerable challenge to overcome. This high level of trust also aligns with Gordon

(2017) observation that "team leaders highly value the participation in the early stages" (p. 193).

One interesting finding that stood out from the data was the amount of trust leakage that occurred within GVTs. The data highlighted that leaders lost interest quickly in team members who did not engage with the rest of the team, with one leader referring to this process as a filtration system, with the non-engaged members being filtered out as the numbers of active team members decreased. This leader's trust filtration system, as well as the other leaders referring to only really trusting a handful of people come the end of the teamwork, suggests that trust leakage is a natural part of virtual teamwork. Coupled with the references by leaders of tight deadlines, this finding suggests that deadlines and short time periods within which virtual teams have to work increases the likelihood of a trust filtration system and for trust leakage to be more pronounced.

The data also suggests that the weeding out of team members occurs around two filters: the investment of the individual to the team and project; and the responsibility of the individual. The application of this filtration process by the team leaders becomes evident from comments that suggest team members were ranked on their trustworthiness based on the level of their involvement. Were members actively involved? Did they have buy-in around the goals the team had set themselves? Were they doing the tasks assigned to them? Were they communicating well and in a timely manner? These questions around proficiency and competency link trust with both time and task.

A surprising link to this finding of trust leakage was the dismissive way that the leaders referred to individuals who had been filtered out of the sphere of the leaders' trust. Leaders referred to these individuals as social or group loafers, calling them extra weight. Those individuals were subsequently ignored or in some cases asked to leave the team or not bother those that remained in the circle of trust. One possible explanation for the apparent callous nature of this rejection is the deadlines and small windows of time that the teams faced to complete their projects. It also shows that emotion plays a role, regardless of how impartial a leader might attempt to be.

5.2.3 Trust and the team

The third aspect of the trust triangle is that of team dynamics. A number of studies have shown that trust plays an important and positive role in the effectiveness of GVTs (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999; Jarvenpaa et al., 2004; Sarker et al., 2011). Also important in GVTs is the ability for team leaders to have good social skills to facilitate the development of relationships with their team members (Mukherjee et al., 2012).

The results of the current research confirm the literature around the idea that trust has an important and positive effect on the dynamics of a GVT. All of the leaders involved in this research stated that a positive correlation between trust and team dynamics existed and that it affected the task performance of the team. The results also confirm the findings of Mukherjee et al. (2012) around the importance of a GVT leader to have good social skills. As highlighted in the results, one of the teams actively focused on creating and using team norms as a guideline for how the team interacted and functioned. These team norms, according to the leader, had a huge positive impact on the team, with all members knowing clearly what was expected of them in their interactions with each other. The explicit team rules played a significant part in the way that trust was exhibited in the team. This aligns with Crisp and Jarvenpaa (2013) finding that trust allows for team norms to emerge and operate. Their research showed that normative actions are significant for GVTs as they set the behavioural foundation that informs everyone how the team will act and sets the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour within the team. The results of how trust operated in the team whose leader specifically highlighted team norms confirms Crisp and Jarvenpaa (2013) findings. That leader further commented that trust in their team being built on friendship implying a deep level of trust. This is in line with Crisp and Jarvenpaa (2013) assertion that swift trust and normative behaviours are inherently linked and lead to higher levels of trust in the latter stages of the GVT. This team's experience of trust also aligns with Social Information Processing Theory where first impressions of people are formed, then tested, which deepened the relationship (Griffin et al., 2015; Walther & et al., 1994). However, this

team was the only team of the eight whose leaders were interviewed that explicitly engaged in normative behaviour in this way. More research on this is required.

In addition to the use of team norms as discussed above, this research highlighted another issue related to team dynamics which must be noted – that of contending with the scenario of a deposed leader (Gordon, 2017). One team had an original leader who stopped communicating with the remainder of the members. In order to get the team on track and finish the project that was required of them, the deputy leader was installed as the new leader, and it was this leader who participated in the research. Their comments on loss of trust in the original leader, the low morale of the team and the stress and anxiety this scenario created for the remaining team members all contributed to a challenging dynamic which their team had to overcome. This aligns with the research of O'Neill et al. (2016), who concluded that GVTs had worse experiences than FtF teams. It is also in line with Gordon (2017) finding that "the laissez-faire leaders are more likely to become deposed leaders and their deputy leaders the most likely to emerge as the new leaders" (p. 194). The leader who was interviewed for this research said of the original leader that 'they really meandered through their roles and duties until we realised that they had dropped out and that this was no longer a point of contact and no longer a point of leadership for us'. Gordon's (2017) findings highlight that, "the laissez-faire leader shows a low telepresence that affects leadership" (p. 194).

This research is also consistent with that of Gordon (2017), who further highlights that a team leader must be present and involved throughout the duration of the team project to prevent being deposed. Two things must be noted. The first is that although the original leader stopped participating and eventually dropped out, their actions are in line with a laissez-faire leader and if their actions continued it is highly probable that they would have been deposed. The second thing to note is that this was only one case and would require further research. However the effect of this scenario on the team was so significant it was worth noting here. Also of interest was how the experience of a deposed leader drew the remainder of the team together, heightening trust and reliance on one another to accomplish the task required of the team. Again it would be worth researching whether this is a norm in a deposed leader scenario.

5.3 Reflections of trust in a virtual team

Turning to the third research question of what team leaders thought was the potential for how trust could work within a GVT, the results continue along the three aspects highlighted in section 5.2 above: task; time; and team. The leaders' responses emphasise the way trust could potentially play a greater role in future GVTs.

5.3.1 It's not what you know it's who you know

As highlighted in section 5.1 on trust perceptions, trust is dynamic and multi-dimensional (DeSteno, 2014a, 2014b; DeSteno et al., 2012; Dunning et al., 2012). The reflections of the team leaders underline the importance of bringing social and emotional aspects of trust into GVTs and not only focus on the economic aspect. Their reflections show the team leaders would seek to improve relations with team members from the beginning if they led another GVT. One team leader noted that, as humans, we "all are social creatures". This aligns with the concept of Social Information Processing Theory, which assumes that affiliation is a human need that is present in all aspects of life. Given time, a relationship in a GVT can be more than just task-orientated and therefore be just as effective as in a FtF team. Joseph B. Walther (1996) advises that GVTs require more time for interaction as a way of overcoming the loss of social cues that are characteristic for face-to-face interactions, and the results of this present study draw this out.

The team leaders also emphasised that they would focus less on the task at the beginning. Instead, they would invest more on getting to know their team members in the early stages of team lifecycle. The emphasis on relationship rather than task would allow the team leaders to understand team members better and to know the strengths and weaknesses of individual team members. With people being fundamentally social by nature, as Mennecke et al. (2011) claim, relating to others is important to how we see ourselves. Engaging in a GVT environment does not reduce that or neglect it. At the very least, the literature and the data from this present study indicate that social interaction becomes key to strengthening the team

dynamics through the role that trust plays. This emphasis on knowing one another online fits with Embodied Social Presence Theory. Mennecke et al. (2011) theorise that a greater engagement and task performance follows when embodied social presence occurs. The reflections of the team leaders highlight that this is a strong possibility in GVTs if the focus on the emotional and social aspects of trust are emphasised at the beginning of the team lifecycle. It is possible, therefore, to hypothesise that this emphasis will save time at the beginning and allow team leaders to have a better understanding of how to delegate effectively and earlier.

Commitment-Trust Theory is also emphasised in the data of this current study. The basis of the theory is that, with both trust and commitment present in a relationship, traits like ability, productivity, and effectiveness are promoted (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) through knowledge sharing. The team leaders in this current study emphasised the need to improve relationships within GVTs for effectiveness to take place. This also highlights the significance of trust within GVTs and shows that GVTs are more effective if the relationships within the team are strong with a high level of commitment between members. The idea of learning about the different team members also supports the research of Alsharo et al. (2017), which concluded that "knowledge sharing has a signifcant influence on both trust and collaboration in virtual team settings" (p. 485). This finding suggests that GVT leaders should invest time and effort into learning who makes up their team at the beginning of the team lifecycle and that this investment will have positive ramifications for the entire lifecycle of the GVT.

5.3.2 Dropping players

Expectation of team members is an important part of the economic aspect of trust. The definition of trust by Mayer et al. (1995), which is often used in GVT literature (Brahm & Kunze, 2012; Breuer et al., 2016; Ford et al., 2017; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Jarvenpaa et al., 2004), emphasises the vunerability of one party over another as they expect that party to perform a certain action. When that expectation is not met a violation has occurred which will affect communication outcomes (Burgoon, 1978). The results of this present study showcase how negative expectation violations can

have a dramatic communications effect. In reflecting on what they would do differently, some of the leaders referred to rejecting non-participants earlier in the team lifecycle. Time wasted on non-participants or trying to have all team members on board with the project were reasons given for embracing this early lifecycle trust filtration.

Ford et al. (2017) postulate that the team leader is the one person who knows the most about what is going on in the GVT. The team leader is the task master, the key communicator, and "the visible and effective cheerleader for both team and team members" (p. 32). Jaakson et al. (2019) conclude that "managing [G]VTs should concentrate on team actions and acheiving small quick wins at least as much as dealing with trust, specifically" (p. 42). This finding of dropping inactive members early suggests support for both Ford et al. (2017) and Jaakson et al. (2019). With leaders taking on so much in a GVT there is little time for team leader to spend on inactive members, the "loafers" as one leader put it. Hence the idea of filtering those inactive members out makes sense and could possibly strengthen the cohension and trust within a team. In addition to that, leaders are looking for members who do their tasks efficiently and effectively and trusting those team members over any other party. The filtering out of inactive members makes this process of concentrating on team actions and achieving wins early regardless of size easier and could lead to faster team efficiency and effectiveness.

5.3.3 Roles and formation

The results of this study have a significant implication for both research and practice when it comes to the area of team roles and team formation. For research, these results suggest new insights regarding early delegation of tasks being a catalyst for swift trust to transition into deeper, stronger trust, which in turn positively affects team performance. This requires further research to better understand how this can work in GVTs. For practice, the results highlight the importance for team leaders to have a clear understanding of how an individual team member's strengths can best serve the mission of the team and how an individual's weaknesses could hamper the GVT's activities.

In the reflection of their experience leaders highlighted the importance of delegation and healthy team structure for GVTs. The delegation of more tasks highlights that "it is not just the team 'star' who determines the effect of trust in the team, rather, the overal pool of resources in the team matter" (Jaakson et al., 2019, p. 41). The sum of individual performances are what impacts the team result and delegation is a key contributing factor to distributing tasks, with the team leader filling the role of task manager: articulating the group mission; defining task goals and requirements; giving feedback on performance and progress; holding the team as a whole, and as individuals, accountable (Ford et al., 2017). As Jaakson et al. (2019) state, "leaders need to make sure that once a [G]VT is formed, a consistently high level of activity should be maintained" (p. 40). Delegation is a key component for this to happen and as the results of this research suggest, delegation could create a sense of autonomy and ownership within the team. The data also suggests that, by having tasks delegated to them, team members would feel that their efforts and contirbutions actually mattered to the overall goals and mission of the GVT.

5.4 Summary of discussion

A number of findings have emerged through this research. Before we move on to looking at the limitations of this current study and opportunities for further research, the findings are summarised here.

1. In a FtF team trust is seen as either the responsibility of the team leader or the team members. Trust within the team is expected to be dynamic and multi-dimensional with three key aspects coming through:

    a. Trust is economic in nature (based on actions and tasks)
    b. Trust is emotional
    c. Trust is social

    However, in GVTs, trust is seen to be the responsibility of the team leader alone and is expected to be only economical i.e. connected to action and task.

This dicotomy confirms the current literature that FtF teams are different from GVTs.

2. Trust is important for GVTs and affects three aspects which make up the Trust Triangle:

    a. Trust is affected by task
    b. Trust is affected by time
    c. Trust affects team dynamics

The team leaders initially extend trust and whether that trust continues is based on the actions of the team members. If a team member is active within the GVT and completes tasks assigned to them, the team leader continues to trust them. However, the reverse is also true and equally important. Inactivity and failure to complete tasks will see trust removed and most likely not reinstated. Continual inactivity will result in the rejection of a team member. In other words, trust grows or shrinks over time and the team leader will filter out loafers.

Trust also impacts on team dynamics. Those team members who the leader trusts the most benefit from a strong trust relationship. The creation of team norms is a valid and important influence on trust development within a GVT and allows the team to have deeper levels of trust as the team progresses through the GVT lifecycle.

A deposed leader creates a heightened level of stress and anxiety within a GVT. A new leader must step up quickly to fill the vacuum left by the deposed leader. However, surprisingly, having a deposed leader can result in a stronger, more united team with trust going deeper quickly as the team pulls together to complete the tasks required of it.

3. Leaders recognised that trust does play an important part in GVTs and emphasised the need to focus on building relationships with their team members in the early stages of the GVT lifecycle. This allows for deeper knowledge of individuals, including their strengths and weaknesses. It also allows for more

effective delegation, which can result in a more effective team. Inactive and nonchalant team members can be dropped quicker, allowing for a more cohesive team with deeper levels of trust sooner.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, limitations and implications

This study set out to better understand the perceptions a leader has of trust and the role trust can play in GVTs. It attempted to discover these perceptions through interviewing leaders of GVTs who had participated in the international "problem-based learning project" (Gordon, 2017, p. 53) known as the Globcom project. Participants of the Globcom project are brought together from around the globe to create "a competitive and creative communications solution that could be applied to the current world market, developed under real-time challenges" (Gordon, 2017, p. 53).

Through interviewing leaders and then applying a thematic textual analysis to those interviews, this study identified a number of key findings that are important for both academic and practical applications and have implications for future studies.

Firstly, leaders conceptualise trust in a GVT and trust within a FtF team differently. In a FtF team, trust is the responsibility of everyone in the team and can be dynamic and multi-dimensional. However, in GVTs trust is expected to be the sole responsibility of the team leader and is one-dimensional in that it is expected to only be economic in nature.

Trust is seen as important in GVTs and the Trust Triangle highlights the three aspects of trust in a GVT of task, time and team. For GVTs the continuation of trust is contingent on the actions of the member and can be positive if the member is active or negative if the member fails to be active.

Over time trust of a member deepens or is damaged with those inactive team members eventually being rejected by the leader while the member who is active benefits from a strong trust relationship.

Team norms came through this study as an important way for trust to deepen but interestingly a deposed leader, although initially potentially damaging to the team,

can actually draw the remaining members together and create a unity that would be unlikely if the leader had not been deposed.

Upon reflection, team leaders acknowledged how important trust was in their GVTs and wanted to focus on relationship building in the early stages of the project if given another chance of leading a GVT.

6.1 Limitations of this study

This study has a major advantage over previous studies into trust in GVTs since the author participated in the Globcom project with all of the team leaders interviewed. Because of that unique and important inside knowledge, the author was highly trusted by the participants and led to some interesting insights from the team leaders that may not have emerged if the researcher was someone who was observing from a position of priviledge or from a position of distance (ie someone not involved in the Globcom project observing from the outside).

However, a number of limitations still remain and need to be considered. Firstly, this study was conducted using students who participated in a global public relations pedagogical project Globcom. Despite teams within Globcom being designed to be "organised in the same way as they would be in a global public relations consultancy" (Gordon, 2017, p. 57), the participants are not employees and as Gordon (2017) notes in their research, this means the students are not subject to the same responsibilities, expectations and pressures that are inherent in the industry. This limitation also appears in other research in this field (Alsharo et al., 2017; Davison et al., 2017; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Penarroja et al., 2015). However, as Davison et al. (2017) argue, GVTs made up of students do make for "suitable exemplars" (p. 318) and much can be learned from the student led and run teams.

Secondly, as highlighted by Jaakson et al. (2019), team leadership emerged in the early stages of the project and was decided by the students within the team. This made it impossible to gather the perceptions of team leaders prior to their involvement in a GVT and why retrospective reflection was necessary. Given that the

current literature has shown that leadership is significant and important for the performance of GVTs and how trust operates in GVTs, this limitation should be taken into account.

Thirdly, this study incorporated the student cohort of only one year of the Globcom project, meaning that the opportunities for engagement with leaders was limited to the number of team leaders within that year. Further research into leaders' perceptions of trust within GVTs should seek to engage with a multitude of leaders across a number of years.

Finally, this study was conducted amongst leaders of temporarily formed, or ad-hoc, teams. The teams were brought together for a specific task and disbanded as soon as the task was completed. Further research into this topic should take this into account and seek to compare leader's perceptions of trust within an ad-hoc team and the same perceptions of trust of a leader whose GVT has had a longer duration.

6.2 Further Research & Practical Implications

This study opens up avenues and possibilities for further research. Firstly, due to the exploratory nature of this study, further research should be conducted in a longitudinal manner over a number of years. The question to answer in a longitudinal study is whether the perceptions of the leaders outlined in this paper are unique to the leaders interviewed or whether their perceptions are emblematic of GVT leadership. Secondly, further work could investigate whether trust can ever be more than just economic or whether the virtual distance means that trust in GVTs will remain inherently based on actions and tasks. It would also be interesting to see what impact culture or gender has on trust within a GVT and how leaders perceive it. Fourthly, despite all the classifications of trust and components, does trust simply get reduced to some 'gut feeling'? How does one measure the cost-benefit in the long run if this is the case? Finally, as technology advances and develops, it would be important to explore whether improvements in technology have an impact on how trust operates in a GVT. Are the challenges of trust within GVTs going to remain or, as technology develops, could GVTs become more and more like a FtF team?

In addition to the possibilities of future research, this study suggests some practical implications for anyone involved in GVTs. Greater efforts are required to ensure that trust negotiation between leader and team member happens early on in the project stages. The emphasis on relationship building and the creation of team norms as the team comes together will ensure a clarity around function and team dynamics. It will give deeper knowledge to the leader of all the team members, including an individual's strengths and weaknesses which will enhance effective delegation and improve efficiency. Ensuring appropriate support for the team leader to accomplish this trust negotiation should be a priority for anyone involved in supervising or running GVTs.

A second broad implication is GVTs can not be seen as the same as FtF. GVTs are unique and should be treated as more than just a digital version of a FtF team. The number of challenges that a GVT and its leader need to overcome are not apparent in a FtF team. These challenges can have a major impact on how the GVT functions but the way trust is built in the team can play a significant role in overcoming those challenges.

Finally, another important implication is that a deposed leader need not mean that a GVT is destined to fail. If given the appropriate support, the remaining team members can be drawn together and greater unity can emerge. What must occur is that a new leader must emerge quickly who can provide that guidance and initiate that unity. This implication shows the importance of a deputy leader and highlights how important it is to provide support for that person stepping up into the vacuum created by the deposed leader.

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Appendix A: Ethics approval letter

AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology
D-88, WU406 Level 4 WU Building City Campus
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
Www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

27 November 2017
Averill Gordon
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Averill

Re Ethics Application: **17/426 Digital trust: Leader's insights into trust within global virtual teams**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 27 November 2020.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation then you are responsible for obtaining it. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

AUTEC Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, WU406 Level 4 WU Building City Campus
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
Www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz
Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: mikejbain@outlook.com

Appendix B: Tools

Participant Information Letter

Hello and greetings,

You may remember me from the Globcom symposium in Bangalore, India held earlier this year. It is hard to believe that it has been nearly six months since we were involved in the Globcom project. I'm sure that like me, Bangalore seems like it happened just last week.

I am contacting you to invite you to participate in some research I am doing for my thesis. I am currently studying for my Masters of Communication Studies at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in Auckland, New Zealand.

I plan on reflecting upon our experiences in Globcom and will focus on the area of trust and the importance it plays in team dynamics and teamwork. I am particularly interested in the experiences we had in team leadership. What made us, as leaders, trust some team members and not others? Was trust important in our individual teams?

As you were involved in the leadership of one of the teams in this year's cycle of Globcom, your insights and knowledge will be of great help in this research and will also help build the knowledge around Globcom for the lecturers and organisers to help improve and adapt the project.

I would greatly appreciate your involvement in this research and I ask only a small amount of your time (a total of one hour).

If you would like to participate in this research, please contact me to make an appointment for a Skype interview.

I will also need your consent. Included with this letter is a consent form where you give permission to me to involve you in the research and where you give permission for the interview to be video recorded. This recording is only going to be used for transcribing purposes and no video footage will be used in the findings.

There are two ways to give your consent. Firstly, you can print out the accompanying consent form, sign it, scan and then email it to me. Alternatively, and to make things easier, I can record your consent when we do the interview.

Also attached is an information sheet that will go into more details and answer questions you may have about the research.

I look forward to talking to you and hearing your insights and experiences of trust within global virtual teams and the role it played (or didn't play) in your team.

Thank you and regards,

Michael Bain
Master of Communications student & former 2017 Globcom participant

Participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:
31st October 2017

Project Title
Digital Trust: Leaders' impressions of trust within virtual teams

An Invitation

Hello, my name is Michael Bain and I am currently studying for my Masters of Communication Studies at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in Auckland, New Zealand. You may remember me from the globcom symposium in Bangalore, India earlier this year. I would like to invite you to participate in research I am doing for my Masters. I am researching the impressions of team leaders around the idea of trust within virtual teams, for example, how important is trust for team leaders, how does it develop, what makes you as a leader trust some team members and not others?

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to provide feedback on the issue of trust within virtual teams (using our experiences in globcom as a study), as well as give guidance on areas for improvement. Both of these areas will ensure long term sustainability. The research will also improve the information on virtual teams for both the PR industry and the academic context. Finally, the research will extend the Public Relations body of knowledge. As well as providing the data for the completion of my Masters thesis, the information you supply may contribute to presentations I give on virtual teams, particularly at the globcom Symposium in 2018. It may also contribute to a journal article on the subject of virtual teams.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You were identified and are being invited to participate in this research because you were either a team leader or a deputy team leader in the 2017 cycle of globcom. Because the focus of my research is on the impressions you as leaders had of trust and virtual teams, you are part of a small group of participants. I obtained your contact details through our time at globcom.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible. If you are willing to participate in this research I will need you to complete and return the accompanying Consent Form. Please keep a copy for yourself.

What will happen in this research?

This research will require you to be interviewed via Skype at a time arranged between yourself and myself that is mutually workable. This Skype interview will be recorded by myself for transcribing purposes and I will also take notes during the interview. This will be the extent of your involvement in the research, unless, subsequent to the completion of the interview, you recall something that may benefit the research. If this should occur, you will be able to email me any extra insights that you feel are important within one month of the completion of the interview. All information supplied by you will be used by myself for this research and only for the purpose of this research and any subsequent thesis, paper presentations and/or articles. All data and information you provide will only be used for the purpose of completing a thesis as part of a Masters program. The data gathered will not be used for any future research.

What are the discomforts and risks?

All questions asked of you will be focused on the subject being researched and will be objective. If you have concerns about questions or feel a question is intrusive, you can choose to not answer. All findings will be reported in a way that ensures your anonymity. Outside of this, there will be no discomforts or risks. Additionally, you will be offered a copy of the transcript, via email, to read and correct (if necessary) prior to your interview being used in the research.

What are the benefits?

This research will directly contribute towards the obtaining of a Masters of Communication Studies for myself. Your contributions to that research will not only allow me to complete that Masters, but will also play an important role in the expansion of the wider academic research around virtual teams and the role of trust with those teams. I anticipate that the results of this research will open up new areas for further research in the future.

How will my privacy be protected?

As a contributor to my research, I will not be identifying you and as such any information you share with me will be completely anonymous. For the sake of the research and where required, the teams will be allocated randomly selected letters and any reference to the information you share will be along the lines of "Leader of Team M".

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The costs of participating in this research is time. Firstly, if you do choose to be involved in my research, you will receive a short survey to find out and send back to me. I will then request an interview over Skype with you where we can talk through some of the questions in more depth. In total I estimate the whole process should take no more than 1 hour.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

The time for considering this invitation is 2 weeks. If you could give me a reply within 14 days of receiving this invitation I would greatly appreciate it.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

As a participant of this research you will be entitled to receive a copy of the results of the research if you desire. Please state if you wish to receive a copy of the research results. If you choose to receive a copy of the final thesis, this can be sent to you electronically once it has received final approval by the examiners.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Averill Gordon, agordon@aut.ac.nz, +64 9 921 9999 ext 6492.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , +94 9 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Michael Bain

Email: zxw7072@autuni.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Averill Gordon

Email: agordon@aut.ac.nz

Phone: +64 9 921 9999 ext 6492

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27th November 2017, AUTEC Reference number 17/426.

Consent form

Consent Form

For use when interviews are involved.

Project title: **Digital Trust: Leaders' impressions of trust within virtual teams**

Project Supervisor: **Dr Averill Gordon**
Researcher: **Michael Bain**

○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 31st October 2017.
○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
○ I agree to take part in this research.
○ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature: ....………………………………………………

Participant's name: ....………………………………………………

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):
……………………………………………………………………………………..
……………………………………………………………………………………..
……………………………………………………………………………………..

Date:

Appendix C: Sample of coding and thematic analysis

1. How would you define trust?

	Words & Phrases Used or Referred to	Self v Team/Other	Clear or vague	Action v Feeling
A1	Reliance Confidence "Goodness and ability"	Team/Other	Clear	Feeling
A2	Believe "Don't have to control"	Self	Vague	Feeling
A3	Belief Reliability Dependence Expectation of performing and behaving	Team/Other	Clear	Action
A4	Reliance Confidence	Team/Other	Vague	Feeling
A5	Reliance Familiarity Loose / relaxed	Self	Clear	Feeling
A6	Belief Honest Mutual agreement Open Respect	Team/Other	Vague	Feeling
A7	"Putting my faith in someone" Voluntary	Self	Clear	Action
A8	Reliance Unequivocable - "no matter the terms or situation"	Self	Clear	Feeling

2. In your opinion, what does trust look like in a global virtual team (like the ones in Globcom)?

	Words & Phrases Used or Referred to	Self v Team / Other	Expectation Met?	Action or Feeling
A1	Scary Difficult Effort Don't know Motivation	Team / Other	Expectation met leading to trust	Action
A2	"Don't really know the people" "Trust is important"	Team / Other	Expectation met leading to trust	Action
A3	Reliance Appropriate Performance Standard	Team / Other	Expectation met leading to trust	Action
A4	"Work well together" Reliance High quality Open Communication	Team / Other	Expectation met leading to trust	Action
A5	Develops Reliability No prejudice	Team / Other	Expectation met leading to trust	Action
A6	"Mutual interest and understanding" Voluntary Belief "A chance to prove themselves" "deliver what they promise"	Team / Other	Expectation met leading to trust	Action
A7	Voluntary "Doing what is asked" Faith	Team / Other	Expectation met leading to trust	Action
A8	Motivation Task "Delivered on time" Assigned tasks Timely	Team / Other	Expectation met leading to trust	Action

3. As a leader of a global virtual team,. Tel me about how trust was within your
   team – was it important? Unimportant?

	Words & Phrases Used or Referred to	Important Or not?	Performance (task or action)	Early trust (extended)	Late Trust
A1	Trust everyone Handle tasks Report back	Y	Y	Y	n/a
A2	Overview Report back Work produced	Y	Y	Y	n/a
A3	Depend Shared responsibility Acheive the goals Effectiveness	Y	Y	Y	n/a
A4	Rely Time bound Tasks completed	Y	Y	n/a	n/a
A5	Tasks assigned Reliable Good quality	Y	Y	Y	Trust leakage
A6	Rely Perform Open-minded Commited	Y	Y	Y	Trust leakage
A7	Voluntary Faith in a person Carry out duty Task assigned Common goal	Y	Y	Y	n/a
A8	Inclusivity Trustworthy Task assigned Rely Faith in a person Reliance	Y	Y	Y	Trust leakage

4. Tell me about how you initially decided to trust people -what made you extend trust to them?

	Words & Phrases Used or Referred to	Action Connected leading to trust consolidation?	Attendance / availability?	Work as a team?
A1	Symbiotic relationship Had no choice Group work	Y	n/a	Y
A2	Great team members Working together Task completion Conscientiousness Relaince	Y	Y	Y
A3	Effective presence Task acheivement Reliability Invest in Suffiicent work	Y	Y	Y
A4	High standard Work distribution Sharing strengths and weaknesses Numerous meetings	Y	Y	Y
A5	Motivation Optimism Task delivery Takes time Feedback	Y	Y	Y
A6	Takes time Norms & rules of behaviour Expectations Openness Respect	Y	n/a	Y
A7	Reliance Morale Difficulty / Pressure Burden Linked team together	Y	Y	Y
A8	Initiative Task completion Timely	Y	n/a	Y

5. Did you extend trust to everyone ot was it only to some people?

	Trust filtration system?	Initiative mentioned?	Participation / action role?	Communication
A1		Y		
A2		Y		
A3	Y	Y	Y	Y
A4	Y	Y	Y	Y
A5	Y	Y	Y	Y
A6				
A7	Y	Y	Y	Y
A8	Y	Y	Y	Y

6. Did you notice whether trust may have changed or developed during the time your team was together or do you feel it syated the same? Tell me why you think this?

	Concepts Used or Referred to	Change in Trust?	Trust Growth?	Trust Leakage?	Related to action / task?
A1	Relationship changes "the more you know someone"	Y	Y	n/a	n/a
A2	Team members work together "I lose trust" due to the actions of members	Y	Y	Y	Y
A3	Reliable " I began to trust less and less" Task completion and the consistency of task completion was important	Y	Y	Y	Y
A4	Form a relationship with people who interacted with the team and didn't form relationships with people not engaged	Y	Y	Y	Y
A5	People got less active – trust went down It was connected with how active people were	Y	Y	Y	Y
A6	Graded attendance and participation to see who was involved or not "The only way members stay involved is if they feel welcome"	Y	Y	Y	Y
A7	Slack or grace was given to those who were trusted Trust drops with those who don't communicate	Y	Y	Y	Y
A8	"People fade out" The list of people to trust gets smaller.	Y	Y	Y	Y

7. In your observation what connection was there between the level of trust (or non-existence of trust) and the team dynamics of your team?

	Connection?	Work Facilitation	Dynamics and hard times.	Did it affect the team leader?
A1	Y	Y	n/a	Y
A2	Y	Y	n/a	Y
A3	Y	Y	Y	Y
A4	Y	Y	Y	Y
A5	Y	Y	Y	Y
A6	Y	Y	Y	Y
A7	Y	Y	Y	Y
A8	Y	Y	Y	Y

8. Would you do anything differently if you were to lead another global virtual team?

	Do things differently?	Three key areas that the leader would do differently		
A1	N	n/a	n/a	n/a
A2	Maybe	Connect with members privately	Learn more about team members	n/a
A3	Y	Be more freindly	Have less focus on the work	Talk to the team and learn from individuals more
A4	Y	Be more firm	Actively increase participation	Increase and improve team structures
A5	Y	Delegate more tasks	Provide more autonomy to team members	Encourage more inidividual contributions
A6	n/a	This question wasn't asked in this interview		
A7	Y	Get to know the team members better	Filter more quickly to weed out lurkers and shurkers	n/a
A8	Y	Work at making members feel more welcome	Filter more quickly to weed out lurkers and shurkers	Become more organised in team and project structure