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CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS: THE SECRET INGREDIENT OF SYNERGISTIC VENTURE COOPERATION

Katarzyna Czernek-Marszałek, Patrycja Klimas,
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ABSTRACT

Social relationships play an important role in organizational entrepreneurship. They are crucial to entrepreneurs' decisions because, despite the bleeding-edge technological advancements observed nowadays, entrepreneurs as human beings will always strive to be social. During the COVID-19 pandemic many companies moved activities into the virtual world and as a result offline Social relationships became rarer, but as it turns out, even more valuable, likewise, the inter-organizational cooperation enabling many companies to survive.

This chapter aims to develop knowledge about entrepreneurs' SR and their links with inter-organizational cooperation. The results of an integrative systematic literature review show that the concept of Social relationships, although often investigated, lacks a clear definition, conceptualization, and operationalization. This chapter revealed a great diversity of definitions for Social relationships, including different scopes of meaning and levels of analysis. The authors

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identify 10 building blocks and nine sources of entrepreneurs' Social relationships. The authors offer an original typology of Social relationships using 12 criteria. Interestingly, with regard to building blocks, besides those frequently considered such as trust, reciprocity and commitment, the authors also point to others more rarely and narrowly discussed, such as gratitude, satisfaction and affection. Similarly, the authors discuss the varied scope of sources, including workplace, family/friendship, past relationships, and ethnic or religious bonds. The findings of this study point to a variety of links between Social relationships and inter-organizational cooperation, including their positive and negative influences on one another. These links appear to be extremely dynamic, bi-directional and highly complex.

Keywords: Integrative review; systematic literature review; organizational entrepreneurship; social/interpersonal relationships; inter-organizational cooperation; trust

1. INTRODUCTION

Social relationships (SR), that is., interpersonal relationships based on emotional intensity (resulting, e.g., from trust, friendship, shared passions, etc.) analyzed from the perspective of various theories or concepts (e.g., the theory of social networks or social capital), have been a subject of interest among researchers in many scientific disciplines. Researchers in the field of economics or management more and more often use achievements of their own and other disciplines (e.g., sociology or psychology) to analyze the importance of SR for economic activities, including organizational entrepreneurship. This is confirmed by many studies, in which the importance of SR is examined in the context of various sectors, for example, the biotech sector (Pina-Stranger & Lazega, 2011; Rank, 2014), tourism (Czernek-Marszałek, 2020a, 2020b; Ghazali, 2005), wine production (Lewis, Byrom, & Grimmer, 2015), agriculture (Cush & Macken-Walsh, 2016), clothing sector (Uzzi, 1996), etc. Generally, business relationships are acknowledged as embedded in a wide range of SR (Casanueva & González, 2004; Ekanayake, Childerhouse, & Sun, 2017; Granovetter, 2005) and this concerns especially entrepreneurs' SR (Shu, Ren, & Zheng, 2018).

What is more, patterns of lasting SR between people constitute social networks (Jenssen, 2001), and SR are an important part of an entrepreneur's social capital (Coleman, 1988). Literature shows that social networks have a positive effect on entrepreneurship, which covers the creation of new enterprises (including startups), the initial idea for the new business, innovation, employing people, accessing tacit knowledge and even the management of small enterprises (e.g., Hite, 2003; Jiang, Liu, Fey, & Jiang, 2018; Granovetter, 2005; Nielsen, 2020; Sorenson, 2018; Stuart & Sorenson, 2005; Ulhoi, 2005; Uzzi, 1997, 1999). SR give access to resources that an entrepreneur needs especially for the startup process (Stam, Arzlanian, & Elfring, 2014; Stuart & Sorenson, 2005). In this perspective, the importance of external, structural influences on the creation, selection and survival of new ventures is indicated (Sorenson, 2018; Stuart & Sorenson, 2005). Authors claim that

individual configurations of SR contribute to greater opportunities for value creation within organizational entrepreneurship in particular, mainly by using external sources of knowledge and technology (Jiang et al., 2018; Li, Wang, Huang, & Bai, 2013; Nielsen, 2020; Shu et al., 2018; Stam et al., 2014). Thus, the entrepreneur must be explicit about own personal network in order to become recognized and able to acquire the resources needed (Littunen, 2000). The personal network also gives the entrepreneur flexibility (Jarillo, 1989). The entrepreneur does not have to buy the resources and keep them as an ordinary asset in the business. Connections with family or friends, who are not directly involved in the business, may assure information and other resources needed. When relationships are developed outside the firm's boundaries, "two major constraints are cut: time and money" (Dubini & Aldrich, 1991, p. 306). In the social network literature is stressed that the initial network directly influences not only entrepreneurship understood as a readiness to build a new company, but also the later development of the entrepreneur's network during the entrepreneurial process. SR are often developed long before the entrepreneurial process. Entrepreneurs without such relationships may have a hard time creating them (Jenssen, 2001; Sorenson, 2018). In everyday activity entrepreneurs do not make business decisions in a vacuum, but rather consult them before and are subtly influenced by their relationships with significant others in their environment: family, friends, co-workers, employers, casual acquaintances, etc. It is stressed that everyday support is provided at two levels – next to the formal one – at the informal one, that is, from friends and relatives of aspiring business owners (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986). However, despite the call for an examination of the intricate relationship between organizational entrepreneurship (manifested in entrepreneurs' different types of activity) and the social network context (Hoang & Yi, 2015), the links between using network resources to fulfill one's entrepreneurial ambitions, unfortunately, remain largely unclear.

One of the most important elements in an entrepreneur's activity is establishing and developing inter-organizational cooperation (e.g., BarNir & Smith, 2002; Ekanayake et al., 2017; Hajderllari, 2015). Inter-organizational cooperation (COOP) has been the subject of researchers' interest for many years (e.g., Anderson, 2008; Gulati, 1999; Hedvall, Jagstedt, & Dubois, 2019; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998; Zaefarian, Forkmann, Mitreğa, & Henneberg, 2017).

Such inter-organizational cooperation is not, however, established and developed impersonally, but primarily through the use of interpersonal relationships of people representing cooperating organizations – that is, entrepreneurs – company owners/managers and employees at various levels (Bian & Ang, 1997; Cai & Du, 2017; Ghazali, 2005; Rank, 2014; Shu et al., 2018; Wang, Childerhouse, Kang, Huo, & Mathrani, 2016). As shown by BarNir and Smith (2002, p. 227), 11–22% of the variance in the degree to which firms engage in strategic alliances can be explained by the SR of senior executives. Additionally, as shown by Wang et al. (2016), inter-organizational cooperation is triggered and positively affected not only by the SR of senior managers but also by those of managers, engineers or even production workers.

Although it seems that SR and their impact on entrepreneurship and inter-organizational cooperation have already been widely researched in the literature (e.g., Henneberg, Naudé, & Mouzas, 2010; Lewis et al., 2015; Sharafizad & Brown,

2020; Sorenson, 2018; Stuart & Sorenson, 2005; Uzzi, 1997; Wang et al., 2016), there are a few important reasons why SR should be continued to pay attention to.

1. Despite the rapid technological progress and ubiquitous digitization, including replacing people with machines in many areas of life, decisions in enterprises are still made by entrepreneurs who, as human beings, will always strive to establish and develop SR.
2. It should be emphasized that in the COVID-19 pandemic the digitization processes have intensified even more, and many entrepreneurs have decided to move their activities to the virtual world. As a result, there has been a loosening of many SR in business. While acting in the virtual world has enabled or helped many companies to survive on the market, it has also made it clear that offline SR may not always be replaced with online relationships (Green, Tappin, & Bentley, 2020). SR have become rarer and therefore even more valuable nowadays.
3. Also inter-organizational cooperation, often based on previously established social relations, has become more important for many enterprises, as it has often made it easier for them to survive in a difficult time of a pandemic (Al-Omoush, Simón-Moya, & Sendra-García, 2020).
4. It should be noted that as a result of the pandemic and rapid digitization, the specificity of SR and cooperation will most likely change, if only because of the importance of hybrid relations. All this makes it worth paying attention to SR and their links with cooperation, which can be the starting point for the future study of SR in completely new conditions of COVID-19 accelerated digitization. Finally, some cognitive and empirical gaps can still be identified in the literature, especially regarding SR themselves, as links between them and inter-organizational cooperation, are crucial in entrepreneurs' activity.

With the reference to these gaps,

1. SR are not clearly defined in the literature. Since they are of interest in a variety of fields and scientific disciplines, various perspectives (e.g., community vs. individual) and terms (e.g., ties, bonds, links, relations, interactions, connections, etc.) are used in reference to them. Importantly, however, these do not necessarily refer to the same phenomenon. Moreover, authors often use the concept of SR, but do not define them nor explain what they actually mean by such relationships (probably as they assume that this is a commonly used and widely known term). Thus, the literature lacks coherence and unambiguity when it comes to a definition for and even an understanding of SR (Marsden, 1990; Poros, 2001). Therefore, consistent, clear conceptualization and transparent operationalization of SR is needed (Czernek-Marszałek, 2020a, 2020b; Jack, Dodd, & Anderson, 2008; Marsden, 1990).
2. SR research uses various theories and concepts (e.g., social capital, social networking, social embeddedness, social exchange, etc. – Oliver & Ebers, 1998). Such practices further intensify the chaos in the literature (Marsden, 1990), but also determine the incomparability of research findings. In referring to the theories/concepts concerning SR, they often have a different genesis, assume a different view and thus also a different understanding of SR, which – in

turn – quite often remains undiscussed. Furthermore, regarding the levels of analysis, the literature presents phenomena related to SR at the micro, meso and macro levels (Felin & Foss, 2009; Raub, Buskens, & Van Assen, 2011). This means that although authors declare that they are researching SR, in fact, they are often researching other phenomena, such as social capital at the macro-level between collectives or individuals who remain anonymous to one another.

3. The literature lacks a SR typology. If there are typologies (e.g., Granovetter, 1973; Zhuang et al., 2012) they are neither exhaustive nor exclusive. As SR are varied and complex (i.e., consisting of different types of bonds, identified by using different and overlapping criteria), their categorization would contribute to greater transparency in research, thus to research comparability. It would also lead to a reduction in the obstacles to knowledge accumulation (Boon, Den Hartog, & Lepak, 2019) and knowledge development (Durach, Kembro, & Wieland, 2017; Fisch & Block, 2018).
4. The focus of research is often toward individually considered features (e.g., informality, emotionality, etc.) and/or components (e.g., trust, engagement, etc.) of SR and their influence on entrepreneurs' decisions (Granovetter, 2005; Jack et al., 2008; Uzzi, 1996). A review of the literature shows that SR components are relatively numerous and varied (e.g., Czernek-Marszałek, 2020a, 2020b; Granovetter, 2005; Jack et al., 2008; Uzzi, 1997). Quite often, these components are not exclusive and their understanding is either overlapping or partially substitutive. The components include trust, respect, friendship, reciprocity, engagement, knowledge about a partner, etc. (Czernek-Marszałek, 2021; Kale, Singh, & Perlmutter, 2000; Luo, 2001; Shu et al., 2018). However, there is a lack of works identifying and organizing the most important components and features of SR, as well as of papers analyzing not only individual components or features of SR, but the entire set. Our research reveals and describes such a pool of components and features of SR in the form of SR building blocks.
5. The literature focuses on the importance of SR for entrepreneurs' business activity, that is, SR implications, while the sources of establishing SR (places, family/friendship ties, experiences, and other conditions, etc., that create an individual and specific context in which the entities could establish a given relationship) are analyzed in a limited and selective manner. At the same time, the literature analysis provides evidence that there is a great diversity of sources of SR, from joint membership in organizations (clubs, associations, networks, etc.), through a shared territory, ethnicity, previous jobs, passions, experiences, etc. (Bastian & Tucci, 2017; Mehta, Maretzki, & Semali, 2011; Milana & Maldaon, 2015; Turner, 2007; Yoon & Hyun, 2010). Sources of SR are either inadvertently analyzed or only some of them receive more attention (e.g., ethnic or national origin – Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Turner, 2007). The literature lacks the identification of various sources of SR and their analysis from their origin point of view, that is, the social context in which they are built. This is all the more surprising as the literature emphasizes that such context, for SR analysis, is critical (Granovetter, 1985; Uzzi, 1997).
6. Several studies show the positive influence of SR not only on business activity in general but also on inter-organizational cooperation (e.g., Cohen &

Prusak, 2001; Granovetter, 2005; Gulati, 1995; Wang et al., 2016). Without trust, treated often as a critical component of SR (Chassagnon & Audran, 2011; Granovetter, 1985; Macke & Dilly, 2010; Staber, 2007; Wang et al., 2016), cooperation is difficult or even impossible to initiate (Czernek, 2014). Nonetheless, some results also show the impact of entrepreneurs' SR on cooperation as negative (Anderson & Jap, 2005; Czernek-Marszałek, 2020b; Luo, 1997; Mitreğa & Zolkiewski, 2012). Although this is an interesting issue, there is relatively little research showing this negative impact of SR on economic activity, in particular inter-organizational cooperation. Moreover, there is a need to gather the results of previous research in this area – that is, works showing the impact of entrepreneurs' SR on economic activity (including business cooperation) – in order to organize and present them synthetically.

7. Given the existing works, it seems that the links between entrepreneurs' SR and cooperation may be bi-directional, that is, that not only SR affect cooperation, but also that inter-organizational cooperation may affect SR (Ashton & Bain, 2012; Xu & Zhai, 2018). On the one hand, business cooperation is shown as contributing to the establishment of SR between managers and/or companies' employees (Gibson, Hardy, & Buckley, 2014; Wang et al., 2016). It can bring friendship and companionship between business partners (Arnott, Wilson, Mouzas, Henneberg, & Naudé, 2007; Ashton & Bain, 2012; Migliore, Schifani, Guccione, & Cembalo, 2014; Ryan & Mulholland, 2014a, 2014b) since it leverages trust (Arnott et al., 2007; Ferru, 2014; Zhong, Su, Peng, & Yang, 2017). On the other hand, in the long-term perspective, these SR contribute to future improvements of expertise, competencies and skills (e.g., due to exchange, sharing and the transfer of knowledge possessed in a new employment environment – for example, Ryan & Mulholland, 2014a, 2014b; Sorenson, 2018; Zhou, Li, Zhao, & Cai, 2003; Zhou, Siu, & Wang, 2010), and develop cognitive abilities (Bottom, Gibson, Daniels, & Murnighan, 2002; Maurer & Ebers, 2006) which are beneficial for future business cooperation. Nevertheless, attention has so far been paid either to the role of SR regarding cooperation or *vice versa*, but not in both directions simultaneously. This becomes even more interesting if we consider that the impact of inter-organizational cooperation on entrepreneurs' SR can be not only positive but also negative, whereas there are far fewer works that consider this *dark side* of SR (e.g., Czernek-Marszałek, 2020a; Mitreğa & Zolkiewski, 2012). Thus, although SR are more often claimed to impact entrepreneurs (Shu et al., 2018; Sorenson, 2018; Stuart & Sorenson, 2005) and business cooperation (Dasgupta, Zhang, & Zhu, 2021), their connections seem to be more bi-directional than one-directional. Moreover, numerous feedback loops are possible between SR and inter-organizational cooperation. It is therefore worth collecting and organizing the existing knowledge on this issue.

Given the knowledge gaps, technological changes changing a way of building and the role of online and offline relationships and considering the importance of both phenomena, that is, inter-organizational cooperation and SR, the authors deemed it relevant to conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) (Bramer,

Rethlefsen, Kleijnen, & Franco, 2017; Callahan, 2010; Durach et al., 2017; Okoli, 2015; Rojon, Okupe, & McDowall, 2021). Regarding the reviewing methodology, the integrative approach (Torraco, 2016) would seem to be most appropriate for our analysis. Our review focuses on two sufficiently mature theoretical constructs (Torraco, 2005), while it also addresses new and up-to-date questions about the building blocks, types, and sources of SR, together with interlinks between both constructs, that is, SR and inter-organizational cooperation.

The aim of this chapter is therefore to develop knowledge – through its organization, synthesis, systematization and analysis – using an integrative SLR on entrepreneurs' SR, including their links with inter-organizational cooperation.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, the SLR was used as conceptual and methodological support (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2013), helpful in designing the research project and making critical decisions regarding project justification, constructing the research model, asking research questions (RQ), setting up hypotheses, etc. According to the typical aims of SLRs, this chapter summarizes, synthesizes (Okoli, 2015), systematizes (Di Vaio, Palladino, Pezzi, & Kalisz, 2021), organizes (Boon et al., 2019; Cooper, 1988), analyzes (Fisch & Block, 2018) and therefore develops (Durach et al., 2017; Rojon et al., 2021) knowledge about SR and COOP, including in particular their interconnections.

2.1. The SLR Process

We applied the *input-processing-output* approach (Levy & Ellis, 2006) typical for systematic reviews, which also remains in line with the integrative approach to literature reviewing (Callahan, 2010; Torraco, 2005, 2016), and is seen as appropriate for ensuring the robustness of the reviewing process (Di Vaio et al., 2021).

The adopted approach covered five phases (Boon et al., 2019; Denyer & Tranfield, 2009; Durach et al., 2017), namely: (1) setting up the RQs: September 2018; (2) literature collection including academic literature: October/December 2018 and gray literature: January/February 2019; (3) literature screening and selection: April/May 2019; (4) content analysis aimed at literature integration, synthesis and interpretation: July 2019–December 2020; and (5) reporting of preliminary findings: from January 2020. Given the methodological recommendations, and acknowledging that the transparency and replicability of systematic reviews require detailed description and reporting (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2013; King & He, 2005), the following sub-sections present our reviewing pathway.

2.1.1. Setting Up the Research Questions

At the beginning of the SLR, we asked several RQs to clarify our research interest and set the boundaries for our cognitive exploration. The RQs focused on SR were as follows: (1) What are the definitions of SR? (2) What are the different types of SR? (3) What are the building blocks of SR that link individuals from cooperating

organizations? (4) What are the sources of SR that link the representatives of cooperating organizations? (5) What is the importance of SR for COOP? and (6) What is the importance of COOP in establishing SR between the representatives of cooperating organizations? These RQs gave us grounds for designing the SLR protocol and later on for data analysis and interpretation. Indeed, our “research protocol served as the road map towards their answers” (Okoli, 2015, p. 889), showing us how to get closer to answers starting with the initial creation of the literature base (i.e., setting up inclusion and exclusion criteria), through a selection of the most relevant publications (i.e., setting up and applying screening criteria), to content analysis (i.e., setting up the list of issues searched for, analyzed and compared).

2.1.2. Literature Collection

To access relevant publications, two recommended tracks were followed (Di Vaio et al., 2021; Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2013): an academic literature search and the capture of gray literature. Given that “the process of excluding sources (and including respectively) has to be made as transparent as possible” (Okoli, 2015, p. 883) our general guidelines adopted at this stage are briefly presented in Table 4.1.

For the academic search, EBSCO and ProQuest were used as they have the broadest scope of coverage of managerial, economic and business literature (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). In the review process, the research team decided to search only for already published articles, while keywords were used to search for abstracts in the chosen databases. The search keyword sets were constructed on the basis of three main constructs underlying the entire project and also included synonyms (Durach et al., 2017), that is, *cooperation* (the words: Cooperation, Coopetition, Collaboration, Networks, Networking); *social relationships* (the phrases: Social relations*, Interpersonal relations*, Personal relations*, Informal relations*, Social embeddedness, Social ties, Interpersonal ties, Personal ties, Informal ties), *innovativeness* (the word: Innovativeness). It should be emphasized that although these three constructs were investigated, only two of them are analyzed in more detail in this chapter due to the topic and aim of the chapter.¹

To acquire a more comprehensive picture, the search results were not limited to a particular field of science, industry or country. Only papers in English and with full content available were accepted for further analysis. It should be noted, however, that given inter-organizational relationships are acknowledged as highly country-dependent (Bensaou & Venkatraman, 1995) we found it reasoned to add a national database. Therefore, since the research team wanted to compare the national and global stock of knowledge, the largest Polish database – BazEkon – was also included in the SLR process. Similarly, as only journals were used as data sources, hence the search language was Polish. In general, we found no significant differences between global and national literature.

Our purposeful decision was to implement gray literature (Bramer et al., 2017) as supplementary to academic literature (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2013), thus reducing the risk of omitting important works that are available digitally (Di Vaio et al., 2021). The gray literature search was run using the most popular search engine: GoogleScholar.com (Di Vaio et al., 2021; King & He, 2005). Again, the

Table 4.1. Initial Database – Search Process and Results.

Category	Search Criteria
Keywords/ Phrases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social relations* & Networking; Social relations* & Cooperation; Social relations* & Coopetition; Social relations* & Collaboration • Interpersonal relations* & Networking; Interpersonal relations* & Cooperation; Interpersonal relations* & Coopetition; Interpersonal relations* & Collaboration • Personal relations* & Networking; Personal relations* & Cooperation; Personal relations* & Coopetition; Personal relations* & Collaboration • Informal relations* & Networking; Informal relations* & Cooperation; Informal relations* & Coopetition; Informal relations* & Collaboration • Social embeddedness & Networking; Social embeddedness & Cooperation; Social embeddedness & Coopetition; Social embeddedness & Collaboration • Social ties & Networking; Social ties & Cooperation; Social ties & Coopetition; Social ties & Collaboration • Interpersonal ties & Networking; Interpersonal ties & Cooperation; Interpersonal ties & Coopetition; Interpersonal ties & Collaboration • Personal ties & Networking; Personal ties & Cooperation; Personal ties & Coopetition; Personal ties & Collaboration • Informal ties & Networking; Informal ties & Cooperation; Informal ties & Coopetition; Informal ties & Collaboration • Social relations* & Innovativeness; Interpersonal relations* & Innovativeness; Personal relations* & Innovativeness; Informal relations* & Innovativeness; Social embeddedness & Innovativeness; Social ties & Innovativeness; Interpersonal ties & Innovativeness; Personal ties & Innovativeness; Informal ties & Innovativeness; Networking & Innovativeness; Cooperation & Innovativeness; Coopetition & Innovativeness; Collaboration & Innovativeness • Social relations* & Networks; Interpersonal relations* & Networks; Personal relations* & Networks; Informal relations* & Networks; Social embeddedness & Networks; Social ties & Networks; Interpersonal ties & Networks; Personal ties & Networks; Informal ties & Networks • Networks & Innovativeness
Databases/ Sources	English: EBSCO, ProQuest Polish: BazEkon
Type of publication	EBSCO, ProQuest: only reviewed scientific articles*, in English, in full text, free access BazEkon: reviewed scientific articles*, in Polish (or English), in full text, free access * Articles only (excluding proceedings, books, working papers)
Keyword range	Abstract or title/topic (or possibly subject terms/subject area)
Publication language	EBSCO, ProQuest: English only, full text, free access papers BazEkon: English or Polish only, full access papers
Publication access	EBSCO, ProQuest: Free access to full-text papers under University licensing agreements

Database	Search In/ As ...	No. of Records	No Duplicate Within One Database	No Duplicate Within All Databases	Total
Academic Review					1,525
ProQuest	Abstract	551	467	1,390	
EBSCO (Academic Source Complete)	Abstract	990	892		
BazEkon	“term”	67	55		
Gray Review					
Google Scholar	–	139	139	135	

search procedure was conducted simultaneously in English and Polish using the following keyword sets: *social relations* AND *cooperation* AND *innovativeness*. One exclusion criterion was imposed, that is, quotes and patents. Additionally, according to methodological recommendations and due to the abundance of search engine results, only the first 200 search results of papers available in the full text were included in the literature database (Bramer et al., 2017). Finally, for the advanced search criteria, we searched for articles *with all words* (from the phrase) and papers *in which words appear anywhere in the article* as two additional specific criteria. As a result, we obtained an initial overall database (known also as the *baseline sample* of potentially relevant literature – Durach et al., 2017) that included 1,525 publications (see Table 4.1).

2.1.3. Literature Screening and Selection

To select only the most relevant papers (Okoli, 2015) which would ultimately be subject to in-depth content analysis, the 1,525 publications collected in the initial database were screened by the research team through careful reading of the abstracts, keywords and conclusions. Following methodological guidelines (e.g., Denyer & Tranfield, 2009; Durach et al., 2017), the publications were evaluated based on the suitability of their abstracts to our RQs (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2013). The application of this specific screening criterion was designed to allocate the gathered works into three categories: selected, insightful and useless (Fisch & Block, 2018; Okoli, 2015).

Papers designated as *useless* and considered unsuitable were papers from other disciplines which concerned a different research area than economics or management, papers with trace links to SR, papers that were in the database by accident, and files with errors, for example, from fields such as zoology, medicine, psychology, ICT or political issues.

The team designated papers as *insightful* if they focused on only one out of the three considered constructs and were indirectly linked to our RQs, although they did at least apply a social science perspective and provided output that might be useful in further analyses.

Finally, papers that considered at least two of our constructs, and were directly linked with our RQs were marked as *selected*.

As a result, we rejected 1,107 papers, thus obtaining a final database (known also as the *synthesis sample* of relevant literature – Durach et al., 2017) covering 319 papers, including 281 in English.

Using details on the collected papers it was possible to evaluate the state and dynamics of the prior attention of scholars interested in both SR and COOP. In general, research activity in the analyzed field is showing an upward trend. This visible increase in the number of publications indicates that the research field under consideration is in its development phase and is a relevant research area. A clear drop in publications in 2017 and 2018 results from the period of literature collection (e.g., licensed databases impose restrictions on the availability of recent papers with the *full-text* option). About 97% of the sources used are journal articles, while monographs, conference papers or conference proceedings constitute the remaining 3%.

2.1.4. Content Analysis

Following a qualitative approach based on content analysis (Di Vaio et al., 2021), all 319 publications collected in the final literature base were read in detail, indexed using typical aggregation, with comparative criteria (Durach et al., 2017) analyzed as well as described in terms of answering our RQs. According to the reviewing protocol – prepared in an MS Excel file – we applied indexing criteria which allowed us to run frequency analysis, an important part of descriptive reviewing (King & He, 2005; Rojon et al., 2021), as well as to aggregate publications in more coherent groups, important for assuring reviewing quality (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009). The indexing criteria included the following: researcher, language, year, author, publication title, type of publication, country context, APA references, journal, SR definition, SR features, SR typology, SR examples, SR building blocks, the role of SR for COOP and the role of COOP for SR.

2.1.5. Reporting

The last, but by no means less important, stage of SLR refers to reporting. This stage focuses on presenting the content analysis findings and is organized in two steps (Durach et al., 2017), namely, the descriptive analysis of results and thematic analysis emphasizing the newly created knowledge.

As this chapter concentrates on the reporting stage of our SLR, we present below the most relevant findings from both *descriptive analysis* (i.e., the third section of the chapter) and *thematic analysis* (i.e., the discussion and conclusion part) of the collected literature on SR and COOP, as well as the links between the two.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Social Relationships

Our final database contained 202 articles (63% out of 319) related to SR. Among the most often used theories and concepts should be listed social capital theory (32 papers), social networking theory (including the structural view and social network analysis in particular – 31 papers), new economic sociology (including the social embeddedness concept in particular – 8 papers), proximity theory (8 papers), new institutionalism (6 papers), cluster theory (6 papers), guanxi concept (5 papers), game theory (3 papers), the resource-based view (3 papers) and collaborative and relationship marketing (3 papers). Firstly, the dominance of sociological perspectives may justify the need for a deeper consideration of articles more related to economics and business. Secondly, the variety of theoretical lenses proves the general relevance and complexity of SR but also contributes to some conceptual and terminological ambiguities.

3.1.2. Conceptualization of Social Relationships

Following the assumptions of content analysis (Di Vaio et al., 2021), the collected papers were analyzed concerning the RQs asked.

Undoubtedly, there is a general understanding of what SR mean, but due to the fairly broad meaning of the term, its precise definition causes difficulties. Our analysis clearly showed that researchers use different definitions of SR, also interchangeably calling them *interpersonal relationships*, *personal relations*, *personal ties*, *personal bonds*, *social bonds*, *social ties*, *social links*, *social connections*, etc. Due to the aim of this chapter, we present only the definitions of *relationship* related to social nature, that is, *personal relationship* – a term often used by researchers interchangeably with the term *social relations* and *social relationship* (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Social Relationships – Search Results.

Definition	Author(s) (Year)
Relationship	
Two persons consider each other's actions and become more mutually dependent and because an exchange is by nature reciprocal, the personal network is a "secret strength"	Johannisson and Mønsted (1997)
Commonly explained in terms of "particularistic ties." The ties refer to family, common experience, ethnic heritage, similar place of origin or business	Tucker (2010)
Entails complex social norms and reciprocal obligations usually stretched across several generations, which means that exiting is too costly or simply unviable	Serra (2011)
Social Relationship	
Defined as information-carrying connections between people in social networks	Cook and Whitmeyer (1992)
Relations based on kinship and common residence, a shared mode of feeling and a spontaneous willingness to cooperate. Activities are shared and roles overlap	Piselli (2007)
Characterized by a repeated interaction between two persons, wherein the individual interaction is influenced by previous interactions as well as the expectation of future interactions (p. 353)	Leimeister, Schweizer, Leimeister, and Krcmar (2008)
A long-term personal relationship such as acquaintances or friendships; every day, business and also confidential information is shared; pleasure is experienced from each other's company and there may be common activities outside the work environment	Mikkola (2008)
May simply reflect a binary relation (the presence or absence of a relation) or they may reflect the strength of a relation between two individuals (e.g., the emotional intensity, the intimacy, etc.). Under such definitions, the relationships between friends are universally identical and players will treat all their friends equally	Xu, Wang, Deng, and Li (2014)
Viewed as the result of individuals' decisions to initiate relations with others according to their preferences	Farkas and Lindberg (2015)
Close or special relationships (the existence of personal ties, trust, precise transfer of information and joint problem-solving)	Uzzi (1997)
Personal Relationship	
Usually guided by individuals' emotions and personal values, is to a great extent a spontaneous and intuitive relationship	Johannisson and Mønsted (1997)
Typically defined in terms of labels such as a friend, relative or neighbor (Krackhardt, 1992)	Poros (2001)
In business networks this usually relates to the tie of establishing and maintaining the most reliable alliance relationship. A good or bad personal relationship among managers from both parties is one of the reasons which determine whether the alliance is efficient or not (p. 324)	Chen and Pan (2009)
Informal SR (also known as informal relations)	Sousa (2005)

The identified definitions emphasize complex social norms and mutual obligations (Serra, 2011), common values and common interests (Mikkola, 2008; Tucker, 2010) connecting individuals. Importantly, SR are also characterized by the awareness of the need to comply with these norms, obligations, interests, values or awareness of being a member of a given group (Farkas & Lindberg, 2015). Also, it should be noted that SR are related to elements of social and/or cultural anthropology (such as shared ethnic identity, language, religion, the history of people involved in the relationship, and the above-mentioned cultural and social norms) because they are usually based on kinship and/or a common place of residence (Farkas & Lindberg, 2015). What is more, SR are influenced by previous interactions as well as the expectation of future interactions (Leimeister et al., 2008).

The expression of SR is the actions of entities resulting from the existence of a causal link between them (the behavior of one person causes effects in the form of the actions of another) (Johannisson & Mønsted, 1997). SR are therefore governed to a large extent by psychological and sociological regularities. The authors indicate that these focus on personal emotions (based on personal feelings, emotional bonds and emotional intensity – Wang et al., 2016) and the shared values of the people involved, which makes them intuitive (Piselli, 2007).

Among the keywords referring to SR and related definitions (Fig. 4.1), it is emphasized that SR involve individuals, are based on a set of interactions, are usually informal, and refer to the common and shared interests, values, etc., mentioned earlier. The word cloud in Fig. 1 also shows the importance of emotions in SR, expressed by words such as emotions, feelings, friends, reciprocal and spontaneous.

To sum up, comparative analysis of SR definitions highlights the dominant focus on the set of interactions between individuals. Furthermore, there are strong claims that imposing the social, micro-nature of interactions in any SR shows that “someone’s behavior acts as a stimulus to someone else’s behavior and *vice versa*” (Leimeister et al., 2008, p. 353). Based on the survey of definitions of SR presented in Table 4.2 and the word cloud in Fig. 4.1, we define SR as *informal relations between individuals, characterized by a certain degree of emotionality*. Thus, the term social relationships can be used interchangeably with interpersonal relationships.

3.1.3. Social Relationship Building Blocks

Our next RQ identified 10 building blocks (see Table 4.3) for SR, with trust being the dominant one as it was identified in 16 papers in our literature review.



Fig. 4.1. Analysis of Social Relationships Definitions.

Table 4.3. Social Relationship Building Blocks.

SR Building Blocks	Author(s) (Year)
Trust	Uzzi (1997), Ghazali (2005), Maurer and Ebers (2006), Murphy (2006), Staber (2007), Lu, Trienekens, Omta, and Feng (2008), Abbott (2009), Johansson and Persson (2009), Bidault and Castello (2010), Vilana and Monroy (2010), Chassagnon and Audran (2011), Adlešič and Slavec (2012), Raggio, Walz, Bose Godbole, and Anne Garretson Folse (2014), Ryan and Mulholland (2014b), Bapna, Gupta, Rice, and Sundararajan (2017), Bapna, Qiu, and Rice (2017)
Reciprocity	Colclough and Sitaraman (2005), Piselli (2007), Abbott (2009), Adlešič and Slavec (2012) and Ryan and Mulholland (2014a)
Commitment	Lu et al. (2008), Adlešič and Slavec (2012), Raggio et al. (2014)
Life-time duration	Ghazali (2005), Abbott (2009), Yoon and Hyun (2010) and Hassanibesheli, Hedayatifar, Safdari, Ausloos, and Jafari (2017)
Emotional intensity/affection	Sousa (2005), Murphy (2006), Wang et al. (2016) and Hassanibesheli et al. (2017)
Sense of belonging	Colclough and Sitaraman (2005), Maurer and Ebers (2006), Piselli (2007) and Chassagnon and Audran (2011)
Gratitude	Fredrickson (2004), Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) and Raggio et al. (2014)
Satisfaction	Sousa (2005), Lu et al. (2008) and Bapna, Qiu, et al. (2017)
Relatively high frequency of contact	Abbott (2009)
Common social norms, patterns (cohesion)	Maurer and Ebers (2006), Bidault and Castello (2010), Chassagnon and Audran (2011) and Sakalaki and Fousiani (2012)

Alongside trust, the other building blocks of SR include reciprocity, emotional intensity, common social norms and patterns (in five papers), commitment, life-time duration and sense of belonging (in four papers), gratitude and satisfaction (in three works).

It is worth noting that the identified building blocks are considered at the individual (human) level and seem to be very distinct with regard to the structure of organizational relationships. One should emphasize here that taking into account the essence of SR (the fact that these are interpersonal relationships – that is, between specific persons, at the individual level) and from the point of view of inter-organizational cooperation, micro-level analysis of SR is the most appropriate. Indeed, this level focuses on the SR of people operationally (i.e., everyday cooperation, reporting, briefings, etc.) and strategically (i.e., setting goals, monitoring, etc.) engaged in business cooperation.

Our literature review shows, however, that there are also two other levels used in SR analysis – the meso and macro levels. Nonetheless, these are not applicable in the adopted context, namely the context of interpersonal links between individuals. Firstly, SR at the macro-level are considered within society and link general communities, nationalities, etc. Secondly, the relationships considered at the meso-level in turn link collectives (i.e., meta-organizations according to

Gulati, Puranam, & Tushman, 2012), such as clusters, associations, partnerships, alliances, etc. Moreover, relationships analyzed at the macro and meso levels are often not only impersonal but also anonymous, and occur between atomized actors (so-called market transactions according to Powell (1990) or the arm's length relationships referred to by Uzzi (1997). Thus, the SR analyzed in this chapter as being particularly important for inter-organizational cooperation are those considered at the micro-level, linking employees or leaders of cooperating organizations. To put it simpler, these relationships are perceived as interpersonal as they link only individual actors.

3.1.4. Types of Social Relationships

At the next stage, the analysis focused on the identification of the main types of SR distinguished so far. Again, there is no one, commonly accepted typology of SR. Furthermore, the very limited number of authors who have differentiated them applied only uni-dimensional – one would say selective and fragmentary – categorizations. Finally, there is even no common stance regarding the number and types of differentiation criteria that are methodologically valid and accurate in differentiating between SR. We also do not know how these categorizations relate to each other, if at all.

By summarizing the existing stock of knowledge, SR can be categorized using 12 different criteria, that is (Table 4.4): level of formalization, strength, range, partner type, level of mediation, type of outcomes, complexity, degree of emotional intensity, degree of emotional stability, nature of existence, time and, finally, social integration.

It is worth noting that although they use different terms, authors usually divide SR according to the criterion of emotional intensity into more or less close, emotional or informal relationships. For example, using the level of formalization, they identify formal versus informal SR (e.g., Ryan & Mulholland, 2014a; Sparrowe et al., 2001), regarding the strength or emotional intensity: weak versus strong relationships (Granovetter, 1973), primary versus secondary (Richards, 2016), or passive, cordial/competitive and emotionally engaged (Campos, 2003), or instrumental versus expressive (Podolny & Baron, 1997; Zhou & Wang, 2010). Nevertheless, as it is difficult to capture this degree of emotionality, it is not always easy to classify SR according to this criterion. In our opinion, this is one of the basic reasons for the difficulties in defining and operationalizing the concept of SR, thus we discuss this issue in greater detail in the later section containing a description of our findings. At the same time, however, some degree of emotionality is claimed to be necessary for establishing and maintaining SR, at least at a low level.

To conclude, despite these problems, we claim that the 12 identified criteria of SR classification are reasoned as being: (1) based on prior findings; (2) complex and varied, and thus complementary – specific SR can be categorized using different criteria simultaneously; and (3) specific for SR considered at the micro-level of analysis, and thus referring to interpersonal relationships.

Table 4.4. Typology of Interpersonal Relationships – The Micro-level Perspective.

Criterion	Type	Author(s) (Year)	Understanding
Level of formalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal (under formal control mechanisms) Informal (under social control mechanisms) 	Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, and Kraimer (2001), Wallenburg and Raue (2011) and Ryan and Mulholland (2014a)	Formal relationships are established in a formal context, that is, entering these relationships is regulated by relevant provisions (statutes, regulations, etc.) or formal and legal contracts Informal relations arise in a voluntary, spontaneous manner. Among informal SR are friendship, relations between and among neighbors or hobby groups
Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak Strong 	Granovetter (1973)	<i>Strong ties</i> – longer in time, based on emotional intensity, proximity (trust) and reciprocity <i>Weak ties</i> – ad hoc, with no emotional affection, no trust or reciprocity
Degree of emotional intensity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passive Cordial or competitive Emotionally engaged 	Campos (2003)	The degree of commitment is expressed by the desire for further or more frequent contact and emotional commitment to the relationship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passive without waiting for further action or contacts on both sides Cordial or competitive – the parties are polite to each other or show <i>polite aggression</i> without damaging the relationship Emotionally engaging both parties and relying on the implementation of joint actions and achievement of goals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instrumental Expressive 	Podolny and Baron (1997) and Zhou and Wang (2010)	Instrumental relationships are links arising in the process of performing formal work roles, and often involve relationships with people of different nationalities and cultures. Expressive relationships are informal, involve more emotional matters and mainly provide friendship and social support
Social integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Secondary 	Richards (2016)	Primary ties are defined as being small in number, informal, intimate and enduring Secondary ties tend to be greater in number, with more formal interactions guided by rules and hierarchical positions – that is, membership of voluntary and religious organizations
Level of mediation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct Indirect 	Uzzi (1997) and Singh (2005)	Undirected – for example, friendship, or directed – an advisor–advisee relationship in the publication network
Range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local International (not localized) 	Levin and Barnard (2013)	<i>Local</i> – requiring less effort regarding their coordination, relatively more reciprocal and based on joint context (norms, values, etc.) <i>International</i> – requiring more effort (e.g., in logistics), small probability of reciprocal help, and sharing norms and values
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Localized Not localized 	Singh (2005)	Type of relation dependent on the distance between partners – from relations with entities located in the same geographical area to relations with partners geographically distanced

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the same town/city • In the same province • In the same country • Outside the country 	Bensaou and Venkatraman (1995)	Type of relation dependent on the distance between partners – from relations with entities located in the same city to relations with partners outside the country
Partner type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buyers • Suppliers • Competitors • Consultants • Public research labs • Universities • Innovation centers • Sector institutes 	Bensaou and Venkatraman (1995)	Type of relation dependent on the role played by the partner in their own business (from the demand side – buyers, to the supply side – e.g., suppliers, consultants, universities, etc.)
Type of outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive • Negative 	Casanueva and González (2004)	The type of relationship can be considered through its effects on the individual innovativeness of the engaged actors – from relations providing positive outcomes only, to those generating only negative ones. The level of advantageousness depends, however, on three dimensions of a SR, namely its structure, connected resources, and general relational embeddedness
Complexity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-stranded • Multiplex relations 	Mehta, Marezki, et al. (2011)	Single-stranded relationships refer to quite a simple connection when the actors play just one role in the SR, for example, they are just both passionate about aviation and belong to the same online community. Conversely, multiplex relations are when actors play more than one role in a specific relationship, for example, neighbors who at the same time are friends, members of the same community of interest, or even colleagues from the same company
Variation in time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Static • Dynamic 	Zhuang et al. (2012)	The ability of relationships to change over time due to the type of relationship
Nature of existence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online/virtual • Physical 	Leimeister et al. (2008) and Zhuang et al. (2012)	Online SR are based on new technologies and take place mainly on the Internet. Physical SR are those established and maintained in reality. Physical SR usually use specific symbols – they are diverse – for example, friends, family members. By contrast, online SR are most often not marked
Degree of emotional stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded at a high social level • Embedded at a low social level 	Sakalaki and Fousiani (2012)	Relations embedded at a high social level are close, durable and trusting. They increase the probability of multiple exchanges, good knowledge of partners and predictability of their behavior, which should be associated with cooperative attitudes and behaviors. Conversely, relations embedded at a low social level are changing and unstable. This may be associated with non-cooperative attitudes and behaviors

Table 4.5. Sources of Social Relationships.

Type of Source	Understanding	Author(s) (year)
Membership in organizations	Relationships resulting from tightening voluntary cooperation to achieve a common goal, often resulting from membership in foundations, associations or non-profit organizations	Abbott (2009), Von Schnurbein (2010), Czernek (2014) and Richards (2016)
Family/friends	Relationships resulting from belonging to a family or relationships resulting from friendship. Both are most often strongly emotionally marked and are associated with maintaining close and frequent contact	Chung and Whalen (2006), Yoon and Hyun (2010), Pina-Stranger and Lazega (2011), Wallace, Buil, and De Chernatony (2012), Bault, Pelloux, Fahrenfort, Ridderinkhof, and van Winden (2014), Milana and Maldaon (2015), Wang et al. (2016), Ekanayake et al. (2017) and Hood, Cruz, and Bachrach (2017)
Workplace (former or present)	Relationships established in a former or current workplace, affecting the level of job satisfaction, the atmosphere at work, the manner of carrying out entrusted tasks, determining the status of the employee in the work environment and their social position	Chung and Whalen (2006), Maurer and Ebers (2006), Abbott (2009), Johansson and Persson (2009), Czernek (2014), Ferru (2014) and Milana and Maldaon (2015)
Religious affiliation	Relationships are based on a common identity built on belonging to a specific religion	Yoon and Hyun (2010), Czernek (2014) and Richards (2016)
Relationships from the past	Relationships maintained based on previously reached mutual findings and feelings; friends from school, childhood, etc.	Maurer and Ebers (2006) and Pina-Stranger and Lazega (2011)
The common place of residence/ neighborhood	Relationships among communities in a given territory, characterized by geographical proximity, based on a common place of residence, often among people who speak the same language	Poros (2001), Chung and Whalen (2006), Piselli (2007), Abbott (2009) and Yoon and Hyun (2010)
Common experiences	Relationships built on past or present common experiences (e.g., shared problems, participation in the same situations, using the same services)	Chung and Whalen (2006), Piselli (2007), Abbott (2009), Yoon and Hyun (2010), Milana and Maldaon (2015) and Wang et al. (2016)
The common ground of interest	Building relationships based on common interests, a sense of belonging to hobby groups, most often associated with a similar way of spending free time	Johannisson and Mønsted (1997), Maurer and Ebers (2006), Turner (2007) and Richards (2016)
Ethnic ties/ origin	A sense of belonging to a given ethnic group based on shared social, cultural, national and historical experiences; relationships that are often based on emphasizing the identity of a specific group	Piselli (2007), Turner (2007), Bidault and Castello (2010), Yoon and Hyun (2010) and Pina-Stranger and Lazega (2011)

3.1.5. Sources of Social Relationships

The next important issue targeting one of our seven RQs are the sources of SR. Based on the literature review it was possible to identify nine different sources of SR (Table 4.5), including membership in organizations; family/friends; former or present workplace; religious affiliation; relationships from the past; a common place of residence (neighborhood); common experiences; common ground of interest and ethnic ties/origin.

However, it should be added that the identified sources are not always exclusive. In real life, a single SR can result from both a common place of residence and a shared workplace. This may suggest that the diversity of sources may impact the strength and longevity of SR or the other SR building blocks (including the level of trust, reciprocity, sense of belonging, etc.) identified in Table 4.3, as well as the specific types of SR presented in Table 4.4. Once again, SR turn out to be quite complex.

3.2. Social Relationships and Cooperation – The Links Between Constructs

We identified four different links (divided into four different sections) between SR and cooperation, that is, (1) 12 positive effects and (2) four negative types of impact of SR on business cooperation and at the same time: (3) four positive and (4) two negative types of impact of business cooperation on SR.

3.2.1. The Positive Impacts of Social Relationships on Inter-organizational Cooperation

Most often in the literature, emphasis is placed on the significance of SR for entrepreneurs' business cooperation. Authors stress that SR are crucial at the first stage of cooperation, that is, when it is being established, or even when a cooperation partner is being selected or potential cooperation is being negotiated. It is recognized that SR facilitate the establishment of business cooperation (Ekanayake et al., 2017; Granovetter, 2005; Irwin & Berigan, 2013) (line 1.1 in Table 4.6). According to Gulati (1995), the formation of business relationships is immersed in an extremely rich social context that conditions future collaboration. In the pre-start phase (Jap & Anderson, 2007), entrepreneurs use SR to minimize the risk of forming a business relationship (Turner, 2007). Vilana and Monroy (2010) stress the crucial role of SR in establishing cooperation, especially when a firm is in the first stage of the business life cycle. They claim that starting business cooperation at the beginning of an entrepreneur's business activity is quite complicated, as partners often do not have previous experience based on SR, while potential business cooperation and its further development is based on the familiarity of interpersonal contacts. This means that friendship and companionship may contribute to establishing business cooperation (Ryan & Mulholland, 2014a) and to its development through the facilitation of economic exchanges (Luo, 2001). Later on, when cooperation is maintained, as claimed by Zhou et al. (2003 p. 83), "partners cultivate social relations, and business relations and social relations often benefit one another." For instance, people who like one another are more willing to complete common activities entrusted to them more quickly,

Table 4.6. Social Relationships and Cooperation – Links Between the Constructs.

Section 1. Positive Impact of Social Relationships on Cooperation		Author(s) (Year)
1.1.	<i>Stimulating (allowing to start), fostering and facilitating the cooperation process – Entering new collaborative relationships influenced by the structure of own prior relations SR allowing to start cooperation thanks to the easier process of identifying and selecting potential partners (especially important when a firm is in the first stage of the life cycle); shortening the stage of choosing business partners; facilitating the undertaking of formal inter-organizational cooperation</i>	Luo (2001), Maurer and Ebers (2006), Vilana and Monroy (2010), Chassagnon and Audran (2011), Mehta, Maretzki, et al. (2011), Mehta Semali, and Maretzki (2011), Sakalaki and Fousiani (2012), Cush and Varley (2013), Czernek-Marszałek (2020a), and Ekanayake et al. (2017)
1.2.	<i>Improving the integration and coordination of cooperative relationships – SR forming the principles of business cooperation. SR used to solve problems informally and to develop trust as a basis for business transactions</i>	Wang et al. (2016), Hajderilari (2015), Sakalaki and Fousiani (2012) and Zhou et al. (2003)
1.3.	<i>Increasing the willingness of partners to cooperate and truly engage in the cooperation process (through personality traits, frequent and open communication between partners and credibility). More comprehensive and coherent cooperation relationship (thanks to mutual understanding, intimacy in relationships, helping all the members of collaboration in improving organizational performance)</i>	Rooks, Raub, Seltén, and Tazelaar (2000), Cohen and Prusak (2001), Granovetter (2005), Sakalaki and Fousiani (2012), Liu, Wang, Orgun, and Lim (2011), Ahmed, Rifat, Nisha, and Uddin (2015) and Sun et al. (2016), Wang et al. (2016) and Cai and Du (2017)
1.4.	<i>Allowing for achieving the aims of cooperation (i.e., successful cooperation) – A higher probability of informal provisions positively affecting the results of cooperation</i>	Zhou et al. (2003) and Steinicke, Wallenburg, and Schmolzi (2012)
1.5.	<i>Reducing transaction costs in cooperation and improving operational efficiency – Cooperation based on past experience and SR developed by trust between partners</i>	Gulati (1995), Vilana and Monroy (2010) and Chen and Pan (2009)
1.6.	<i>Facilitating access to and diffusion of resources previously unavailable or not sufficient to business activity (including cooperation). For example, obtaining valuable, richer and more detailed information in a way that is cheaper and safer</i>	Chassagnon and Audran (2011), Cai and Du (2017), Maurer and Ebers (2006) and Casanueva and González (2004)
1.7.	<i>Sharing tacit knowledge thanks to developing a better information exchange mechanism</i> Interpersonal relationships between different firms foster the exchange of relevant knowledge and know-how between companies, and ensure access to in-depth knowledge of short-cuts to bureaucratic problems	Hansen (1999), Hislop (2000), Zhou et al. (2010), Pina-Stranger and Lazega (2011), Rodrigues and Child (2012), Rank (2014), Ahmed et al. (2015) and Ekanayake et al. (2017)
1.8.	<i>Being a channel used by stakeholders to share information on skills, competencies, experiences and needs, for example, about potential cooperation in the future</i>	Vilana and Monroy (2010)
1.9.	<i>Prioritizing social (group) interests over the personal interests of the individual – Acting for the common good, leading, for example, to limiting the risk of opportunistic behavior</i>	Sousa (2005) and Vilana and Monroy (2010)
1.10.	<i>Being a decisive source for competitive advantage – SR have an impact on the performance of individual employees and an organization making it possible to gain new business contacts</i>	Zhou et al. (2003), Lu et al. (2008), Cush and Varley (2013) and Cush and Macken-Walsh (2016)

1.11.	<i>Increasing an actor's or partnership reliability against potential opportunistic behavior</i> (thanks to informal contacts with other actors providing information about potential opportunistic behaviors)	Vilana and Monroy (2010)
1.12.	<i>Creating preferential terms of cooperation</i> (e.g., detailed personal knowledge of clients) – social contacts as a kind of business strategy	Uzzi (1999), Ferrary (2003) and, Granovetter (2005)
Section 2. Negative Impact of Social Relationships on Cooperation		
2.1.	<i>Closing off from the external environment</i> making partners and/or partnership structure vulnerable to exogenous shocks and deprived of fresh market information	Rooks et al. (2000)
2.2.	<i>Duplicating known business models and solutions</i> (by relying only on social relations) <i>limiting the level of innovativeness</i>	Zhou et al. (2010)
2.3.	<i>Increasing costs of breaking business relationships including transaction costs being a result of opportunistic behavior</i> – When partners suddenly break an existing relationship, especially when there is too heavy a reliance on one another	Bae (2011) and Mitrega and Zolkiewski (2012)
2.4.	<i>Generating unreasonable costs for business cooperation</i> – time spent with business partners in social settings being time away from other business opportunities or not paying attention to costs spent on cooperation	Zhou et al. (2003) and Czemek-Marszalek (2020b)
Section 3. Positive Impact of Cooperation on Social Relationships		
3.1.	<i>Strengthening existing social relationships by cooperation</i> (because, e.g., of spending a large amount of time with each other)	Kleinbaum and Tushman (2008)
3.2.	<i>Triggering positive emotions</i> (the emergence of new ones) positively influencing SR (including building such relationships) between partners	Gibson et al. (2014)
3.3.	<i>Bringing mutual support by cooperation</i> (also in private life) thanks to friendship and companionship between business partners	Ryan and Mulholland (2014a)
3.4.	<i>Enhancing the feeling of entities being part of a place/organization/partnership structure, etc.</i> Business cooperation leading to trust among business partners, respect, sympathy and reciprocity	Granovetter (1985), Ashton and Bain (2012) and Wang et al. (2016)
Section 4 Negative Impact of Cooperation on Social Relationships		
4.1.	<i>Causing interpersonal conflicts</i> (when partners work together for a long time, they know each other's faults and become tired over time)	Mitrega and Zolkiewski (2012)
4.2.	<i>Causing a lack of ability and competence for the effective establishment of social contacts with partners outside their own community</i> (because of too intense business cooperation in the case when people do not share divergent views and are closed to new potential relationships)	Maurer and Ebers (2006)

and often also help each other. Indeed, SR work like a catalyst for cooperation (Irwin & Berigan, 2013), reinforce workflow (Ekanayake et al., 2017), accelerate the dynamics of work-based interactions (Hislop, 2005) and mitigate competition (Pina-Stranger & Lazega, 2011).

Furthermore, as claimed by Hajderllari (2015), entrepreneurs can successfully manage inter-organizational relations by using interpersonal relationships, thus SR are seen as improving the integration and coordination of cooperative relationships (Wang et al., 2016) (line 1.2. in Table 4.6). Personal feelings such as affinity, friendship or sentiment, act as a *binding agent*, forming the principles of business cooperation (Sakalaki & Fousiani, 2012). SR are used to solve problems informally and to develop trust as a basis for business transactions (Zhou et al., 2003). Thus, researchers claim that informal relationships are even more important than formal ones (Ashton & Bain, 2012; Ekanayake et al., 2017).

When it comes to the positive effects, personality traits, including tendencies to adapt in entrepreneurs' SR, are also strongly correlated with business cooperation (Rooks et al., 2000). This is mainly due to frequent and open communication between partners, but also thanks to the credibility built in the eyes of the business partner, which intensifies the willingness of the parties to cooperate and engage with each other (Wang et al., 2016). It is pointed out that intimacy in relationships allows business cooperation to become more comprehensive and coherent due to organizational stability and mutual understanding (Cohen & Prusak, 2001; Sun et al., 2016). This leads to another impact of SR on business cooperation, which is a more comprehensive and coherent cooperation relationship.

Moreover, it is claimed that entrepreneurs' contracts initiated through SR tend to have a higher probability of following informal provisions than those based on an open information search channel (Zhou et al., 2003). For instance, the process of affinity creation and persistence in informal contacts of varying depth may be decisive for the results of cooperation (Czernek-Marszałek, 2020a).

Prior studies also prove that with time, emerging personal relationships create trust through the continuous interaction of people from different companies (Vilana & Monroy, 2010). Cooperation based on such trust significantly reduces transaction costs and improves the operational efficiency of cooperation (Chen & Pan, 2009; Ekanayake et al., 2017) (line 1.5. in Table 4.6).

Interpersonal relationships are also assumed to facilitate entrepreneurs' access to resources and services previously unavailable or not sufficient to business activity (including cooperation) (Chassagnon & Audran, 2011). For example, they enable valuable, richer and more detailed information to be obtained. What is more, partners may obtain such resources more cheaply and safely (Casasnovas & González, 2004). Furthermore, SR enable cooperating partners to ensure faster and more effective diffusion of obtained resources, which enhances business cooperation. In particular, it is said that SR foster the exchange of relevant information, knowledge and know-how between companies (Maurer & Ebers, 2006).

Thanks to developing a better information exchange mechanism, it is possible to share tacit knowledge (Hansen, 1999; Hislop, 2000) (line 1.7 in Table 4.6). For instance, partners have access to in-depth knowledge of short-cuts to bureaucratic problems (Ekanayake et al., 2017). This might be because the sharing of

complex and tacit knowledge may require levels of interpersonal trust and frequency of interactions that are typical in such relations (Hislop, 200). Indeed, Hansen (1999) proved that a strong tie is more likely to lead to tacit knowledge transfer because it bears more trustworthiness (Zhou et al., 2010).

Moreover, SR are often a channel used by stakeholders to share information on competencies (including skills and abilities), experiences and needs, for example, about potential cooperation in the future (Vilana & Monroy, 2010). Thus, entrepreneurs' SR not only serve as actual cooperation, but their existence also favors the establishment of new forms of business cooperation.

What is also stressed in the literature is that closeness in relationships develops empathy, which often leads to prioritizing social interests and the common good over the personal interests of the individual (Sousa, 2005). This can lead to another positive impact of entrepreneurs' SR on business cooperation, for example, limiting the risk of opportunistic behavior (Vilana & Monroy, 2010) (line 1.9. in Table 4.6).

Furthermore, properly shaped SR have an impact on the performance of individual employees (Cai & Du, 2017) and organizational performance (Ahmed et al., 2015), thus firm productivity (Granovetter, 2005) – as they make it possible to gain new business contacts which can be utilized in future, thus leveraging performance indirectly in a long-term perspective. For instance, friendship can be a decisive source for the future competitive advantage of business partners individually and the whole partnership organization as well.

Finally, we identified two more positive impacts of entrepreneurs' SR on business cooperation. These increase an actor's or partnership's reliability against potential opportunistic behavior and can result from additional knowledge from trusted persons on potential opportunistic behavior in the business environment (Vilana & Monroy, 2010) (line 1.11. in Table 4.6). Moreover, it is claimed, for example, by Uzzi (1999), Ferrary (2003) and Granovetter (2005), that SR enable entrepreneurs cooperation on preferential terms (the rules are more beneficial than in cooperation with partners with whom no SR are maintained).

3.2.2. *The Negative Effects of Social Relationships on Inter-organizational Cooperation*

As shown in Table 4.6, the impact of entrepreneurs' SR on business cooperation can also be negative (Mitręga & Zolkiewski, 2012). For instance, it is claimed that SR can have negative implications in the context of knowledge and information exchange. When entities have too many strong connections, this leads them to close themselves to the external environment and isolate themselves from the external world, which makes them vulnerable to exogenous shocks and deprives them of up-to-date market information (Rooks et al., 2000) (line 2.1. in Table 4.6).

Moreover, the literature indicates that relying only on SR means that entrepreneurs duplicate known business models (small-scale activity, mainly local, limiting the process of searching for employees in the local community, etc. – Zhou et al., 2010). This negatively affects their innovativeness as well as their business cooperation innovativeness.

Another negative implication of SR for business cooperation mentioned is a too strong dependency on a business partner with whom SR are maintained. The consequence may be problems in the day-to-day functioning of the firm, or costs (including transaction costs) incurred if the partner suddenly breaks the existing relationship and behaves opportunistically (Mitręga & Zolkiewski, 2012) (line 2.3. in Table 4.6).

Furthermore, it is also stressed in the literature that when partners get to know each other's flaws better, this may lead to conflicts and resignation from further business cooperation. Conflicts may block cooperation or even lead to its breakdown (Czernek-Marszałek, 2020b). They can also generate distrust, which may lead to disruptive power struggles between people, thus limiting learning capacity at both the individual and the organizational levels (Czernek-Marszałek, 2020b).

Finally, entrepreneurs' SR also incur other costs, for example, time spent with business partners in social settings is time away from other individual or common business opportunities (Zhou et al., 2003) (i.e., opportunity costs). Too strong SR can also lead to unreasonable costs spent by entrepreneurs on business cooperation.

3.2.3. The Positive Impacts of Inter-organizational Cooperation on Social Relationships

Besides the impacts of social relationships on cooperation, our literature review shows that the reverse influence is also possible. Business cooperation has an impact on strengthening SR as during the implementation of activities covered by cooperation, partners spend a large amount of time with each other, which can be conducive to establishing entrepreneurs' SR (Kleinbaum & Tushman, 2008) (line 3.1. in Table 4.6).

Moreover, thanks to business cooperation, not only existing SR can be strengthened, but also new positive SR can emerge (Gibson et al., 2014). Furthermore, thanks to SR (e.g., friendship) between business partners, cooperation can bring mutual support – also in non-business life (Ryan & Mulholland, 2014a).

Finally, business cooperation enables business partners to feel socially embedded in the cooperation structure, which is possible thanks to the trust and other positive emotions built among them over the time of the cooperation process (Ashton & Bain, 2012; Granovetter, 1985; Wang et al., 2016). In such a situation, partners feel part of a place, organization, or partnership structure (line 3.4. Table 4.6), which positively influences SR between them.

3.2.4. The Negative Effects of Inter-organizational Cooperation on Social Relationships

Just as SR may lead to negative effects on business cooperation, reverse negative impacts are also possible. For example, when entrepreneurs work together for too much time, they can become tired of the business relationship, and as

a result of knowing a partner's faults better, interpersonal conflicts may arise (Czernek-Marszałek, 2020b; Mitreğa & Zolkiewski, 2012). Conflicts can block further cooperation or even lead to its breakdown (Mitreğa & Zolkiewski, 2012) (line 4.1. in Table 4.6).

Researchers also noted that when ties with business partners are too intense, the partners have little opportunity to experience divergent views. As a result, they may lack the capacity and competence to relate effectively to partners outside their community. Whenever such contacts take place, they describe their related experiences as *painful, demanding or embarrassing* (Maurer & Ebers, 2006, p. 277).

Summing up, we can find evidence in the literature for bi-directional and two-sided (positive and negative) links between entrepreneurs' SR and inter-organizational cooperation. These links, however, used to be considered separately, either in terms of direction or type of the influence. Moreover, they have to date been considered asymmetrically as the vast majority of scholars have focused on the positive effects, including principally the effects of entrepreneurs' SR on inter-organizational relationships.

3.2.5. *Interlinks Between Social Relationships and Inter-organizational Cooperation*

Our literature review proves that cooperation and SR are relevantly interlinked. In the final database, 125 papers presented empirical findings from quantitative investigations. Nevertheless, only eight of them (i.e., Acedo & Gomila, 2013; BarNir & Smith, 2002; Bell & Zaheer, 2007; Brennecke, Schierjott, & Rank, 2016; Cimenler, Reeves, Skvoretz, & Oztekin, 2016; Hajderllari, 2015; Zhou et al., 2003, 2010) link SR and COOP. Two other papers (i.e., Casanueva & González, 2004; Ferru, 2014) applied a mixed methodological approach when considering both variables addressed by our RQs. Such a significant reduction in records derives from the fact that many of the gathered papers link either SR or COOP with a third, totally different theoretical construct, namely organizational innovativeness (e.g., Bastian & Tucci, 2017), also used in our general research project. Furthermore, the vast majority of papers linking SR and COOP provide neither qualitative nor quantitative empirical findings. Finally, there are many papers in which SR are reduced to social networks, and the findings do not outline specific entrepreneurs' interpersonal relationship(s), but rather describe social network structure or characteristics and present the main structural measurements, while at the core of the papers is ever-popular social network analysis (e.g., Migliore et al., 2014). Overall, we were able to identify 10 prior studies investigating both SR and COOP under one research project, however, as only 10 of all 319 collected papers presented any quantitative or mixed empirical results, it is justified to claim that there is a research gap in this field.

Moreover, our SLR shows that COOP and SR are interlinked in a multidimensional and bi-directional way. Regarding these interlinks, the following findings can be formulated.

1. Although prior works stress that SR and COOP are interlinked (Acedo & Gomila, 2013; Casanueva & González, 2004; Hajderllari, 2015), they focus either on the role of SR for COOP or on the role of COOP itself.
2. The effects of SR can be either positive or negative (Bell & Zaheer, 2007; Zhou et al., 2010), however, focusing on the positive impacts of SR on COOP noticeably dominates in the literature.
3. SR are an important source of COOP (e.g., BarNir & Smith, 2002; Ferru, 2014), however, most often attention is paid to the SR of managers, and less attention is paid to the SR of other employees (e.g., Wang et al., 2016).
4. SLR shows that SR are beneficial not only for COOP but before its establishment as well (Zhou et al., 2003).
5. Four specific characteristics of both considered constructs were identified as crucially important, namely dynamics (BarNir & Smith, 2002; Gerlach, 1992; Gjerding, 2005; Zhou et al., 2003) – the way links between SR and COOP change over time, the level of formality (Brennecke et al., 2016), the density and the intensity of social and inter-organizational relationships (Bell & Zaheer, 2007; Hajderllari, 2015).

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter deals with the issue of entrepreneurs' SR, which in the era of bleeding-edge technological advancements observed in the modern business world, seem to be additionally gaining in importance. This is because decisions – operational, but especially strategic, about the future of the enterprise are made by entrepreneurs who, as human beings, not emotionless machines, maintain networks of SR and – as the results of our review have shown – do not hesitate to use them. Technological progress may facilitate making these decisions, but it still does not replace the decision-making process, which in the case of entrepreneurs is often based on intuition, trust, and not always strictly economic premises. In the era of digitization, especially exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies have moved their activities to the virtual world and many have survived thanks to this decision. However, as shown by the latest research (Al-Omoush et al., 2020) SR established and maintained offline could not be replaced with online ones, and hybrid relationships of entrepreneurs or only virtual ones are associated with costs, including social costs already noticeable (e.g., isolation of employees and mental problems with resulting therefrom) (Green et al., 2020). This made online SR less frequent and elite, and thus even more appreciated. It was also them that allowed many enterprises on the market to survive pandemic time – often entrepreneurs use previously existing SR, for example, to establish business cooperation, to deal more effectively with the negative effects of a pandemic. All this means that research on SR not only does not lose its importance but even gains because a new perspective opens up to study inter-organizational and SR, which today, having a strongly hybrid form, are changing their meaning. Before this perspective is examined, it is worth summarizing the knowledge about SR functioning before the COVID-19 pandemic which intensified the digitization processes.

Thus, following methodological recommendations (Cooper, 1988; Fisch & Block, 2018), our literature review summarizes and discusses the content and findings from primary empirical studies. In particular, we see this chapter as contributing to the debate among scholars on entrepreneurs' SR – a theoretically (Grandori & Soda, 1995; Uzzi, 1997) and even intrinsically important issue for establishing (Shu et al., 2018), carrying out and reaping long-term benefits from entrepreneurs' COOP (e.g., Granovetter, 1985; Zhou et al., 2010). Indeed, our literature review identifies knowledge gaps regarding the SR themselves, as well as the links between the two constructs and their mutual impacts on one another.

4.1. Theoretical Contributions

In terms of SR, several identified cognitive gaps have been filled (see Fig. 4.2):

1. We noticed that the concept lacks a clear definition and understanding. SR (in this chapter interpersonal or personal relationships) are not only understood differently (Table 4.2) but they are also identified using various other concepts, that is, networks, networking, social capital, etc. The reason for this may be that the authors investigating SR represent very different disciplines of science. Additionally, as SR are an immaterial and theoretical construct, the *soft* side of relationships can itself be difficult to capture and measure. Regarding this SR cognitive gap, based on the literature review, we have proposed a definition of SR, however, their detailed conceptualization and operationalization are still needed.
2. Very diverse components or features of entrepreneurs' SR are pointed out in the literature (Hite, 2003; Jack et al., 2008). What is more, the same factors are treated by various authors as either features of SR or their components. We

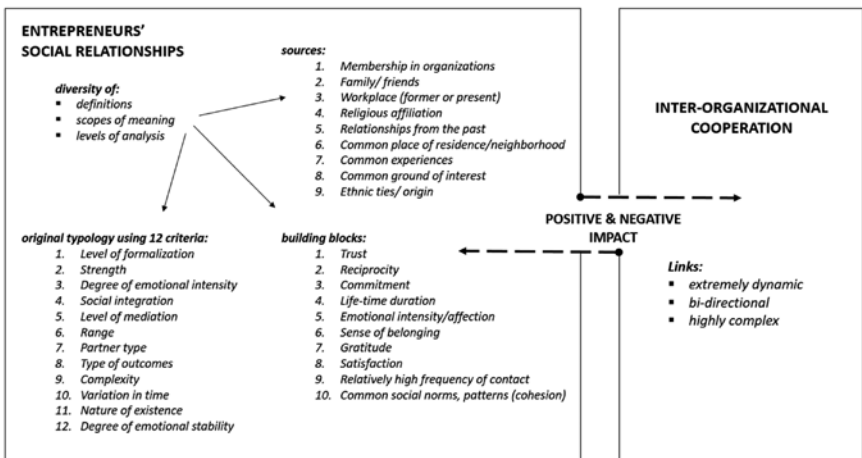


Fig. 4.2. Characteristics of Social Relationships Exploited by Entrepreneurs – Results of Literature Review.

call these SR components and features the main SR building blocks (Table 4.3 and Fig. 4.2), among which trust seems to be the most important (Acedo & Gomila, 2013; Raggio et al., 2014; Zhou et al., 2010). As these building blocks came from a review of empirical and theoretical investigations, we see it as important to verify them all in field exploration, with the focus on the identification of others, the ones that are missing.

Moreover, the results of the conducted analyses allow us to assume that the importance of SR building blocks such as trust or reciprocity may be different when these relations are built between various types of entities, for example, suppliers, competitors, consultants, etc. For example, it may turn out that, depending on the type of partner, SR are based on different types of trust – for example, in the case of suppliers with whom enterprises establish long-term relationships, it may be trust based on emotional ties (affective), while in the case of competitors, whose trust is limited to some extent, it may be based primarily on the competitor's reputation in the environment or on knowledge about him. Our SLR revealed no studies in this field. Moreover, having made a typology of SR, it would be worth conducting comparative research on the significance of social relations of a specific type (e.g., online vs. physical SR; direct vs. indirect SR) for economic activity, including inter-organizational cooperation.

3. Different authors have to date revealed various types of SR. Moreover, to do so, they used diversified differentiation criteria. This chapter synthesizes these prior fragmented and conceptual arrangements (Table 4.4) and frames an SR typology, which, as it results from a literature review, calls for empirical verification.
4. Our SLR also allowed us to identify nine related and overlapping sources of SR (Table 4.5), for example, membership in organizations, a common ground of interest, common experiences and a common place of residence/neighborhood (e.g., Abbott, 2009; Chung & Whalen, 2006; Johansson & Persson, 2009; Maurer & Ebers, 2006; Milana & Maldaon, 2015). So far, the identification of these sources has very rarely been the subject of literature reviews, and if it has, to a large extent this has concerned selected industries (see Czernek-Marszałek, 2021). As the identified sources of SR are interlinked, it would be reasoned to investigate these mutual interlinks in detail using large-scale quantitative surveys.

For instance, in the future, it would be valuable to compare whether and what sources of SR are specific to building cooperation between entities in various industries. Recent studies distinguish between sufficient and necessary factors affecting a given phenomenon (Dul, 2020; Knol, Slomp, Schouteten, & Lauche, 2018), and it would be valuable to consider which of the identified sources (and in which industry) are critical for establishing SR.

5. SLR allowed us to formulate some conclusions regarding the links between SR and COOP as one of the questions underlying our SLR was if (and how) SR impact COOP. Our findings support and expand prior claims that intra-firm “cooperation depends upon a manager's social skills, supported by social cognitive capabilities” (Helfat & Peteraf, 2014, p. 834) into inter-organizational cooperation, as they suggest that there is a link between SR and COOP. Additionally, our findings confirm prior claims about the role of SR for

establishing business relationships by and among entrepreneurs, especially as they pay great attention to cooperate with friends, with friends of their friends or at least with acquaintances they trust (Shu et al., 2018; Sorenson, 2018; Stuart & Sorenson, 2005).

6. It must be stressed that so far, attention has much more often been paid to the SR of entrepreneurs/managers (e.g., Anderson, 2008; Ashton & Bain, 2012; Bell & Zaheer, 2007) rather than those of other employees (e.g., Wang et al., 2016). We believe that operational links may benefit from SR between workers, thus it would be valuable to deepen research on the importance of SR among firms' employees across a wide range of organizational issues going beyond merely inter-organizational cooperation (e.g., organizational culture, communication efficiency, individual efficiency, employees' engagement, etc.).

Analysis of prior works suggests that these linkages seem to be dynamic and much more complex rather than purely one-directional (Gerlach, 1992; Gjerding, 2005). Thus, they should not be considered from a static perspective only (Acedo & Gomila, 2013; Casanueva & González, 2004; Hajderllari, 2015), as has been done so far. Therefore, a few interesting avenues emerging from the literature have been identified for further research on the links between SR and COOP.

1. In the literature there are claims about the co-occurrence of business (i.e., cooperation) and interpersonal (i.e., social) relationships (Brennecke et al., 2016; Granovetter, 2005; Poros, 2001; Shu et al., 2018), as well as their mutual dependence (Casanueva & González, 2004). On one hand, some works stress the crucial role of SR in COOP (e.g., Anderson, 2008; Ekanayake et al., 2017; Ferru, 2014; Sun et al., 2016) while on the other hand, there are works emphasizing the significant meaning of COOP for SR (Bell & Zaheer, 2007; Casanueva & González, 2004; Ferru, 2014). Nonetheless, we are missing works linking the one-directional perspective to an exploration of mutual and bi-directional linkage. Indeed, in our final database, of 319 papers, only 125 presented empirical findings from any quantitative investigations. Of these, just eight made a vague link between SR and COOP as part of a quantitative exploration (e.g., BarNir & Smith, 2002; Bell & Zaheer, 2007; Zhou et al., 2003). This reveals a relevant empirical gap. Although it is known that relationships including both social (Jap & Anderson, 2007) and inter-organizational (Dyer & Singh, 1998) relationships are dynamic, this dynamic nature seems so far to have been overlooked. Thus, it would be worthwhile deepening research on the links between SR and COOP from a dynamic, not just a static perspective. At the same time, it should be highlighted that attempts to move toward dynamic studies raise the difficult question of defining, conceptually and operationally, when relationships start, change and end (Marsden, 1990). What is more, as discussed above, one construct impacts another and *vice versa*, and this impact can be either positive or negative (see Table 4.6), which reinforces the dynamics of these two phenomena. We claim that all these aspects require further, more holistic investigation as the vast majority

of the above conclusions result from theorization, conceptual considerations or explorative (country and industry limited) studies.

2. Research showing the feedback between SR and COOP would also be valuable. To grasp a holistic view of the role of SR in the context of COOP, we suggest reinvestigating the implications of SR on the development path of the COOP process, including their impacts on different phases of the entrepreneurs' COOP life cycle (including the pre-relationship phase – i.e., during the awareness stage – Jap & Anderson, 2007; Zhou et al., 2003) as so far, the focus has been limited only to formal and inter-organizational relationships (Jap & Anderson, 2007).
3. The effects of SR on COOP can be either positive or negative (Bell & Zaheer, 2007; Zhou et al., 2010) however, focus on the former dominates in works published to date. Thus, it is also worth focusing attention on the negative effects, including also the reverse direction of the influence.

Moreover, this may suggest that the positive influence of SR on COOP reaches some kind of maximum level, a turning point, after which the influence begins to become negative. Therefore, the relationship between SR and COOP can take the form of an inverted *U*-shape, similarly to the relationship between embeddedness and firm performance (Boschma, Lambooy, & Schutjens, 2002; Uzzi, 1996, 1997), or between the strength of ties and intra-team creative cooperation (Leenders, Van Engelen, & Kratzer, 2003). All in all, we find research on the visual representation of links between SR and COOP to be extremely valuable, that is, it is interesting whether it actually follows an inverted *U*-shape and what factors this depends on, and what can be done to make the influence of SR on inter-organizational COOP positive for as long as possible (and thus to generate economic benefits of SR for cooperation).

4. Four specific features of both considered constructs, that is, dynamics, formality level, density and intensity of social and inter-organizational relationships – although shown as constitutive and relevant for relationship establishment and long-term utilization – have so far been neglected in consideration of the links between SR and COOP. Therefore, we see it as reasoned to include them as mediating or moderating variables when digging deeper into our understanding of the mutual connections between SR and inter-organizational cooperation.

Summing up, given the scope of our findings, we believe this chapter adds value to the current discussion as it integrates prior findings in the form of originally developed frameworks (Callahan, 2010) (see Fig. 4.2), namely a comprehensive typology of SR (Table 4.4), SR building blocks (Table 4.3) and sources in the context of cooperating organizations run by entrepreneurs (Table 4.5). It should be emphasized that – from the perspective of the integrative literature review – syntheses offering novel classifications of the theoretical construct should be seen as adding to cumulative knowledge development (Torraco, 2005). Furthermore, our review contributes to the future view (Torraco, 2016) on the interconnection between SR and COOP, as we have found literature-based evidence of its bi-directional (not one-directional and linear) as well as paradoxical nature (not only positive or not only negative but simultaneously positive and negative) (Table 4.6).

Given the above contributions resulting from a systematic and integrative analysis of the current stock of knowledge, we claim these to be advancing theory (Post, Sarala, Gatrell, & Prescott, 2020) through cumulative knowledge creation (Boon et al., 2019; Elsbach & van Knippenberg, 2020).

Finally, what is crucial in the context of the issue of bleeding-edge technological advancements observed nowadays, it should be emphasized that research on SR is gaining in importance, as it opens up a new perspective for the study of inter-organizational and SR, which today, having a strongly hybrid form, are changing their meaning. Along with this significance, the sources of SR (more and more often having their genesis in online contact), the components of SR or their positive and negative consequences, as well as the links between them and business cooperation (more and more often established in the form of only remote or hybrid), would probably change. Moreover, the rapid digitalization and technological humanization of machinery, equipment and items of every day can not only enable but also facilitate the establishment of SR with robotic others. Indeed, such social interactions are shown as emotionally engaging, morally and psychologically ambiguous but at the same time as appearing and utilized by more and more people (Kahn, Gary, & Shen, 2013). As people, including entrepreneurs, begin to be embedded in social interactions with computers, robots or artificial intelligence it would be interesting to verify if the revealed building blocks of SR, their sources but also outcomes are adequate. In our opinion, this literature review is a good starting point for future research on the meaning of SR and their links with inter-organizational cooperation in a completely new, post-Covid world, heavily virtualized world.

4.2. Managerial Implications

Given the wide range of benefits of SR for business (Ryan & Mulholland, 2014a, 2014b; Zhou et al., 2010), and for COOP in particular (Czernek-Marszałek, 2020a), it seems reasoned to intentionally use them in managerial practice. According to Uzzi (1997), when entrepreneurs being partners personally know and like each other, they exchange experience and knowledge (including tacit knowledge – Davidsson & Honig, 2003) and make contact with one another when something goes wrong. However, when the partners do not build SR and only work strictly according to contractual, written arrangements, it may generate problems when entities have to react flexibly in crises.

Managers need to become more aware of the role and importance of SR in developing individual entrepreneurship (Shu et al., 2018) as well as the entrepreneurial orientation of their companies. As the authors point out, SR increase the company's ability to obtain valuable external resources and gain a resourceful advantage (Sorenson, 2018; Stuart & Sorenson, 2005), hence the deliberate effort of managers to properly manage SR in the strategic planning process is important when companies plan entrepreneurial initiatives (Jiang et al., 2018; Li et al., 2013; Nielsen, 2020; Ulhøi, 2005).

Furthermore, among the effects of SR, there are also discussions about certain serious consequences, including interpersonal conflicts, replacing economic rationality with loyalty, nepotism in cooperative relations (e.g., partners'

selection), limiting the willingness to cooperate and/or lowering the assessment of cooperation or the level of entrepreneurship, and susceptibility to partners' opportunistic activities (Czernek-Marszałek, 2020b; Mitreǵa & Zolkiewski, 2012; Nielsen, 2020). Analysis of these negative effects of SR and their potentially harmful impact on COOP suggests that managers should be aware that SR, shown here as inseparably linked to any organization, generates, in addition to benefits, very significant costs.

4.3. *Limitations of Our Desk Research*

Our SLR has some limitations.

1. We are aware of the subjectivity inherent in the different steps of SLR (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2013), which were also not avoided in our research.
2. We acknowledge that there are typically a great many different biases to SLR, which may lower the quality of its contribution (Di Vaio et al., 2021; Durach et al., 2017; King & He, 2005). In this study, however, we applied many different forms of triangulation, including triangulation of data sources (i.e., different databases within the academic search and a gray literature search), analysts (i.e., a team of four independent researchers), methods (i.e., description, semantic and frequency analyses) and theories (i.e., two leading perspectives – economy and management) which are acknowledged as “strategies for reducing systematic bias in the data” (Patton, 1999, p. 1197) and thus in the entire review process.
3. The findings presented and discussed in this chapter are based on a qualitative, descriptive review, which can also be seen as a limitation. However, although there is a significant stock of knowledge within the relational view, the limited number of papers linking SR with COOP and presenting empirical findings did not allow us to run either metasynthesis of the qualitative results (58 papers presented qualitative results) or meta-analysis of quantitative ones (eight papers presented quantitative findings). Generally speaking, it is quite common to rely on narrative, descriptive revision of the literature if the specific field of interest is new, emerging or consists of fragmentary findings and contributions (Boon et al., 2019; King & He, 2005; Okoli, 2015). Furthermore, as suggested in methodological recommendations, instead of lengthy operational descriptions, the focus in this chapter is placed on describing and discussing results (Rojon et al., 2021).
4. We claim that this review meets methodological requirements (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009; Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2013), allowing us to ensure at least an idiographic approach or *moderatum*, as this is more typical for the socio-behavioral sciences than the nomothetic sciences searching for universal laws of nature (Finfgeld-Connett, 2010).

NOTE

1. The SLR presented in this chapter was an integral component of a cognitively broader research project linking SR, inter-organizational cooperation (COOP) and organizational

innovativeness. This chapter, however, focuses mainly on the first and the mutual links between SR and COOP.

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