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**Trustworthiness in Youth:
How Youth Understand Their Own Trustworthiness and the Trustworthiness of Others**

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Abstract

In this paper, I explore youth conceptions of trustworthiness. I draw on qualitative interviews conducted with 20 young Americans, ages 15 to 19, from the Greater Boston area and Maine. The subjects represent a subset of participants in the GoodWork Project's study of Trust and Trustworthiness. Researchers have conducted 113 interviews with 60 youth participants to date, probing their conceptions of trust and trustworthiness in the form of person-centered and dilemma interviews. Using interview data, I present a three-part analysis to address the questions of 1) how youth conceptualize trustworthiness; 2) how youth assess the trustworthiness of others; and 3) how youth assess their own trustworthiness.

The findings reveal that trustworthiness takes on moral meaning in the lives of today's youth. The informants discussed trustworthiness primarily in terms of fulfilling expectations of honesty, loyalty/commitment, and freedom from judgment. Yet, despite the moral nature of these expectations, the majority of youth view the establishment of trustworthiness as an instrumental quality of trusting relationships rather than as a good in itself. When assessing the trustworthiness of others and themselves, youth also require reputation, performance, or appearance-based evidence. For appearance-based evidence in particular, youth expressed little reliance on visual cues and, surprisingly, more often cited the use of other behavioral cues in real-life and hypothetical trust scenarios. Finally, the findings reveal an intimate connection between youth conceptions and assessments of trustworthiness: throughout the interviews, youth cited the same types of expectations in their explanations of how they define and assess trustworthiness. In a concluding discussion, I touch on the contributions of the study to the literature; the utility of its protocols; and implications for how one might foster appropriate trustworthiness in youth.

Background and Introduction

It would be hard to think of myself as not trustworthy. I don't think I could live with myself if I thought of myself that way. So, I guess I never let myself think that I could be untrustworthy. I do my best to be as good a person as I can be, and that's all I can ask of myself.

– *Emily, age 18*

Emily is exactly the type of person you might want to know and trust because she considers herself to be trustworthy and strives to be virtuous. For example, as her teacher, I might trust Emily to complete her assignments on time; as her parent, I might trust Emily to be honest; and as her friend, I might trust Emily to keep my most intimate secrets – *might* being the operative word. Despite our inclinations to trust Emily, we might also realize that it is not sufficient to grant her trust merely because she says she views herself as trustworthy. After all, there is the possibility that Emily will not do what we expect her to do, or even worse, does not even mean what she says. How then can we decide if Emily is worthy of our trust, and what motivations might she have to be or at least appear trustworthy?

In the real world, it is highly unlikely that we should judge or try to understand Emily's trustworthiness on the basis of her statements alone. In fact, it is more likely that we will have had interactions with Emily or testimony from others that tell us about her qualities such as her demeanor, system of beliefs and values, and past reliability. For example, we might conclude that Emily is trustworthy because we know she is kind to others, values honesty, and upholds her commitments. It is also highly unlikely that we should trust Emily solely on the basis of a single assessment carried out for a single purpose. Rather, in deciding to trust Emily, we might also consider the risks and opportunities of our decisions (i.e., what we can stand to lose or gain in this interaction). Finally, given the particularities of each circumstance and relationship, it is highly unlikely that everyone will reach the same conclusion to trust, distrust, or withhold trust from Emily. For example, I might trust Emily to walk my dog, but I might not trust her to watch my child. Alternatively, I might be more likely to grant her trust if she is my sister but not if she is a stranger.

It would be difficult to imagine life in the absence of such considerations of trust and trustworthiness in our daily decision-making processes and cooperative participation in our society at-large. In fact, all of us have been in positions in which we must decide in what or whom we should place our trust, as well as positions in which we are judged on the basis of our own trustworthiness. For youth like Emily, such matters of trust and trustworthiness are further complicated as they grow up in an era when levels of trust in individuals and institutions have declined (Fukuyama, 1996; Gardner, Benjamin, & Pettingill, 2006;

World Values Survey, 2007), and new technologies and media are creating brave new worlds for youth to grapple with emerging ethical dilemmas. How then do youth conceptualize trustworthiness today? What do youth expect of others and of themselves when it comes to thinking about what it means to be trustworthy? Like Emily, do they find it hard to think of themselves as untrustworthy individuals or does trustworthiness have a different meaning? In other words, is trustworthiness deeply intertwined with their sense of goodness or do youth conceive of it in other, perhaps, more self-serving ways?

Despite their interactions with and experiences as youth, adults might quickly realize that the answers to these questions are not so simple. That is, while it might be easy to *think* we know, I imagine that few of us have stopped to ask these difficult yet critical questions directly from the source – the voices of today’s youth. What can the individual experiences of youth tell us about how they view trustworthiness? If adults are to consider themselves responsible for creating the conditions for youth to become trustworthy individuals, it therefore becomes of paramount importance to ask and seek an understanding of these difficult issues. The purpose of the present investigation, then, is to illuminate how young people conceptualize trustworthiness; what sources of evidence they use to assess and judge the trustworthiness of other individuals, groups, institutions, and the information they receive from various media; and if and how they establish their own sense of trustworthiness.

In this paper, I use qualitative interviews conducted with 20 young Americans¹ to take a first step in examining the nature and meaning of trustworthiness in the lives of today’s youth. Together, they represent the perspectives of a subset of participants in the GoodWork Project’s study of Trust & Trustworthiness, in which a team of researchers have conducted 113 interviews with 60 youth participants to date, probing their conceptions of trust and trustworthiness in the form of person-centered and dilemma interviews. To begin, I present a case for examining trustworthiness youth. I also situate the study in the context of previous findings of the GoodWork Project and describe the research methods in detail. Using data from the interviews, I then present a three-part analysis to address the questions of 1) how youth conceptualize trustworthiness; 2) how youth assess the trustworthiness of others; and 3) how youth assess their own trustworthiness. In doing so, I uncover how youth define trustworthiness primarily in terms of fulfilling moral expectations², as well as how youth assess trustworthiness using reputation, performance, and appearance-based evidence; I also uncover the consistency youth demonstrate between their definitions and assessments of trustworthiness. I conclude with a discussion of the study’s implications

¹ Any identifying details described herein have been omitted or replaced to maintain participant anonymity.

² It is worth noting that while I describe these expectations as moral in nature, the youth in this study may not recognize their expectations as such. Thus, I would like to make a distinction here between what youth recognize and the meaning I make of their responses as a researcher.

for theory, research, and practice, as well as the limitations and questions it raises for future research.

A Case for Trustworthiness in Youth

When we decide to trust another person, we determine in some sense that they are trustworthy. It would be irrational, of course, to think that we should trust something or someone who is untrustworthy. Thus, when we speak of trust, we might actually be grappling with the problems and complexities of trustworthiness. Russell Hardin (2002) argues this to be the case particularly in the work on trust of such scholars as the philosopher, Bernard Williams, the economist, Roland McKean, and the sociologist, Niklas Luhmann. *Trust*, which Hardin defines as “little more than knowledge,” would be described more aptly as work on *trustworthiness* – “the motivation or set of motivations for acting” (p. 31). Given this possibility, I have chosen to bring the concept of trustworthiness to the forefront of this investigation.

From a developmental perspective, trustworthiness emerges as a necessity in the earliest years of life. In his theory of psychosocial development, Erik Erikson (1968) presents growth as it occurs in a series of stages; at each stage one must confront specific crises or psychological turning points, which must be resolved for healthy psychological functioning. Trust appears as the first of such crises – a process whereby an infant needs to establish a mutual bond of trustworthiness with its caretaker. Game theoretical studies also provide insight into emergence of trustworthiness early in development. Specifically, researchers have used economic games to study altruism and the cooperative and reciprocal nature of trusting and trustworthy behavior. The studies suggest that trustworthiness and the capacity to assess the trustworthiness of others develop over time, though the fundamental qualities and skills necessary for developing a disposition for trustworthiness or assessing trustworthiness are likely to have been established at a very young age (Harbaugh, Krause, & Vesterlund, 2001; Harbaugh, Krause, Liday Jr., & Vesterlund, 2003). This interpretation is consistent with findings in other areas of psychological research, which demonstrate that children as young as four years display capacities to assess the trustworthiness of their informants (Clément, Koenig, & Harris, 2004; Koenig & Harris, 2005).

Adolescence presents a particularly difficult time when the role of trustworthiness becomes increasingly critical for identity formation and relationship-building. Specifically, youth must confront their own trustworthiness as they reconcile who they are with what others trust them to become (Erikson, 1968). In terms of relationships, Rotenberg, McDougall, Boulton, Vaillancourt, Fox, and Hymel (2004) found a positive association between trustworthiness and the number of friendships, peer preference (i.e., positive peer evaluations), and psychological adjustment over time. Other studies focusing on academic motivations and risk behavior point to the critical role of trustworthiness in adolescent peer and parent

relationships. In one study of 7th grade students in Israel, researchers found that students who are performance-oriented or focused on demonstrating “smartness” doubted the trustworthiness of their peers, and such attitudes were negatively associated with intimacy in peer relationships (Levy-Tossman, Kaplan, & Assor, 2007). Moreover, researchers also found that among New York City adolescents, the perceived trustworthiness of their parents was positively associated with the frequency of communication, a factor that when scarce is predictive of risk behavior (Guilamo-Ramos, Jaccard, Dittus, & Bouris, 2006).

Taken together, it appears that an investigation of trustworthiness is not only merited but also critical given its important role throughout development, particularly during adolescence. A review of the literature suggests, however, that few, if any qualitative studies have systematically examined the meaning youth make of the role of trustworthiness in their lives. Thus, to address this gap in the literature I ask the following overarching research question:

How do youth understand the concept of trustworthiness, and how do they assess the trustworthiness of others and themselves? Are these understandings and assessments related, and if so, how?

The initial findings from the GoodWork Project’s study of Trust and Trustworthiness have begun to shed light on this question. An online survey (Pettingill, 2005) revealed high levels of trust for teachers, minimal trust in journalists and politicians, and a general distrust of the media across the sample. Among these individuals, family members and close associates were found to be the most trustworthy. Interestingly enough, younger respondents (ages 25 and below) more often cited entertainers as trustworthy while older respondents cited established journalists. In two subsequent investigations using trust-related vignettes, Benjamin (2005) and Davis (2006) probed more deeply on the models of trust held by young Americans from affluent and working-class backgrounds in the Philadelphia and Boston areas, respectively. Findings from both samples confirmed a general distrust of media and celebrities, though respondents from the Boston sample were less consistent in their responses. Despite the small scale of the studies, several mental models identifying a variety of bases for trust and assessing trustworthiness emerged: knowledge-based, person-centered, and other.

Drawing on the initial findings of the GoodWork Project, Davis (2008) then developed a conceptual framework of trust (see Appendix A). She construes a trust judgment as entailing 1) the background variables that set the stage for 2) assessing the trustworthiness of others using evidence of trustworthiness and considerations of potential benefits/losses, which in turn leads to 3) the decision to trust, distrust, or withhold trust. Using this framework and the findings of previous trust studies, the team of researchers then created instruments for an empirical study of youth. Transcripts from the qualitative interviews

serve as the data for my analysis.

Methodology

Sample

In order to facilitate a detailed analysis, I selected a subset of 20 participants from a sample of 60 young persons, ages 15 to 25. Given that the full sample represents students from working-class areas in the Greater Boston area and Maine, I chose to balance my subset by gender and area representation (i.e., 10 from Boston – 5 male, 5 female; 10 from Maine – 5 male, 5 female). Participants in the Maine sample were recruited from a high school, and the participants in the Boston sample were recruited from a high school and two civically-engaged community organizations. I chose to focus on the younger group of respondents, ages 15 to 19, to yield a rich investigation of high school student perspectives³.

Materials

Using the initial findings and conceptual framework of the GoodWork Project, the researchers developed three instruments to investigate youth concepts of trust and trustworthiness: 1) the person-centered interview; 2) the additional paper-based pre-interview survey; and 3) the dilemma interview⁴. The person-centered protocol provides a tool for exploring youth perspectives on trust and trustworthiness through in-depth qualitative interviews (see Appendix B). Specifically, participants are asked to describe their key pursuits, goals, beliefs, and values to understand the possible independent and intervening variables that influence their perspectives; information is also sought about mentors and anti-mentors. Participants were also asked to comment on their real-life trust scenarios; their own sense of trustworthiness; and their dispositions and orientations of trust toward the media, public figures, political processes, and government institutions. Additionally, a paper-based pre-interview survey was designed to gather baseline data, which was subsequently used to supplement questions in the person-centered interview (see Appendix C). Finally, the dilemma interview consists of five hypothetical trust scenarios designed to understand participant reasoning and judgments in a variety of contexts (see Appendix D). In particular, the dilemmas prompted participants to consider issues of power and proximity, as well as what

³ While additional criteria for selection included the completion of two interviews and consent to use both in the study, we were not able to obtain consent from one participant at the time of the second interview. Thus, I eliminated one transcript from the total of 40 collected from the subset.

⁴ The person-centered and dilemma interview protocols serve as guidelines for semi-structured interviews. Consequently, each interview varies slightly from the others.

the participant would actually do if faced with the given situation.

Procedure

Prior to meeting with the interviewer, participants were asked to complete and bring a paper-based pre-interview survey to their first interview. Researchers then administered the person-centered interview protocol first and dilemma instrument second, each in separate one-on-one sessions lasting approximately 60 minutes each. In the dilemma interview, researchers presented participants with three of five scenarios, which were systematically varied to ensure equal representation of each across the sample. Representation of dilemmas in the subset was, however, slightly imbalanced⁵. The interviews took place during or after regular school hours in private settings, and the time between each interview ranged from immediately following to approximately four months, depending on scheduling and availability. Upon completion of the interview, each subject received a monetary compensation for his or her participation.

Analysis and Findings

In the following section, I present the findings of my analysis based on general impressions and more precise coding of responses to questions in the person-centered and dilemma interviews. The analysis is organized according to the three parts of my overarching research question: 1) youth conceptions of trustworthiness; 2) the sources of evidence youth use to assess and subsequently make decisions about the trustworthiness of others; and 3) youth's assessment of their own trustworthiness.

Youth Conceptions of Trustworthiness

Given that trustworthiness is viewed as a virtue, it is surprising that youth do not discuss it as a trait but instead as expectations they hold of others in specific relational contexts. Specifically, when 14 of 20 respondents were asked the question, "What does trustworthiness mean to you?" their responses alluded to three types of expectations: *honesty*, *loyalty/commitment* (defined as strong sense of obligation to a person), or *freedom from judgment*, which are notably all moral in nature (i.e., concerns the rights and wrongs of how we ought to live in relationship with one another). 18-year-old Emily, for example, alluded to all three when she responded:

Trustworthiness means that you're not going to lie about the important things. The

⁵ The following figures represent the number of students per dilemma: accepting a ride – 12; lending your car – 12; medical advice – 11; eBay vs. car dealership – 13; and new political party – 9.

people I trust are the people that I feel will stick around at the end of the day no matter what I tell them I believe. If I feel a certain way about a world issue or about a friend or something, and I can tell them about that, and they're not going to judge me for that one belief – that they'll still continue to be honest with me and tell me honestly how they feel about my beliefs. I don't like people who tell you what you want to hear. I don't trust that.

In this example, Emily expressed, first and foremost, an expectation of honesty in which the quality of trustworthiness implies that the trustworthy person will not lie and instead be truthful about his or her feelings. Trustworthiness also implies expectations of loyalty or commitment to the trustor regardless of circumstance, as well as freedom from judgment about Emily's own beliefs and feelings (i.e., freedom to be her authentic self). It is interesting that among these expectations, Emily's statement that lies should not be "about the important things," may suggest a perspective on trustworthiness that accounts for the reality that people are not always honest. In other words, Emily recognizes that while people may lie about less important things, she perhaps requires their honesty in "important" situations. While Emily's recognition is realistic, it does not necessarily imply that lies are permissible. In fact, several other respondents exhibit a notable intolerance for dishonesty and cite lies as a primary reason for a loss of trust:

"You can lie to me one time about the smallest thing; I'll never believe another word you say. Because you can lie to me about the smallest thing, why wouldn't you lie to me about the biggest thing?" – *Ray, age 18*

"If someone lies to me, and I found out that they lied, then I can't trust them after that. Even if it's just a little lie, you still lied, and I just don't trust you." – *James, age 17*

"And if they're going to say something and then do it consistently, then you obviously can trust that person. And then if they lie to you once, then that's it." – *Jenny, age 18*

While Emily's response is exemplary because it illustrates all three categories of expectations observed among the participants, it is not unique. Several others mentioned multiple expectations in their responses and used proxies of loyalty/commitment including secret and promise-keeping as a means to earn and maintain trust. Moreover, some respondents also cited violations of expectations such as "backstabbing," while others provided specific situational and relational contexts for trust such as "watching over somebody, like a child; watching somebody's house, materialistic things" and intimate friendships, respectively. Finally, two participants did not provide specific expectations but instead generalized trustworthiness as such: "[Trustworthiness means] that I can trust you with anything."

When youth spoke of their own trustworthiness, they also demonstrated surprising consistency between

the expectations they held for themselves and others, which suggests the importance of these themes in their lives. For example, 17-year-old Henry defined trustworthiness as being “able to tell that person anything, and at the end of the day, they won’t judge you.” His expectation of freedom from judgment is also the same expectation he holds for judging his own trustworthiness as evidenced in his statement, “It’s just that I don’t really judge people, in a way, so no matter what their mistakes are, I still look at them the same.”

It seems logical then that when expectations are met, trustworthiness should be established in relationship with others. This proves to be the case across the discussions about whom youth trust and how they came to trust them (see question 7 in Appendix B), as well as in discussions about how others (i.e., family and friends, authority figures, distant people, and institutions) earn their trust (see question 11 in Appendix B). In particular, the findings suggest that the establishment of trustworthiness necessitates the fulfillment of expectations of honesty, loyalty/commitment, or freedom from judgment through interactions between the trustor and trustee⁶. In other words, trustworthiness is established when others fulfill an expectation that is consistent with their definitions of trustworthiness. When 17-year-old James, for example, defined trustworthiness as “not saying anything if I tell you a super-secret,” it is clear that he expects a trustworthy individual to be loyal/committed to keep his secrets. Then, when James described his relationship with his brother, the connection between James’ definition and his brother’s establishment of trustworthiness in their relationship becomes clear:

Me and my brother have a deeper trust than that, and I trust him before I trust any person in my family. Like I talk to him before I talk to anyone else, because I know my brother won’t say anything because it’s like we kind of have a check and balance with each other. It’s like, I know his secrets and he knows my secrets, so it’s kind of like we don’t say anything about each other.

Here, James recognized that he can trust his brother because his brother will keep his secrets. Specifically, James’ brother has established his own trustworthiness by fulfilling James’ expectation in the context of their ongoing relationship as siblings and confidantes. This example is illustrative of the general consistency of expectations of trustworthiness and how they play out in trusting relationships. It is also noteworthy because it exemplifies the reciprocal trust that characterizes many of the interpersonal relationships cited by youth in the study. That is, when James spoke of the “check and balance,” he described the reciprocity inherent in their trusting relationship: James trusts his brother because his brother trusts him, and together they benefit from their ongoing pact to keep each other’s secrets.

⁶ Defined as the person/object of trust.

In another example, 19-year-old Ryan discussed how his teammates established their trustworthiness by fulfilling his expectation that those whom he considers trustworthy will be loyal and committed to him in times of need, regardless of circumstance. Ryan spoke about his coach and training partner – two individuals with whom he has ongoing relationships of trust – one being an authority figure and the other being a close friend:

For me, it's mostly who's going to be there when I'm in need. They say you may have lots of friends on sunny days, but a true friend will stick around on rainy days. That's one of the things that probably speaks loudest to me because I've had a lot of friends over the years, but my closest friends have stuck with me. I have a lot of friends on the team. After my dad died, they were there supporting me, and they came to the wake and the funeral. They just helped out with so much.

Together, these findings about the ways in which youth conceptualize the meaning and establishment of trustworthiness suggest its instrumental role in their lives. In particular, youth expect others to be honest, loyal/committed, and non-judgmental to serve the particular end of establishing trustworthiness in relationships. Given that such types of expectations are often discussed as virtues, which do not necessitate a particular purpose except to be a good in itself, it is surprising that youth frame their concepts of trustworthiness in pragmatic ways. For example, rather than being trustworthy for the sake of it, James defined trustworthiness in the context of a specific end or goal to maintain a reciprocal commitment with his brother. Yet, not all of the youth in this study expressed their perspectives or expectations as serving a particular end. In fact, youth also appear to conceive of trustworthiness as a good in itself. Two respondents, in particular, described trustworthiness as a virtue – Emily, whom I quote in the introduction of this paper (see p. 3) and 18-year-old Ray who stated:

I hold myself to the highest standard just like I hold everybody else to the highest standard because I feel like nobody should be put lower than me because we're all human. I am not saying that I'm perfect, but I am saying that I am the best. Maybe that's an oxymoron to say, but like I said, if I don't think I'm the best I'm thinking less. So maybe I am saying that I'm perfect, but knowing that I'm not because everybody makes mistakes. But I must believe that I am the best.

In these examples, Emily and Ray demonstrate a moral disposition for trustworthiness that is deeply intertwined with the way they identify themselves, and fulfilling expectations or having others do so is more than just a means to an end. Instead, trustworthiness is an expectation or end in itself. For Ray, this standard holds for himself and others. It is something he strives for by thinking that he is the best and capable of achieving them. Thus, for individuals like Emily and Ray trustworthiness takes on new meaning, as more than a means to establish trusting relationships, but a way of life.

This ability to extend thought from a pragmatic to a more abstract conception of trustworthiness as more than just having a purpose but also *being* a purpose in itself presents an interesting puzzle: Why do youth express trustworthiness in such different ways, and why are they overwhelmingly expressing trustworthiness in what appears to be a self-serving manner? On one hand, it might be possible that the majority of youth possess a somewhat egocentric view of trustworthiness that depends on the trustee fulfilling the trustor's expectations. By implication, it might therefore appear that youth like Emily and Ray are perhaps exhibiting a more mature view of trustworthiness that is less dependent upon what others do for them. Based on this hypothesis, we might therefore conceive of these examples as illustrating the developmental nature of trustworthiness in which adolescence may represent a critical transition from an egocentric to a more selfless view of trustworthiness. On the other hand, it might also be possible that youth like Emily and Ray have the ability to express their views on trustworthiness in more abstract terms and thereby appear to perceive trustworthiness as a virtue while their counterparts who express their views in more pragmatic terms do not. These hypotheses need not be mutually exclusive; youth who exhibit a more mature view of trustworthiness might also be more likely to speak of trustworthiness in more abstract manner.

Sources of Evidence

Recall that the conceptual framework used to design the research instruments conceives of trust and trustworthiness within a 3-part process of making a trust judgment. So far, the investigation into youth conceptions of trustworthiness has shed light on the types of expectations that set the stage for the second part of the process – assessing the trustworthiness of others. This part lies at the heart of this investigation because it exposes the mental processes by which youth come to make their decisions. At this point, data from both the person-centered and dilemma tools become particularly useful in this analysis because they elicit the mental models youth employ in grappling with real-life trust situations and hypothetical dilemmas.

When engaging in deliberate and rational-decision making⁷, youth consider the competence and motivations of the other to meet their expectations of trustworthiness. Whereas determinations of competence are dependent upon actions, determinations of motivation are dependent on the trustor's personal perceptions about the desires and intentions of the trustee to do what they are expected to do. Specifically, youth mentioned three types of evidence to determine the competence and motivations of the trustee: *reputation*, *performance*, and *appearance*. These types of evidence are categorized and defined

⁷ I acknowledge that there are also situations in which trust is granted automatically rather than by deliberate and rational decision-making.

in Sztompka's sociological theory of trust (1999) wherein reputation-based evidence concerns the past record of the trustee's behavior or motivations; performance-based evidence concerns the present actions or motivations of the trustee; and appearance-based evidence concerns the visual and behavioral qualities of the trustee.

These three types of evidence also lend themselves to the emergence of three of the prototypes or mental models of trust hypothesized by Davis (2008). Specifically, reputation, performance, and appearance-based evidence evoke *rational trust* whereby youth consider all sources of evidence and extend trust to those whom youth believe will continue to demonstrate trustworthiness as they have in the past. Performance-based evidence, in particular, evokes *demonstrative trust* whereby youth trust those who demonstrate trustworthiness through current actions; and appearance-based evidence evokes *stereotypic trust* whereby youth trust unknown others based on their perceived similarity to a group they have judged stereotypically.

For the most part, participants mentioned considerations of the competence of the trustee. Few also mentioned simultaneous considerations of the motivations of the trustee in discussion about how they decide if someone is trustworthy (see question 7, Appendix B). Specifically of the 18 who were asked this question, 14 provided judgments they would make based on reputation; 3 based on performance, and 2 based on appearance⁸. Considering the findings that trust and trustworthiness are established in the context of ongoing relationships, the dominance of reputation-based evidence is not surprising. Examples of reputation-based evidence of the competence of an individual include the following:

Experiences like friends, if they've done something for me like I didn't even ask to and they did like, but I can trust them with that and if I tell them like something that happened, and they don't tell anybody I can trust them and of family you just – I saw my mother or father that they've been there for me also and how they react to situations. – *Kiera, age 16*

I don't know, I guess I have to hang around them for a while. I like to see what they say about other people. Like if they talk about someone else's business, then they'll probably do the same to me, so I won't trust them. – *James, age 17*

Their past and what they've done for you or how they've interacted with you and what you know about them. – *Sarah, age 15*

Evidence from discussions of real-life trust situations also provides such an example. In the following excerpt, 17-year-old Derrick described a situation in which he had to trust his classmates:

⁸ The total reflects one extra count for the respondent who referenced both reputation and performance-based evidence.

Well like chemistry class we do labs all the time. We each have to get separate information and finish up the whole project. And so we each split it in three since three are three of us, so I like trust them to do what they have to do.

In this situation, Derrick had the choice of choosing his lab partners and he chose classmates that were not necessarily his friends but people that he knew “more than anyone in the class.” When asked why he chose his partners, he cited evidence based on their reputation of having earned good grades in the past. Thus, Derrick makes it clear that he has determined his classmates to be trustworthy because they have the competence to meet his expectation that “they’re going to try hard to pass the lab.”

In each of these examples, participants cited firsthand observations of past behaviors that might signal competence in meeting their present expectations. Similarly, the following quote from 15-year-old Ana provides an example of how participants assessed the competence of an individual, but in this case on the basis of *present* behaviors (i.e., performance-based evidence):

If I notice the person, I would say like if the person starts showing that they care for me, like if they started building that bond with me, like oh, like they don’t want to know me for my business but they want to know me because of me, I would be like okay maybe I can trust this person. And I learned from that.

Here, Ana’s response illustrates her consideration of the trustee’s current performance of care and building a bond in judging his or her trustworthiness. Her response is unique because it also reflects her consideration of the performance-based internal motivations of the trustee to establish an ongoing relationship. Together, both examples of reputation and performance-based evidence illustrate how these can elicit *rational* and *demonstrative trust*.

Interestingly enough, while we might expect appearance-based evidence to concern visual cues (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, dress, health, or cleanliness), evidence from the interviews and the examples below demonstrate that youth primarily mention behavioral cues (e.g., friendliness, confidence, or care) that signal the competence and motivations of the trustee:

I look for contradictions inherent in what they talk about and stuff. And I look for wisdom. I can sort of see if someone is wise. I sort of use my own discretion with that. I don’t know – just if they have a good demeanor, and if they have a good personality, if they seem like a good person to follow, not just to give advice but to get advice from. – *Elliot, age 17*

The first thing I would ask is do they love their family because to me loving my family is the only thing that I care about other than the rest of the things. That comes first. And I guess if everyone cares that they love their family so much, I guess, I start feeling that they’re okay. – *Brandon, age 16*

Here, Elliot and Brandon described evidence that they might use to assess competence and motivation in terms of qualities concerning the dispositions and values of the trustee, respectively. The absence of mentions of visual cues suggests that youth might hesitate to admit to, or perhaps are unaware of, the potential influence of stereotyping in their decision-making processes; it may also suggest that such cues do not play a major role in their trust judgments. The results from the dilemma to *accept a ride from a stranger* reveal that the latter might be the case. For the 12 respondents who were posed this scenario, the responses were evenly split with 6 who said they would accept the ride and 6 who said they would decline. Among those who would accept, only one participant demonstrated *stereotypic trust*, citing the use of visual cues of age, gender, and dress to determine if the driver was trustworthy. Specifically she mentioned that “a middle-aged woman would be more trustworthy than probably a middle-aged man or a younger person” and “they wouldn’t dress – there’s a certain way that people dress. Sometimes they just look motherly even if they’re not – they just look like it. So I find that to be easier to trust people, or easier.”

Participants also stated that visual cues did not matter, especially when their decisions are founded on a commitment to keep a promise (most often to their parents) to decline rides from strangers. The scarce mentions and denial of the influence of visual cues, however, does not rule out the possibility that youth might be unaware of their own “implicit” (i.e., unconscious) stereotyping (Banaji, Hardin, & Rothman, 1993) – or might be aware of but hesitant to admit to their stereotypes. Yet, when youth were questioned about whether they would accept the ride if the driver were male, their responses suggest that youth are indeed open to and aware of the source of their stereotypes; nearly all responded that they would not accept the ride (or still not accept the ride) if the driver were male, citing negative accounts and portrayals of men in the media (e.g., news and movies) as a reason for mistrust.

Discussions with youth concerning judgments in specific relational contexts (e.g., family and friendships) reveal a nuanced portrait of youth assessments of trustworthiness and suggest that they evaluate trustworthiness differently based on their relationship with the trustee. Specifically, of the eight who responded, all but one of the participants said that they would employ different criteria based on the relationship. There was widespread agreement among the remaining seven participants that trustworthiness is assumed or the default for family members unless they did something to violate the trusting relationship such as steal or lie. In doing so, they contrasted the permanence of family relationships with the uncertainty of their friendships, citing this as the reason for decisions of trustworthiness being different for family versus friends. In particular, the youth referred to judgments as being “easier because you’re family” and with friends “it’s kind of iffy.” This finding supports the hypothesis that trustworthiness may be connected more so to early formative experiences – even as early

as infancy, as Erikson (1968) would suggest – than to specific evidence. It is therefore plausible that the youth in the study have made judgments of trustworthiness about family at a time that they do not remember and for this reason view their criteria for judging the trustworthiness of friends and others as different from family. Take, for example, 15-year-old Tanya’s response:

Family doesn’t have to prove it as much as friend because they’re kind-of coming from where you’re coming from, being that they’re family. Like, they’re two steps ahead of a friend that you never knew before until you met them or whatever, so they don’t have to earn as much.

In this quote, Tanya has been working through the difference she perceives between trustworthiness for family versus friends and is able to articulate the way in which family is “ahead” in terms of establishing its trustworthiness. Note, however, that she was not able to describe exactly how her family is ahead other than citing a vague reference to having a common background and history given that “they’re kind-of coming from where you’re coming from.”

It is also worth noting that in real-life trust scenarios, such pieces of evidence of one’s competence and motivations can be difficult to obtain. Here, Emily described a situation in which she had to assess the trustworthiness of her boyfriend based on evidence of his competence to fulfill her expectation of honesty and reciprocal communication in the relationship:

I’ve been going through some things with my boyfriend, I guess. He and I have been going out for just a couple of months, and relationships are hard. Boyfriend/girlfriend relationships are harder than anything else on earth, I think, because you put so much of yourself into it, and it matters so much what happens. And just kind of – I’ve been recently trying to sit down with him and him sit down with me and trying to figure out if he’ll be honest with me, and I’m still on the fence for certain things. I have trouble with shy people, and he is very shy because sometimes I feel like they’re holding back their thoughts because they’re scared to tell me what they think and that feels like a form of dishonesty to me. Yes, I’m still on the fence with him. And the more that I can get him to talk to me, the more that it will be easier for me to trust him. I want to trust him. He’s a great guy, and I like him so much. And it will be hard to trust him because once I do trust him, then that’s what will be there. Oh, I’m back and forth. I need him to talk to me. If he can’t talk to me honestly about what he thinks about me and him and the world in general, then I won’t be able to trust him. I just can’t. For me, quietness is just a form of not trusting me enough to tell me what’s on his mind.

It is evident that Emily was grappling with her desire for honesty and her boyfriend’s personality. As such, she had not yet determined whether her boyfriend is trustworthy. His shyness prevents her from establishing evidence of both his current performance-based competence to tell her what is on his mind and his internal motivation to be an honest person. This case therefore highlights the importance and necessity of evidence for the trustee to demonstrate that he or she can meet the trustor’s expectations in

order to gain his or her trust.

A final theme that emerges from this discussion is regrettable but perhaps realistic in a time when youth are exploring and questioning their identities. Along with the widespread expression of trustworthiness attributed to family, the participants also expressed widespread caution with friendships that ranged from acknowledging that friends can break trust to assuming that friends can never be trusted at all. Those friends who were trustworthy, however, were often referenced using family terms such as “people I would want to be in my family,” “second family,” sister, or brother. This tendency for youth to distinguish their trusted friends by referring to them with familial names suggests the possibility that the role of family might not only serve as a label to denote a closer proximity of relationship, but may also indicate that the model of family relationships is an initial prototype for trust. This suggestion is consistent with both Erikson’s theory (1968) in which trust is first established in a close familial bond (most often between the mother and child), as well as evidence from youth in the study who point to the assumed nature of trustworthiness with family members. In this sense, youth may conceptualize trustworthiness in terms of its similarity or departure from that initial prototype.

Am I trustworthy?

I now turn to an analysis of how youth judge their own trustworthiness when they are in the position of the trustee. When participants were asked the follow-up question, “On what basis do you feel that your trustworthiness is evaluated?” the responses fell under aforementioned general categories of evidence of competence and motivation. That is, 3 offered reputation-based evidence; 3 offered performance-based evidence; and 2 offered appearance-based evidence. Reputation-based evidence included one’s background and consistency between thoughts and beliefs, while appearance-based evidence included not being “sketchy” or being a “friendly” person. The responses to performance-based evidence were interesting because they included examples of current actions such as “being able to be there when they need you,” as well as tests to see if the other will uphold an expectation. For example, James stated that “They tell me their secrets and then see if I keep them or not.” In this case, the trustor conducts an experiment of sorts to see how the respondent will perform, and thus the judgment of trustworthiness is based on the respondent’s ability to meet the expectation.

So far, I have noted how youth evaluate the trustworthiness of others differently based on their relationship with the trustee. In the present study, participants cited a similar relational differentiation when discussing the criteria that others (e.g. family and friends versus teachers) use to assess the respondent’s own trustworthiness. Specifically, the majority of students who responded said that the

criteria would be different, while only two students said that the criteria would be the same. In contrast to previous findings that the youth in the study would begin from a position of assuming the trustworthiness of their family members, the respondents did not always view the situation to be the same in reverse. That is, while some spoke of family members “starting out as very trusting,” others like 16-year-old Samantha spoke of having to prove trustworthiness by fulfilling a mother’s expectations of honesty and loyalty/commitment:

Like tell the truth, you know, not lying. That’s probably the big thing with her is, you know, lying and stuff like that. If you don’t do that and you keep your promises and you don’t try to cover up something, then she trusts you a lot.

Despite youth perceptions that the criteria for assessing their own trustworthiness vary depending on the individual, a closer look at their responses suggests that the opposite may be the case. In fact, while the particularities of the action or situation may have been different, the actual type of expectation remains the same across parents, teachers, and friends. That is, honesty and loyalty/commitment emerge once again as dominant expectations. For example, respondents discussed teachers’ assessments of trustworthiness as primarily based on reputation and performance of being honest and completing assignments on time; these traits reflect a disposition for honesty and a commitment to schoolwork and the teacher-student relationship. Ryan’s response serves as one such example:

Teachers determine my trustworthiness by how hard I work – the fact that there have been few cases where I’ve totally forgotten I left my homework at home, and I’d be like – I’m so sorry. I really didn’t mean to do this. They’d be like it’s okay. Just bring it in tomorrow, and I have, and it definitely pays off.

Thus, taking Samantha and Ryan’s examples into consideration, it appears that the expectations of trustworthiness that youth hold of others and the types of evidence they use to assess it are consistent with their perceptions of the expectations that others hold of them and the types of evidence others use to assess the trustworthiness of the youth sampled in this study.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

In this paper, I have examined how youth understand the concept of trustworthiness and how they assess the trustworthiness of others and themselves. My purpose was to contribute to our understanding of trustworthiness in youth, particularly during a time when levels of trust have apparently declined and

youth are now encountering new trust situations and dilemmas in their socio-technological and increasingly globalized worlds. In my analysis of 20 person-centered and 19 dilemma interviews conducted by researchers at the GoodWork Project, the following major findings emerged:

Finding 1. Youth define trustworthiness in primarily in moral terms. Specifically, they expect others and themselves to fulfill expectations honesty, loyalty/commitment, and freedom from judgment. Trustworthiness is therefore established when such expectations are fulfilled in the context of ongoing interpersonal relationships.

Finding 2. Despite the moral nature of these expectations, the participants illustrate that it is rare for them to express a view of trustworthiness as a good in itself. This finding suggests that youth may hold an egocentric view of trust or are perhaps more likely to express trustworthiness in more pragmatic than abstract terms.

Finding 3. When assessing the trustworthiness of others and themselves, youth require reputation, performance, or appearance-based evidence before they make a judgment about the trustworthiness of the other. The youths also believe that others use these sources of evidence to assess trustworthiness when they are in the position of the trustee.

Finding 4. Finally, youth demonstrate that their understandings and assessments of trustworthiness are intimately connected. That is, throughout the analysis, the responses youth provide about how they assess the trustworthiness of others and themselves is consistently aligned with their definitions of trustworthiness and perspectives on how it is established.

Implications

My analysis yields several important implications for our understanding of trustworthiness in youth. In terms of contributions to the literature, several theoretical implications arise. First, much of the research focusing on the constructs of trust and trustworthiness has been conducted in past decades when levels of trust were higher and the idea of trustees (individuals who are known and respected for their unbiased knowledge and guidance) was familiar in American society (Gardner, 2005). Specifically, these earlier studies (as cited in Rotter, 1980) were published between the early 1960s and the early 1980s, just before a critical shift in perspectives on trust in American society when even the *New York Times*, began to refer to the era as “the age of suspicion” (Rotter, 1980, p. 1).

The findings of these earlier studies reveal the benefits of high levels of trust – from less immoral behavior such as lying, cheating, or stealing to more positive mental states and relationships with others.

More importantly, high levels of trust were also found to have a strong positive relationship with one's own sense of trustworthiness. In contrast, recent studies have focused on constructs such as altruism or cooperation as proxies for trustworthiness or have examined it as a variable in relationships and development (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2006; Harbaugh et al., 2001; Harbaugh et al., 2003; Levy-Tossman et al., 2007; Rotenberg et al., 2004).

The findings from the present study, therefore, provide a timely contribution to the literature, returning once again to examining the construct and meaning of trustworthiness, this time from the perspectives of youth. Specifically, youth were asked to define what trustworthiness means to them during a time when social trustees are virtually absent and when youth have the power to engage in the creation of meaning and identity of their generation in ways that are vastly different from generations past. I found that trustworthiness takes on a moral meaning in the everyday lives of youth. They expect others to be honest, loyal, committed, and non-judgmental, and they establish and assess these qualities in the context of ongoing interpersonal relationships. Moreover, the findings reinforce the importance of trustworthiness in relationships with friends, parents, and classmates (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2006; Levy-Tossman et al., 2007; Rotenberg et al., 2004), as well as the ability of youth to employ consistent types of evidence in judging the trustworthiness of others.

The theoretical contributions of this study would not have been possible without the use of person-centered interviews and hypothetical dilemmas. The person-centered interview, in particular, allowed researchers to probe deeply into the meaning and role of trustworthiness in youth from a variety of angles such as examining how trust emerges in the context of close relationships with admired figures and how it plays out in real-life trust scenarios. Asking questions in this manner allowed youth to construct their own meaning, taking into context all the independent and intervening variables in their lives that set the stage for their assessments of trustworthiness.

Additionally, the person-centered interviews were helpful in assessing whether trustworthiness and other such constructs emerge as a natural category for youth in the context of their conversations about their key pursuits; goals, beliefs, and values; as well as mentors and anti-mentors. For example, the transcripts reveal that unless otherwise prompted, discussions about trustworthiness more often arise in the context of interpersonal relationships than in the context of institutions. Similarly, the dilemma interview was not only successful in extracting rich discussions about situations not discussed in the person-centered interview; it also allowed a basis for comparison between the mental models youth use in judging the trustworthiness of others and themselves in everyday versus hypothetical scenarios. Moreover, several of the youths in the subset cited having actually encountered many of the hypothetical dilemmas in their own

lives such as purchasing items from online sellers, taking rides from strangers, obtaining medical advice for family members, and lending their car, indicating that the dilemmas posed were realistic and relevant to the everyday dilemmas of youth. Taken together, the benefits of using the instruments developed by the GoodWork project suggest their utility in future studies with youth and serve as models for qualitative research.

As for the practical implications of the findings, the results suggest several important steps that we might consider in our interactions with youth in both school and community settings. First, to create the conditions for the establishment of trustworthiness, we might begin at the level where youth situate trustworthiness in their own lives, which is within an ongoing interpersonal relationship; accordingly, we might convey that we value the expectations that are most important for youth such as honesty, loyalty/commitment, and freedom from judgment and do our best to honor these accordingly.

Second, the conditions we create for youth might provide a safe context in which they can grapple with trust situations and take risks to develop both capacities to assess the trustworthiness of others and a sense of trust in those around them. This step might involve providing youth with opportunities to reflect on the types of evidence they use in assessing the trustworthiness of others and to become aware of their own thought processes as well as those of others. Doing so might also challenge youth to think in more abstract terms about how trustworthiness might serve more than a specific end. In this way, we might consider the interviews conducted in this study as a tool for research *and* intervention given that it provides a means for adults to challenge youth to think beyond the pragmatic role of trustworthiness in their lives.

Finally, on a broader scale, it is important to recognize how these practical implications might serve as building blocks for youth participation in a democratic society. That is, as youth come to expand their notions of trust to that of larger groups and institutions, their capacities to assess the trustworthiness of others and own sense of trustworthiness can facilitate a healthy skepticism and empower youth to realize the responsibility they have to make a positive contribution to society. As such, it is critical that we acknowledge the importance of our role and the impact our actions can make in the lives of youth for their prosocial development, participation in a democratic society, and potential to rebuild trust in their generation.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

The findings presented in this study should be interpreted with caution as the sample represents the perspectives of 20 youth living in Maine and the Greater Boston area, all of whom are high school

students. It is also noteworthy that all respondents in the subset shared the commonality of being civically engaged in their schools and communities. This finding raises the possibility that they may be a self-selecting group, or more optimistically, that opportunities for civic engagement are readily available for youth and many are interested in and willing to commit to them. Note, however, the diversity of perspectives within a seemingly homogeneous sample. For example, no two respondents cited the same set of interests or beliefs. In fact, interests ranged from barrel racing to writing poetry, and belief systems ranged from karma to a belief in God. Many of the youth in the sample also cited a variety of critical events in their lives that changed or shaped their perspectives on trust and trustworthiness. These include cancer, the death of a family member or close friend, immigration (either their own experience or that of their parents), a period of rebellion against authority figures, and getting assaulted by strangers and even the police. Taken together, these observations suggest both limitations of the sample and avenues for future research – for example, broadening the sample to include students from schools and communities from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds throughout the nation or creating in-depth profiles to more deeply examine the impact of critical events. Moreover, while this investigation did not include youth perspectives towards political figures, the media, and larger institutions, future work might test the proposition that, in order to assess their trustworthiness, youth require direct interaction or personal relationships with distant others, groups, and institutions. Finally, this investigation has raised a puzzling question about why youth overwhelmingly express trustworthiness only as an instrumental quality of trusting relationships and begs us to ask if this pragmatic view of trust is pervasive among today's youth and perhaps indicative of a transition from an egocentric to more selfless conception of trustworthiness in adolescence.

Appendix A

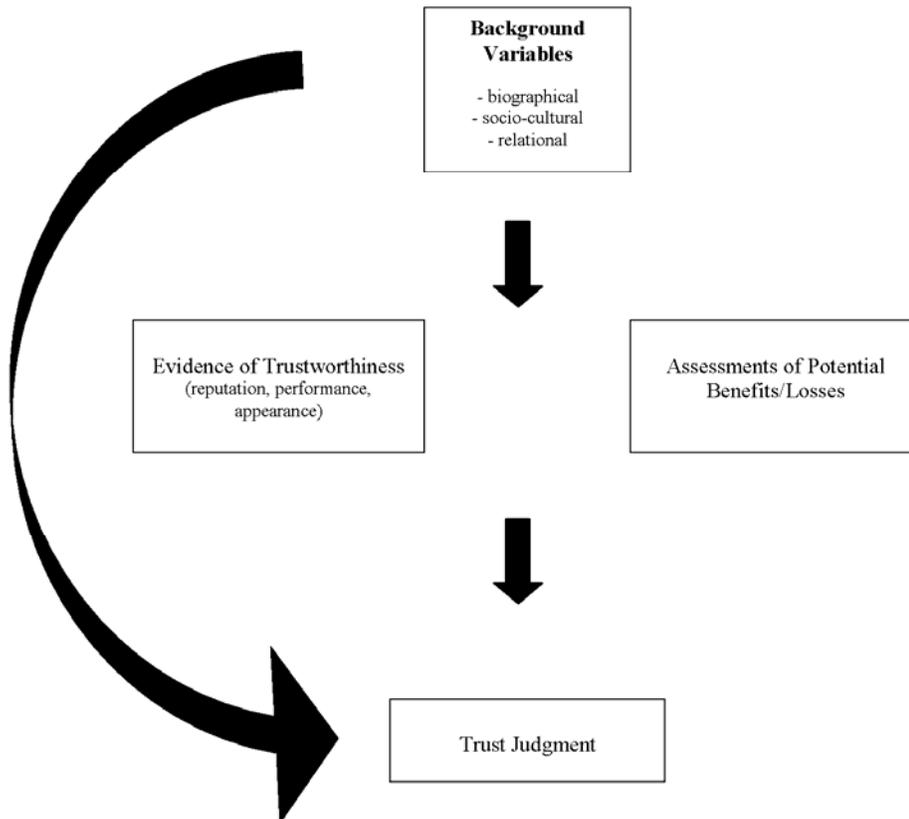


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of factors influencing a trust judgment (Davis, 2008).

Appendix B

Youth Perspectives on Relationship and Community

I. Introduction: Key Pursuits (school, work, other involvements)

1. How do you spend your time? To what activities do you devote most of your time and energy?

Probes:

a. *Students:* What is your academic focus or major? Why did you choose this focus?

Workers: What kind of work do you do? Why did you choose this line of work?

b. What are some of the things you care about? What is really important/meaningful to you? What kinds of things do you enjoy doing? (music, art, blogging, etc.)

c. Besides school/work, are you involved in any other activities (political organizations, student clubs, sports, volunteer work, religious groups, etc.)

If yes:

- i. What are you trying to accomplish through your involvement in this organization? (In other words, what are goals in being involved?)
- ii. Describe your role and responsibilities in this organization?
- iii. What values does the organization embrace?
- iv. What inspired you to get involved in this organization? (e.g., recent world events such as Katrina, War in Iraq? Family or friend influences? etc.)

II. Goals, Beliefs, and Values

2. Is there an overarching goal (or sense of purpose) that give meaning to your work, school, or other involvements? *If fails:* What specific goals do you have for your future?
3. Do certain beliefs—religious, spiritual, cultural, political, or other—motivate, inspire, or guide you in your life? If so, what are they and how do they influence your work, school, or other involvements?
4. What experiences or influences were most important, in forming these goals and beliefs? (e.g., life-altering events, books, family upbringing, religion, culture, political views, etc.)

III. Mentors / Admired Figures

5. Who or what has had the greatest influence on your approach to work, school, etc. and/or how you have made crucial decisions in your career thus far?
 - a. Probe: parents, teachers, siblings, someone you didn't know personally, public figures—be sure to ask about individuals whom they don't know personally.
 - b. HOW have the individuals you mentioned influenced you?
6. Would you consider any of the individuals you mentioned mentors? Why? How did they affect you? What did you learn from them?
[Mentor = someone whom you admire, a role model AND has guided, taught, or facilitated your personal/professional development in some way]
7. Do you trust these individuals? If so, how?

- a. What do you mean when you say you trust (or distrust) these individuals?
 - b. With or for what do you trust them? Are there areas in which you don't trust, or are unsure about whether to trust, these individuals? (Examples: personal life, professional/schoolwork dilemmas, information about current events, opinions about political issues, etc.)
 - c. Can you describe how you came to trust these individuals?
 - d. What does trustworthiness mean to you? How do you decide if someone is trustworthy? How do you decide about the trustworthiness of Family vs. Friends vs. other individuals?
[Keep in mind: 1) assessments of Competence = person's ability to be trustworthy; and 2) Motivations: Internal = trusted has a sense of obligation, moral commitment, disposition/personal character/qualities, emotional connection w/ trustor, maintenance of relationships or reputation, self-preservation, desire for rewards; External = institutional norms, social/cultural norms, religious controls]
8. Can you identify any "anti-mentors" in your life? [Anti-mentor = someone whose conduct or approach sets an example you would NOT follow AND is/was close to you AND in a position of authority over you, etc.]
- a. What qualities made them anti-mentors?
 - b. How did they affect you? What did you learn from them?
 - c. Do you *distrust* these individuals? If so, how? Did you ever trust them? What changed?
9. In school, at work, or just hanging out with friends, do you ever find yourself in situations in which you struggle over the "right" versus "wrong" course of action?
- a. If you do not personally have such experiences, do you witness situations in which your friends or peers struggle over the "right" course of action? [If necessary, use examples from Making Good: Intel Science Fair; misrepresenting one's self on college applications]
 - b. How are these issues typically handled by you and your peers? Is there consensus about how to handle such situations?

IV. Trust and Trustworthiness

[REMINDER: In this section, we hope to extract trust scenarios regarding four distinct targets: a) individuals close to the subject; b) authority figures; c) more distant figures; and d) institutions]

10. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a trusting or distrusting person? If so, how?
- a. In what ways are you trusting? Which individuals and institutions do you trust?
 - b. In what ways are you distrustful? Which individuals/institutions are you skeptical of?
11. How does someone earn your trust? (For example, how does someone earn your trust to confide in them with sensitive information or a secret, or ask them for advice about your future or about a personal or professional dilemma you are experiencing?) What makes someone lose your trust? Once lost, can it be regained?
- a. Do family and friends have to earn your trust, or is it a given until something goes awry? What makes them lose your trust? Once lost, how can they regain your trust? Can you think of an instance when a family member or friend earned or violated your trust?
 - b. What about people who have authority over you? Do they have to earn your trust? (E.g., teachers, principal, boss) How? What makes them lose your trust? Once lost, how can they regain it? Can you think of an instance when an authority figure earned or violated your trust?
 - c. How do more distant people earn your trust? (E.g., people in your community whom you may not know personally or intimately, such as police, politicians, community leaders, etc.) What makes them lose your trust? Once lost, how can they regain it? Can you think of an instance when a distant person earned or violated your trust?

- d. How do institutions earn your trust? (E.g., bank, newspaper/media outlet, OTHER EXAMPLES?) What makes them lose your trust? Once lost, how can they regain it? Can you think of an instance when an institution earned or violated your trust?
12. Would you say that most of your experiences with trusting a person have had positive or negative outcomes? What about experiences with trusting an institution?
- a. In other words, does the subject live in a context/community in which trust and trustworthiness thrive? Or does s/he feel like s/he's been burned over and over again?

TRUST SITUATIONS

13. Can you describe a recent situation in which you had to decide whether or not to trust someone (or an institution)? [NOTE: leave open-ended first – if having difficulty, prompt with: It could be a case of trusting someone enough to cooperate with them, trusting someone to give you accurate information, or entrusting someone with something of value (secret, car, your health/well-being)]

Characteristics of trustor and situation

- a. Who was involved? What was your relationship with them? (your peer? teacher? Stranger on the street?) How long did you know them? Did you have any prior knowledge of or interactions with this person? Did they have power/authority over you (or vice versa)? Emotional connection w/ person?
- b. How did you decide whether or not to trust in this situation? What considerations were brought to bear in your decision? What evidence did you draw upon to make your decision to trust/distrust/withhold trust? (their actions; assessments of their competence and motivation – internal and external)
- c. Were there other individuals in the situation who affected you? (presence of other trustors and relationship to subject?)

Characteristics of trustee

- d. Did past experiences with trust affect your thinking process and decision to trust/distrust? If so, how? (may be covered in above 'characteristics' q)
 - e. What were your goals or interests in this situation?
 - f. Did your core beliefs or values affect your decisions? If so, how?
14. Do you trust yourself? If so, how? Is this different from or similar to how you trust others?
- a. If needed: Do you trust yourself to make sensible day-to-day decisions? Do you trust yourself to follow through on your commitments? Are there specific ways in which you *distrust* yourself?
15. Do you consider yourself trustworthy? Why?
- a. On what basis do you feel that your own trustworthiness is evaluated? Are these criteria different for different people? I.e., do your friends and family members evaluate your trustworthiness on different bases than your teachers do?
 - b. Who should trust you? Why?
 - c. Who should not trust you? Why not?
 - d. If you could change something about your trustworthiness, what would it be?

V. TRUST ORIENTATION / IDENTITY

[Reflect on relevant survey questions in this section. Remind subject that responses will be kept confidential]

16. Reflect on survey Q1) If you were asked to take a position on an important and complex issue—such as the best course of action to take in the next five years with regard to Iran—and you did not feel

adequately informed, to whom would you be most likely to turn to? (choose 3 most trusted and 3 least trusted sources)

Elaborate on why you would most trust XXX sources. Why would you least trust XXX sources?

17. Do you trust the media to report the news accurately and fairly? Why / why not?
 - a. If distrust, how do you keep up with what is going on locally, nationally, and globally? How do you develop an informed opinion about current issues—especially those issues about which you (and others close to you) have little knowledge?
 - b. Which news sources do you most trust? Which do you distrust?
 - c. Do you tend to have more (or about the same) trust in national or local news sources? Explain.
 - d. Which internet sites do you trust for news? Why? Which sites do you distrust (or are unsure about whether to trust)? Why?
18. Are there *individuals* in the media (news/radio/tv journalists, news anchors, commentators) whom you most trust? Why do you trust these individuals?
 - a. Which individuals in the media do you distrust? Why? (From where do you think these individuals get their information?)
 - b. Do you read/listen to/watch commentators whose political philosophy you disagree with? If so, whom do you read/listen to?
 - c. Based on the news that you read/ hear/ see, do you think that the media has been accurate in reporting on the war on terror/ in Iraq? What do you base this impression on?
 - i. if trust, what would it take to lose trust?
 - ii. if distrust, what would it take to gain your trust?
19. Are there any public figures whom you particularly trust? (Oprah, Supreme Court Justices, etc.) If so, why? Any public figures whom you distrust? If so, why?
20. Do you trust the democratic political process and US political institutions (house of rep, congress, executive branch, courts) [to run smoothly, not be corrupt]? In your town? In your city? In your state? Federal?
Why / Why not?
 - a. Do you trust your political leaders? In your town? In your city? In your state? Nationally? Why / why not?
21. Survey after survey shows that levels of trust in important institutions (media, political inst, etc) in society are consistently falling. Why do you think this is so? Why was trust greater in the past?
 - a. Do you think it is possible to restore trust in these institutions? How? (probe for top-down (trustee), or bottom-up, grassroots solutions, also for models of truth and bias)
 - b. Would you like to restore trust in these institutions?
22. Surveys also show that levels of trust in strangers/fellow citizens in society are consistently falling. Why do you think this is so? Why was trust greater in the past?
 - a. Do you think it is possible to restore trust at this level? How?
 - b. Would you want to restore trust at this level? How?
23. Do you think it is important for people to have trust in the government, the media, and their teachers, employers, friends, coworkers, fellow citizens? Why or why not?
 - a. Can you envision a society with high levels of trust? What would it be like?
 - b. On the flip side, can you envision a society without trust? What would it be like?

VI. CLOSING

We are coming to the end of our interview, is there anything you would like to add?

- a. Check notes for things left out.
- b. May I follow up with you in the future?
- c. Can you recommend other individuals who might be interested in participating?

Appendix C

Youth Perspectives Survey

Please complete this survey and return to us in advance of your interview. The interviewer will have your responses on hand during the interview. Note that your responses will remain confidential.

1. Imagine that you are asked to take a position on an important and complex issue—such as what the United States should do in future dealings with Iran or the Middle East— but you don’t feel like you know enough about the issue. Where would you go for more information? Choose the 3 sources from the list below you would *most* trust, and the 3 you would *least* trust to help you make up your mind. Then fill out the chart below.
 - a. Teacher
 - b. Friend
 - c. Major national newspaper (For example, The New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, The Boston Globe, print or online)
 - d. Co-worker
 - e. Blog focused on political issues (For example: Huffington Post, Daily Kos, Michelle Malkin)
 - f. Politician
 - g. Family member
 - h. Radio or TV personality (For example: Don Imus, Jon Stewart, Rush Limbaugh, Howard Stern)
 - i. Community or public service organization
 - j. Research center devoted to the study of Iran/the Middle East
 - k. Your principal or dean
 - l. Local newspaper / magazine (print or online) (For example: The Metro, The Boston Herald, The Times Record, The Portland Press Herald, The Worcester Telegram & Gazette, The Cape Cod Times)
 - m. Boss
 - n. Mentor/person you go to for advice

MOST Trusted Sources (letter)	Why?

LEAST Trusted Sources (letter)	Why?

- a. Most of the time
- b. Some of the time
- c. Only now and then
- d. Hardly at all

5. When you're older, do you *plan to follow* current events (local, national, and world):

- a. Most of the time
- b. Some of the time
- c. Only now and then
- d. Hardly at all

6. How much time do you spend online (average hours per day)?

- How much of this time do you spend doing school / work activities?
- How much time do you spend doing non-school / non-work activities?

For what kinds of things do you use the internet? (Check all that apply)

- keeping informed about current events
- keeping informed about entertainment news
- information gathering, research
- social networking (email, instant messaging (AIM, iChat), Myspace, Facebook)
- games
- blogging/keeping an online journal
- music downloading
- shopping
- other; please specify:

7. Please circle your response to the following:

How many text messages do you send in an average day?

0 1-5 6-10 11-20 Over 20

Appendix D

Dilemma 1: Accepting a ride from a stranger

Research Question: Is stereotyping/ appearance the primary consideration in evaluating trust in strangers? What role do gender and other physical characteristics play in evaluations to trust?

Imagine that you are on a bike ride and you have a bad fall, injuring your ankle so that you can no longer bike and certainly not walk the 25 miles home. You left your cell phone at home and cannot call anyone for help. While considering what you can do, a middle-aged woman drives by and then stops. The woman expresses concern and offers to drive you home. Would you accept the ride from this unknown person?

- What are your **main** reasons for making this decision?

Target's Trustworthiness

- Would anything about the driver's appearance help you make your decision?
 - Age, dress, mannerisms, civility, health/fitness, language/fluency, other
- Would anything about the car's appearance help you make your decision?
 - Model, age, manufacturer, wear
- What would you 'hope' that such a person (and her car) looks like as you are on the side of the road wondering what to do?
- What do you think motivates the driver to offer you a ride?
 - *Types of motivations to probe for:*
 - *Internal: feeling moved by knowledge that the trustor is counting on you; pure willing; moral commitments; dispositions/personal character (benevolence, honesty, reciprocity, loyalty); self-preservation; feelings of love/friendship for the trustor; desire to earn tangible rewards (e.g. money); desire to maintain or establish one's reputation; desire to maintain or establish ongoing relationships*
 - *External: institutional constraints (laws, contracts, etc.); social/cultural norms; religious controls*

Risk/ Opportunity Assessment

- *Probability of outcome:* Would you consider the likelihood/chances that something could go wrong when you were in the car?
 - Would you be able to get in the car with such doubts, or ignore them?
 - Would this affect your actions while in the car, or only your thoughts? (would you sit in the back, hand on the door, get out as soon as you were near a phone, etc)
- *Benefits & losses:*
 - Could anything good come from accepting this ride? What could go wrong if you accept the ride?
 - Benefits: ride home, no risk of further injury to ankle, convenience
 - Losses: harm to self
 - Could anything good come from NOT accepting the ride? Could anything bad happen if you don't accept the ride??
 - Benefits: personal safety
 - Losses: personal inconvenience
 - *Commitment required:* What would be the easiest thing for you to do?

Independent/Intervening Variables

- *Relational/Situational: Emotional connection:* Sometimes people feel a connection with someone they first meet, or they have a good feeling about them. What if you felt this way about the stranger?
- *Psychological/Biographical: Past experiences with trust:* Have you ever accepted a ride from a stranger? Have you ever offered one to someone on the side of the road? What were the results? Would you consider this past experience in making your decision? If a friend or family member had been in situations like this, would you consider their past experiences? What if you had heard about similar experiences of people featured in the news?
- *Psychological/Biographical: Trustful dispositions:* In general, would you consider yourself a trusting or cautious person when it comes to dealing with strangers? Do you think this would influence your decision?
- *Social/Cultural: Trusting norms:*
 - Do you think this is the sort of situation where it is commonly expected (based on social convention) that a) someone offers their car, b) you get into the car?

You mentioned that you would do XXX. Is this what you would **really** do if you were faced with this situation (and you were expected not to get in the car (*optional*)?)

At the very beginning when I first asked you what you would do, you said that you WOULD/WOULD NOT accept the ride from the stranger and XXXX would be the main reason for your decision. After all of the things I've asked you to consider, is there anything else that you would consider in addition to/instead of XXXX?

Variation

Imagine that you are in the exact same situation (bad fall, injured ankle, 25 miles home, no cell phone). This time instead of a middle-aged woman stopping to offer you a ride, it's a middle-aged man. What are your thoughts about accepting the ride now?

- Is your decision different? If yes, why?
- Are your considerations different?

Dilemma 2: Lending Your Car

Research Question: What evidence of trustworthiness do people consider and what kind of risk/opportunity assessments do they make in the context of a new interpersonal relationship? How do risk/opportunity assessments influence/interact with the type of evidence of trustworthiness that subjects consider? Do trust judgments change if the person you are deciding to trust's status is less than yours?

Imagine that you have just started college. Your roommate asks to borrow your car for the weekend (the car is a bit old but runs perfectly- you inherited it from an uncle who hardly drove it), mentioning something about family problems. You do not know your roommate that well, but you have no obvious reasons to distrust him/her. Would you lend him/her your car?

What are your *main* reasons for making this decision?

Target's Trustworthiness

- Would anything about your roommate's appearance help you make your decision?
 - Age, dress, mannerisms, civility, health/fitness, language/fluency, other
- Would it matter if you shared any similarities with your roommate, like coming from the same hometown, playing the same sport, sharing an academic major, having similar clothing styles or tastes in music?
- What motivations do you think your roommate would have to return your car unharmed? Is this something you'd consider?
 - *Types of motivations to probe for:*
 - *Internal: feeling moved by knowledge that the trustor is counting on you; pure willing; moral commitments; dispositions/personal character (benevolence, honesty, reciprocity, loyalty); self-preservation; feelings of love/friendship for the trustor; desire to earn tangible rewards (e.g. money); desire to maintain or establish one's reputation; desire to maintain or establish ongoing relationships*
 - *External: institutional constraints (laws, contracts, etc.); social/cultural norms; religious controls*

Risk/Opportunity Assessment

- *Probability of outcome:* Would you consider the likelihood/chances that your roommate would return your car unharmed – e.g. distance traveling, highway vs. backroads?
 - Would this consideration affect your actions (call him/her during the trip to check up, refuse car altogether), or only your thoughts?
- *Benefits & losses:*
 - Could anything good come from lending your car? What could go wrong if you lend your car?
 - Benefits: establish a friendship with roommate
 - Losses: car damage
 - Could anything good come from NOT lending your car? Could anything bad happen if you don't lend your car?
 - Benefits: avoid car damage
 - Losses: missed opportunity to start friendship
- *Commitment required:* Would you consider the inconvenience to you of lending your car for a weekend? For instance, what if you wanted to go grocery shopping or had a doctor's appointment?
- What would be the easiest thing to do?

Independent/Intervening Variables

- *Relational/Situational: Emotional connection:* Sometimes people feel a connection with someone they first meet, or they have a good feeling about them. If you felt this way about your roommate, would this make a difference? What if the opposite were the case?
- *Psychological/Biographical: Past experiences with trust:* Have you ever been in a situation in which someone has asked to borrow something of value, such as a car? If yes, would you consider this past experience in making your decision? If a friend or family member had been in situations like this, would you consider their past experiences? What if you had heard about similar experiences of people featured in the news?
- *Psychological/Biographical: Trustful dispositions:* In general, would you consider yourself a trusting or cautious person? Do you think this would influence your decision?
- *Social/Cultural: Trusting norms:*
 - Do you think this is the sort of situation where it is commonly expected (based on social convention) that you would lend your car to your roommate? Does this impact your decision?
 - Is this the sort of situation where it is commonly expected (based on social convention) that your roommate would drive your car carefully and return it safely?

You mentioned that you would do XXX. Is this what you would **really** do if you were faced with this situation?

At the very beginning when I first asked you what you would do, you said that you WOULD/WOULD NOT lend your car to your roommate and XXXX would be the main reason for your decision. After all of the things I've asked you to consider, is there anything else that you would consider in addition to/instead of XXXX?

Variation 1

- Let's say it's the end of the school year and you and your roommate have become close. You have shared things like clothes during the year, and you've even borrowed money from him/her one time when you were waiting to get paid. What are your thoughts about lending him/her your car now? Does the fact that you know your roommate well and are very close to him/her change the way you would make your decision?
- *If appearance was a factor in first scenario ask:* You mentioned earlier that you would consider certain aspects of your roommate's appearance and/or whether he/she was similar to you in any way (sports, hometown, etc.) Would these considerations still be important?
- You would know a lot more about your roommate after spending an entire year with him/her – driving record; length of time driving; borrowed car from you/friend before – would you consider any of this information that you didn't have access to before?
- Do you think his/her motivations would be the same as they were before? (desire to maintain friendship/reputation)
- You mentioned earlier that this is/is NOT the type of situation where it would be commonly expected that you would lend your car to your roommate. Do you still feel the same way? Does this impact your decision?

Variations 2 & 3

- Let's say that instead of your roommate, it's your freshman proctor who asks to borrow your car for the weekend. Would this change your decision? If yes, how?
- What if YOU were the freshman proctor and one of your freshmen asks you to borrow your car. Would this change your decision? If yes, how?

Dilemma 3: New Political Party

Research Question: Is the exposure of untrustworthiness enough to merit trust, and how is this mediated by power/prestige? What other factors are considered?

In the wake of recent political scandals and unhappiness with the course of events in the Middle East a new political party is formed. To date, the primary focus of the party has been to expose the poor decisions and wrongdoings of the current party in power. Just based on this information does this party appeal to you?

- Would you choose to support this party (by voting for it)?
- What are your main reasons for your decision?

Target's Trustworthiness

- What would the party (and its members) have to be like and/or what actions would it have to take to earn your vote before the election?
- Would you think about the party's reputation when deciding whether to support it? What would you base their reputation on (how would you measure it)?
 - Would the party's reputation depend on its members' reputation?
 - If yes, what kind of experience & reputations would members need to have?
 - Would members need to be established politicians? If yes, would their previous party affiliation matter? What if they are all former members of one particular party?
 - Is the purpose of the party (to expose the truth) enough, or do they need a track record first to gain your vote? If yes, what kind of track record?
- Would you pay attention to how the party presents itself?
 - Rock concert-like speeches, use of technology to spread message, eye-catching slogans/branding
- Would it matter if you shared any similarities with members of the party, like coming from the same hometown, sharing the same values & interests?
- Would anything about members' appearances help you decide whether to give your support?
 - Age, clothing, charisma, height, mannerisms, language, gender, education
- Based on the information that I gave you in the beginning, what motivations do you think the party (and its members) has to run in the election?
 - Commitment to truth, justice, word of God
 - Individual members: build/repair reputation, earn fame, money
- If motivations are important to you, what could the party (and its members) do to demonstrate that its motivations are genuine?

Risk/ Opportunity Assessment

- *Probability of outcome:*
 - Would the party's chances of winning affect your decision to support it?
 - Does the probability of the party doing a good job once in office affect your vote?
- *Benefits & losses:*
 - What are some of the benefits that could result from voting for the party? What are some of the negative outcomes that could result?
 - Benefits: radical change, being part of something new
 - Losses: wrong candidate,
 - What are the benefits of choosing not to vote for the party? What are the negative outcomes that could result from not voting for the party?

- Benefits: maintain safe status quo
- Losses: democracy may suffer
- *Commitment required:* Does the commitment required of you affect your decision of whether or not to vote for the party?
 - Would you support the party in their efforts to get elected through volunteer work? Donations? Or just give them your vote?

Independent/Intervening Variables

- *Relational/Situational: Emotional connection:* Sometimes politicians can be quite charismatic when they give speeches and people feel moved and excited by what they say. What if you felt this way about one or more of the party's members?
- *Relational/Situational: Past trust experiences with trusted:* Would it make a difference if you had had previous experiences with one or more of the party's members (as politicians, businessmen, classmates, etc)? What would these experiences have had to be like for you to support them now? What if you had heard about others' (positive or negative) experiences through friends/family or a news report?
- *Psychological/Biographical: Past experiences with trust:* Have you ever been in a situation where you had to decide which politician and/or party to support? How did you make your decision? Would you consider this past experience in making your decision in the current situation? Would you consider the past experiences of friends, family members, or people featured in the news?
- *Psychological/Biographical: Trustful dispositions:* In general, would you consider yourself a trusting or cautious person when it comes to politics? Do you think this would influence your decision?
- *Social/Cultural: Trusting norms:*
 - Do you think this is the kind of situation where you are expected (based on age, social convention, etc) to vote for the new party? Describe.
 - Is this the sort of situation where it is commonly expected that the party running would live up to their goals and aspirations if elected?

You mentioned that you would do XXX. Is this what you would **really** do if you were faced with this situation?

At the very beginning when I first asked you what you would do, you said that you WOULD/WOULD NOT support the new political party and XXXX would be the main reason for your decision. After all of the things I've asked you to consider, is there anything else that you would consider in addition to/instead of XXXX?

Dilemma 4: Medical Advice for Sick Sibling

Research Question: In the absence of personal expertise, what is the role of trust in the process of assimilating a large amount of new, sensitive information? Is this assimilation of information avoided in favor of reliance on those with expertise? Under which situations?

You just found out that your sibling has a rare disorder. Your sibling wants to know about treatment options that are available and entrusts you with doing the research. You have a number of resources at your disposal- talking directly to your general practitioner (who has been your family doctor for years), going to a specialist, researching books and articles on the topic, and searching online on medical websites and in chatrooms dedicated to talking about your sibling's disorder. Which resource(s) would you trust to provide the best information?

What are your *main* reasons for making this decision?

Proximity

- I want you to think about how close each source of information is to you. For instance, if you went to your family doctor or a specialist, you'd be seeing them face-to-face, but if you went online or used books you wouldn't actually be speaking or seeing anyone in person. Does this make a difference?
- How would you compare the advice you might get from your family doctor, whom you've known for years, to the advice that a specialist that you've only just met would give you?

Power

- If you went to an online chatroom, you may get advice from someone who is not a medical expert but who may have lots of personal experience with the disorder and might have done a lot of independent research. Would this be more or less valuable to you than the advice you might receive from your doctor or from a specialist?

Target's Trustworthiness

- Which source do you think would be more **capable** of giving you the information you are looking for? How could you tell?
 - Family doctor & specialist: expertise gained in medical school
 - Books/articles & medical websites: written by professionals
 - Medically-focused chatroom: personal experience
- Which source do you think would be more **motivated** to give you the information you are looking for? What would these motivations be? Would any source have **bad** motivations?
 - Family doctor/specialist : maintain reputation; maintain/establish personal relationship; avoid lawsuit; earn money; personal character
 - Books/articles: maintain reputation; earn money; peer review
 - Medical website: if affiliated with pharmaceutical, make money; maintain reputation; avoid lawsuit
 - Medically-focused chatroom: honesty; benevolence; establish personal relationship; if affiliated with medical institution, maintain reputation
- Would you consider the **reputation** of each source of information? How could you find out about the reputations of each source?
 - Family doctor/specialist: the quality of your personal experience or that of a friend/family member; how long he/she's been a doctor; medical certificates on wall; specific licenses; popularity/fame
 - Books/articles: publisher; author's credentials & resume; popularity/fame

- Medical website: if it's endorsed by a well-recognized medical association, like the American Heart Association; if it's affiliated with a for-profit pharmaceutical company (Merk, Lily); if a friend/relative has used it; if you've used it; popularity/fame
- Medically-focused chatroom: if a friend/relative has used it; if you've used it; popularity/fame (i.e. number of users)
- Would you consider aspects of each source's **appearance**? If yes, what would this tell you?
 - Family doctor & specialist: dress, age, health/fitness, mannerisms, language/fluency
 - Books/articles: length, format
 - Medical website: layout, search features, advertisements
 - Medically-focused chatroom: avatars, handles/nicknames, layout, grammar/punctuation

Risk/Opportunity Assessment

- *Probability of outcome*: Do you think the chances of getting good medical advice are equal for all of the sources I've asked you to consider? Which is the most/least likely to give you good medical advice?
 - Would this consideration affect your actions (i.e. cause you to choose one source over the other), or only your thoughts?
- *Benefits & Losses*:
 - You said that XXXX would be the **most** likely to give you good information. Can you sum up the main benefits of using this source? Are there any drawbacks to using this source?
 - You said that XXXX would be the **least** likely to give you good information. Can you sum up the main drawbacks of using this source? Are there any benefits at all of using this source?
 - Would you consider the benefits & losses when making your decision?
- *Commitment required*: What would be the easiest thing to do:
 - Go to your family doctor? To a specialist? Read books/articles? Visit a medical website? Join a medically-focused chatroom?
 - Is this something that you'd consider?

Independent/Intervening Variables

- *Relational/Situational: Emotional connection*: Sometimes people feel a connection with someone they first meet or who they've known for awhile, and they have a good feeling about them. What if you felt this way about your family doctor? The specialist? Someone in the chat room? Does the emotional connection you feel for each source affect your decision?
 - What if the opposite were the case?
- *Relational/Situational: Past trust experiences with trusted*: Would it make a difference if you had had previous interactions with these specific sources of information? What would these experiences have had to be like for you to go back to the same source? What if you had heard about others' (positive or negative) experiences through friends/family or a news report?
- *Psychological/Biographical: Past experiences with trust*: Have you ever been in a similar situation to this, or have you ever wanted or needed to learn about a medical issue? To whom / what sources did you turn, and with what results? Would you consider this past experience? What if you had heard about others' (positive or negative) experiences with various sources through friends/family or a news report?
- *Psychological/Biographical: Trustful dispositions*: In general, would you consider yourself a trusting or cautious person? Do you think this would influence your decision?
- *Social/Cultural: Trusting norms*:
 - Do you think this is the sort of situation where it is commonly expected (based on social convention) that you would trust one source of information more than another? If so, which one? Does this influence your decision?

- Is this the sort of situation where it is commonly expected (based on social convention) that one source of information would give you better information than the other?

You mentioned that you would go to XXX for the information you were looking for. Is this what you would **really** do if you were faced with this situation (and you were expected to trust a doctor (*optional*))?

At the very beginning when I first asked you what you would do, you said that you would choose source XXXX to give you accurate medical advice and YYYY would be the main reason for your decision. After all of the things I've asked you to consider, is there anything else that you would consider in addition to/instead of YYYY?

Dilemma 5: eBay vs. Car Dealership

Research Question: What evidence of trustworthiness do people consider to avoid financial loss or gain maximum financial benefit? In the absence of in-person judgments or previous trust experiences what role do iconography, wisdom of crowds, and trust in regulations play, particularly when proximity is more removed?

eBay = (3,2) if seller is individual or (3,3) if seller is car dealership

Car dealership = (2,3)

You would like to purchase a car and find two similar cars- one at the local car dealership, another on eBay, the online auction site. *The car on eBay is a “buy now” price about \$1000 cheaper than the price offered by a local dealership.* Which car would you be more likely to buy? (The eBay car is actually located in the town next to yours for pick-up.)

What are your *main* reasons for making this decision?

Proximity

- What do you think about the fact that you can visit the car dealership, see the car and the dealer in person, whereas you have no face-to-face contact with the eBay seller and you can only look at photos of the car?

Power

- Does it make a difference to you if the eBay seller is an individual seller or an established car dealership? Describe.

Target’s Trustworthiness

- Which seller do you think would be more **capable** of selling you a quality car? How could you tell?
- Which seller do you think would be more **motivated** to sell you a quality car? What would these motivations be? Would either seller have *bad* motivations?
 - *Types of motivations to probe for:*
 - *Internal: feeling moved by knowledge that the trustor is counting on you; pure willing; moral commitments; dispositions/personal character (benevolence, honesty, reciprocity, loyalty); self-preservation; feelings of love/friendship for the trustor; desire to earn tangible rewards (e.g. money); desire to maintain or establish one’s reputation; desire to maintain or establish ongoing relationships*
 - *External: institutional constraints (laws, contracts, etc.); social/cultural norms; religious controls*
- Would you consider the **reputation** of each seller? How could you find out about their reputations?
 - eBay: the number of reputation ratings that the eBay seller has received in the past; the kind of reputation ratings (positive/negative) he/she has received; buyer comments; how long he or she has been an eBay seller; whether or not you know someone who has bought a car from him/her; whether you have bought something from this seller in the past
 - Car dealership: how long it has been around; whether it is part of an established chain of dealerships or if it is an independently owned, local dealership; if it is a popular and successful dealership; whether it has nearby competitors; whether or not you know someone who has bought a car there; whether or not you know the owner or the salesperson; whether you have bought a car there in the past
- Appearance:

- In this situation, you would not know what the eBay seller looked like, but you might consider what their posting looked like. Would you consider anything about the seller's posting?
 - Payment type accepted (cash only vs. paypal or credit card)
 - Thoroughness of the car description, number/quality of photos, layout of posting, username
- You would know what the salesman at the dealership looked like and how he/she acted. Would you consider anything about the salesperson's appearance?
 - Age, dress, mannerisms, civility, health/fitness, language/fluency, other

Risk/Opportunity Assessment

- *Probability of outcome:* Do you think the chances of being sold a quality car are equal for eBay and the car dealership? Which is the most/least likely to sell you a good car?
- *Benefits & Losses:*
 - You said that XXXX would be the **most** likely to sell you a quality car. Can you sum up the main benefits of buying from XXXX? Are there any drawbacks to buying from XXXX?
 - You said that YYYY would be the **least** likely to sell you a quality car. Can you sum up the main drawbacks of buying from YYYY? Are there any benefits at all of buying from YYYY?
 - Would you consider the benefits & losses when making your decision?
- *Commitment required:* What would be the easiest thing to do – buy the car on eBay or through a dealership? Is this something that you'd consider?

Independent/Intervening Variables

- *Relational/Situational: Emotional connection:* Sometimes people feel a connection with someone they first meet, or they have a good feeling about them. What if you felt this way about the salesperson at the dealership? What if you had this feeling through the email exchanges with the eBay seller? What if the opposite were the case?
- *Relational/Situational: Past trust experiences with the trusted:* Would it make a difference if you had had previous interactions with this particular eBay seller or this particular car dealership before? What would these interactions have had to be like in order for you to go back? What if you had heard about others' (positive or negative) experiences through friends/family or a news report?
- *Psychological/Biographical: Past experiences with trust:* Have you ever bought something of value – such as a car – online? Have you ever bought a car at a car dealership? What were the results? Would you consider these past experiences in making your decision? If a friend or family member had been in situations like this, would you consider their past experiences? What if you had heard about similar experiences of people featured in the news?
- *Psychological/Biographical: Trustful dispositions:* In general, would you consider yourself a trusting or cautious person on the Internet? Do you think this would influence your decision?
- *Social/Cultural: Trusting norms:*
 - Do you think this is the sort of situation where it is commonly expected (based on social convention) that you would trust one seller more than another? If so, which one?
 - Is this the sort of situation where it is commonly expected (based on social convention) that the car dealership would sell you a good quality car? What about the eBay seller?

You mentioned that you would buy the car from XXX. Is this what you would **really** do if you were faced with this situation (and you were expected to buy the car from the dealer (*optional*))?

At the very beginning when I first asked you what you would do, you said that you buy the car from XXXX and YYYY would be the main reason for your decision. After all of the things I've asked you to consider, is there anything else that you would consider in addition to/instead of YYYY?

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