

**DISCONNECTED:  
AN EXAMINATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST AND PSYCHOLOGICAL  
SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN A NETWORKED ENVIRONMENT**

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# **DISCONNECTED: AN EXAMINATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN A NETWORKED ENVIRONMENT**

**Kellee Michelle Franklin**

## **(ABSTRACT)**

The concept of trust in human relationship has gained much attention over the past decade. The majority of the trust literature focuses on the definition of trust and the development and maintenance of trust. Most scholars agree that trust is developed and maintained through dialogue and socialization, including verbal and nonverbal social cues. The literature suggests that individuals share information and build communities with persons they trust. Within an organizational environment, higher degrees of trust enhance the discovering processes and, ultimately, the ability of groups and organizations to fully function. A “sense of community” is created in environments that encourage open and honest communication among their members. Despite the research supporting a link between socialization, communication, and trust, there is almost no research that specifically addresses the relationship between communication technologies that eliminate face-to-face interaction and organizational trust and sense of community. E-mail, a tool that enables members of an organization to communicate with one another despite differences in time and location, is used by a vast majority of corporations to communicate with its organizational members. While e-mail communication provides many advantages, the literature in this area suggests that this tool may limit the amount of “human moments” at work, which may relate to decreased levels of trust and feelings of community in the workplace.

This study was aimed at learning more about this phenomenon. Using a questionnaire developed that included three valid and reliable instruments of trust and sense of community, responses were collected from members of selected teams within a large, international organization to examine the relationships between trust, community, and e-mail communication. Other demographic and organizational data was also collected. Although no relationship was found between e-mail use, organizational trust, and psychological sense of community in the workplace, the results suggest that factors other than communication medium influence feelings of trust and community. Implications of the findings as well as recommendations for practice and future research are provided.

## **DEDICATION**

For my parents—

thank you for instilling in me a love for learning and a curiosity about life.

I am truly grateful for all that you have given me.

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