Welcome to the World Database of Trust!

In compiling research on trust, I have divided it into theoretical, empirical, and other designations. These designations are only approximate. Some empirical studies will make a theoretical contribution, and some theoretical papers contain empirical results. Nevertheless, I have made every effort to fit the papers and books as closely as possible to the main theoretical or empirical contribution of the work.

I am also beginning to compile definitions of trust and, to be added later, empirical measures of trust and trust-related concepts, such as trustworthiness and the like.

If you have any comments, suggestions for improvement, or know of papers or books that should be listed here, please e-mail me at hjames@missouri.edu.

Definitions of Trust

“Trust ... is reliance on another's good will ... Where one depends on another's good will, one is necessarily vulnerable to the limits of that good will. One leaves others an opportunity to harm one when one trusts, and also shows one's confidence that they will not take it. Reasonable trust will require good grounds for such confidence in another's good will, or at least the absence of good grounds for expecting their ill will or indifference. Trust then ... is accepted vulnerability to another's possible but not expected ill will (or lack of good will) toward one.”

“Trust ... is letting other persons (natural or artificial, such as firms, nations, etc.) take care of something the trustor cares about, where such 'caring for' involves some exercise of discretionary powers.”


Trust “is the mutual confidence that one's vulnerability will not be exploited in an exchange.”


“Trust is an expectation that alleviates the fear that one's exchange partner will act opportunistically.”


“Trust is the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behavior,
based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community.”

“Trust (or, symmetrically, distrust) is a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action, both before he can monitor such an action (or independently of his capacity ever to be able to monitor it) and in a context in which it affects his own action.”

“Trust is the reliance by one person, group, or firm upon a voluntarily accepted duty on the part of another person, group, or firm to recognize and protect the rights and interests of all others engaged in a joint endeavor or economic exchange.”
Trust is “the expectation ... of ethically justifiable behavior – that is, morally correct decisions and actions based upon ethical principles of analysis.”

“In the language of economics, trust can be viewed as an expectation, and it pertains to circumstances in which agents take risky actions in environments characterized by uncertainty or informational incompleteness. To say ‘A trusts B’ means that A expects B will not exploit a vulnerability A has created for himself by taking the action.”

“Trust can be defined as the belief or perception by one party (e.g. a principal) that the other party (e.g. an agent) to a particular transaction will not cheat, where the payoff structure internal to the transaction can be characterized by a prisoner’s dilemma or principal-agent game.”

Trust is the “undertaking of a risky course of action on the confident expectation that all persons involved in the action will act competently and dutifully.”
- J.D. Lewis and A. Weigert, “Trust as a Social Reality,” *Social Forces*, 63, 1985, 971

“Trust can be defined as the judgement one makes on the basis of one’s past interactions with others that they will seek to act in ways that favor one’s interests, rather than harm them, in circumstances that remain to be defined. Trusting judgements inevitably remain tentative, rather than certain, since they are based on a limited knowledge of others rather than a precise calculation of their interests.”

Trust “is the perceived likelihood of the other not behaving in a self-interested manner.”

Trust is “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor.”

Trust is “the extent to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another.”

“Trust in things or people entails the willingness to submit to the risk that they may fail us, with the expectation that they will not, or the neglect or lack of awareness of the possibility that they might.”
“‘Real’ trust, or trust in the strong sense, is an expectation that things or people will not fail us, or the neglect of lack of awareness of the possibility of failure, even if there are perceived opportunities and incentives for it.”

Trust broadly defined is “the expectation that a partner will not engage in opportunistic behavior, for whatever reason, including control of his conduct.”
Trust more narrowly defined is “the expectation that a partner will not engage in opportunistic behavior, even in the face of short-term opportunities and incentives, in the absence of control.”

“Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another.”

Trust is a person's "expectations, assumptions, or beliefs about the likelihood that another's future actions will be beneficial, favorable, or at least not detrimental to one's interests."

“Trust is a state of mind, an expectation held by one trading partner about another, that the other behaves or responds in a predictable and mutually expected manner.”

Trust "may be defined as a reliance upon information received from another person about uncertain environmental states and their accompanying outcomes in a risky situation."

Trust is a "belief, attitude, or expectation concerning the likelihood that the actions or outcomes of another individual, group or organization will be acceptable or will serve the actor's interests." Trust is the "belief in a person's competence to perform a specific task under specific circumstances."

“Trust is the willingness to permit the decisions of others to influence your welfare.”

“When we trust other people, we expect that they will fulfill their promises, either because we know that they have usually done so in the past … or because we believe that we shall fare better if we presume that others are trustworthy.”

“From a sociological perspective, trust is defined as a set of expectations shared by all those involved in an exchange.”
- L.G. Zucker, “Production of Trust: Institutional Sources of Economic Structure, 1840-1920,”

http://web.missouri.edu/~jamesha/trust/index.htm
Books on Trust


Surveys, Overviews, General Discussions


**Theoretical Models**


**Markets, Institutions and Society**


Organizational Trust


**General Empirical Studies**


**Experiments**


Gächter, S., B. Herrmann, and C. Thöni, “Trust, Voluntary Cooperation, and Socio-economic Background: Survey and Experiment Evidence,” *Journal of Economic Behavior and*


### Trust and Risk Communication


Sjöberg, L., "Limits of Knowledge and the Limited Importance of Trust," Risk Analysis, 21(1), 2001,
189-198.


**Social Psychology of Trust**


**Neurobiology and Trust**


