

**How to be not-so-rational  
and make your life easier:**

**TRUST  
and all that**

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# Abstract

Would you entrust me with all the money you own? No? Or with your life? No again? Then WHY do you give all your money to complete strangers (whose real name probably isn't even Barclay)? And why do you go to hospitals to have your guts cut open by some random guy? Because you're blatantly stupid, is the non-expert answer – because you TRUST is what really clever people (i.e., myself) say. Trust is a funny thing: in essence you just act like things will go right although you don't know they really will (and sometimes they really don't). I'll be telling you all sorts of sociological things about trust, using weird sociological words like "institution", and generally making your life more complicated by talking about things people never think about, because that's what sociologists usually do. But don't worry, I promise you won't leave utterly untrusting and paranoid – surely you can trust me on that?

P.S. If you DO want to give me all your money, please make cheques payable to Frens Kroeger. Thanks.

# Demonstration

Whatever made you think it was a good idea  
to give me that money...

# What, who, why, how?

– didactic approach

(adopted from "Sesame Street")

- What:

Trust means you choose to rely on somebody else and have confidence that their future actions will not be detrimental to your own interests.

- Who: you (yes, YOU!)

- Why: because you have to

# Trust me, you can't help it

- Fundamental significance of trust  
(trust as a "basic fact of social life",  
the "glue that holds society together", etc.)
- Function of trust:  
reduction of social complexity  
(makes your life easier!)
- How to do that: don't worry  
(just act AS IF everything will be all right)

# So we should all be fine, shouldn't we

- Trust makes our life easier  
(or indeed, marginally bearable at all)
- We all know that, so we will all be trusting
- And we all know that consequently we will  
all have to be trustworthy

And we all trusted happily ever after.

– HAPPY ENDING –

... NOT.

# Ow, that hurt – the risk of trust

- Trust is necessary in situations "between knowledge and ignorance"
- Trust bridges this gap in time and information ("leap of faith")
- Problem: trust produces risk  
(or rather: transforms uncertainty into risk)
- Problem: you cannot get rid of this risk  
(due to the other's freedom)

# See you in court, dear – safeguards for trust

- "The shadow of the future"  
in repeated exchanges (incl. reputation)
- "Institutional antecedents",  
e.g. contracts and contract law
- "System trust" underwrites  
interpersonal trust
- Norms and roles to make trusting  
and being trustworthy "reasonable"
- "Symbolical exchange"  
to signal trustworthiness

My, isn't THAT clever

– some aspects of trust I work on

- The institutionalisation of trust  
(how do social structure and individual behaviour interact in trust building?)
- Gradual trust building, norm building in symbolic exchange and the "transformation" of trust
- The relation between cognitive and normative elements in trust



Thanks.

Please don't forget about the cheques.



