

Trust



What is trust? How important is it, in our relations with one another, online, and in the world in general?

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Exercise

- ❖ Think of a time when someone you trusted did something that violated your trust.
- ❖ Take out a piece of paper and write down:
 - what happened
 - how you felt
 - what happened to your relationship with that person afterwards

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Nearly everything we do requires trust

- ❖ Driving a car
- ❖ Entering a building
- ❖ Making an appointment
- ❖ Taking a course
- ❖ Eating a meal
- ❖ Walking (putting one foot in front of the other)
- ❖ Knowing something (e.g. that the earth is round)

Can you think of any activity that doesn't require trust?

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Nearly everything we do requires trust

"How could coordinated activity of any kind be possible if people could not rely upon others' undertakings. No goods would be handed over without prior payment, and no payment without goods in hand. There would be no point in keeping engagements, nor any reason to make engagements with people who could not be expected to honor their commitments. The relationship between teacher and pupil, parent and child, would be impossible if the reliability of the former as sources of knowledge were not to be granted." (Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*)

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Contracts and agreements

- ❖ Contracts and agreements establish expectations of reciprocity between two parties
- ❖ But social contracts or agreements don't just happen when you sign a piece of paper – they are everywhere
 - Getting on a bus
 - Taking a course
 - Living with roommates

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How trusting are you?

- ❖ How willing are you to take people and things on “face value”?
- ❖ What do you look for as clues to someone's or something's trustworthiness?
- ❖ How do you know when someone is who they claim to be?
 - Meeting someone at a party
 - Someone on the street asking for a handout
 - Going to the doctor
 - Getting in a car
- ❖ What events have influenced the way you trust?

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How trustworthy are you?

- ❖ Are you who you claim to be?
- ❖ How do you claim to be somebody or something? (“presentation of self”)
- ❖ What do you tell other people about yourself by the way you dress, the way you speak, the actions you perform?
- ❖ How have you learned (are you learning) to be trustworthy?

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What are the consequences of being (viewed as) untrustworthy

- ❖ Personal consequences: the ability to work (and play) with others
- ❖ Professional consequences
- ❖ Consequences for groups, organizations, businesses (the example of Enron)

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A loss of trust in Enron



- ❖ “Confidence and credibility, which is what this business is all about, deteriorated after that” (NYT 11/29/01)
- ❖ “Every banker knows that if he has to prove that he is worthy of credit, however good may be his argument, in fact his credit is gone.” (Walter Bagehot, British journalist, 1873)

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Learning to trust, to be trustworthy

A big part of our growing up is learning how to trust (and whom and what to trust). Equally, it involves learning to be trustworthy ourselves and to display ourselves as trustworthy and authentic.

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Privacy, ownership and trust

- ❖ Ownership and privacy: what is mine
- ❖ We are constantly trusting that others won't abuse what is ours:
 - By stealing
 - By misusing
 - By violating our person
 - By misrepresenting what we've said
 - By repeating what we've trusted them not to say
- ❖ Many of our laws are about protecting people's privacy, their possessions, from other individuals or groups, including the government (e.g. copyright)

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Trusted people, trusted systems

- ❖ A shift in modern times from trust in individuals in contexts of face-to-face interaction to trust in systems and abstract capacities
- ❖ “We board a plane trusting it to get us safely to our destination not because we have familiarity with the design engineer or the pilot but because we trust that reliable systems of expertise were brought to bear in constructing the plane and will be devoted to flying it.” (Shapin)

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FIT 100 Trust online

- ❖ Financial dealings on the Web: Will you use your credit card? Why or why not?
- ❖ Personal email in chat rooms: How do you know that the person is the person he or she purports to be?
- ❖ Collection information about user behavior on the Web (via cookies).
- ❖ Web sites: To what extent can you trust that a site is what it claims to be (and, therefore, that its information is true and reliable)?

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FIT 100 Trust online

- ❖ Researchers (Rand) checked out 6 health Web sites and 12 sites dedicated to specific diseases.
- ❖ How frequently Web sites are complete and accurate:
 - ❖ Breast cancer 63%
 - ❖ Depression 44%
 - ❖ Obesity 37%
 - ❖ Childhood asthma 33%

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FIT 100 Trust online

In a study of 500 sites used by Colorado high school students to do research, only 27% of the sites were judged to be reliable for academic research!

Ebersol, Samuel, "Uses and Gratifications of the Web among Students,"
Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 6(1): September 2000,
www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol6/issue1/ebersole.html.

Colhoun, Alexander. "But -- I Found It on the Internet!" Christian Science Monitor, 25 April 2000: 16.

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FIT 100 How do you want to live?

- ❖ "Everybody dreams of being famous, rich and famous. Once you get rich and famous, you think, 'this wasn't it.' And that made me go on to find out what it is.... And it doesn't matter how much money or property or whatever you've got, unless you're happy in your heart, then that's it." (George Harrison)
- ❖ "A good name is better than good oil"

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