Chapter Authors – Laura Gale: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9464-2992, Ben Ives: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7262-0693, Lee Nelson: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7491-2382, and Paul Potrac: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9616-6491 *with* Martyn D. Cooke

Chapter Number & Title – Chapter 16, Trust and (dis)trust in community sport coaching

Abstract

This chapter aims to help you to understand and navigate interpersonal (dis)trust in the context of community sport coaching. We begin by outlining how the consideration of trust has much to offer in terms of understanding the complex interplay between community sport coaches and the various contextual stakeholders that form their practice networks. Drawing on Hardin and Cook's theorisation of (dis)trust, Goffman's dramaturgical writings addressing strategic interaction, and Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's conceptual framework on the five facets of trust, the chapter then explores those relational factors that are often deemed necessary if we are to trust and be trusted. Specifically, it examines those interpersonal strategies that a community sport coach might use not only to determine the trustworthiness of others, but also to appear trustworthy themselves. The chapter includes a running practitioner commentary in which an experienced community sport coach, Martyn, critically reflects on the importance of interpersonal trust, inclusive of the interactional strategies he has implemented in an effort to assess the trustworthiness of others and convince others he is trustworthy.

Introduction

> At the heart of community sport coaching is the need to build caring and trusting relationships with a range of community stakeholders. Trust is vital as it underpins and shapes values, cultures, the environment, and our workplace bonds and relationships. A culture of distrust, however, is problematic as it can result in selfishness, anxiety, self-doubt, and low confidence. It is important that community sport coaches consider what trust and distrust means to them, and how they can develop trusting relationships with others. (Lois, Community sport coach).

The purpose of this chapter is to enable you to understand and navigate interpersonal (dis)trust in the context of community sport coaching. We begin by outlining how the consideration and application of various theories of trust has much to offer in terms of understanding the complex interplay between community sport coaches and the various contextual stakeholders that form their practice networks (e.g., participants, colleagues, or managers). Drawing on Hardin and Cook's theorisation of (dis)trust, Goffman's dramaturgical writings addressing strategic interaction, and Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's conceptual framework on the five facets of trust, the chapter will then explore those relational factors that are often deemed necessary if we are to trust and be trusted. Specifically, it will examine those interpersonal strategies that a community sport coach might use not only to determine the trustworthiness of others, but also to appear trustworthy themselves. The chapter includes a running practitioner commentary in which an experienced community sport coach, Martyn, critically reflects on the importance of interpersonal trust, inclusive of the interactional strategies he has implemented in an effort to assess the trustworthiness of others and convince others he is trustworthy.

What is (dis)trust and why is it important for community sport coaching?

While studies in sport coaching have alluded to the importance of trust 'in developing, maintaining, and advancing productive and meaningful working relationships' (Purdy et al., 2013, p. 309), there remains a paucity of research directly addressing the issue of interpersonal (dis)trust in sports organisations (Gale et al., 2019). This situation is somewhat surprising given that 'trust makes social life possible' (Weber and Carter, 2003, p. 1), and is the 'foundation of effective relationships' (Reina and Reina, 2006, p. x). In contrast to its limited coverage in the sociology of sport sub discipline, interpersonal trust has been subject to wide scale examination in mainstream sociology. Here, researchers have focused their attention on a range of interconnected topics. These have included a) how interpersonal trust is experienced emotionally and cognitively by individuals, b) the ways in which trust is developed, maintained, and spread between individuals and groups, and c) how it may be weakened, dissolved, or broken (e.g., Jones and George, 1998; Sztompka, 1999; Luhmann, 2017). Within this body of research, interpersonal trust is positioned as an inherently relational expression of confidence; one where an individual believes that another person will consider his or her interests when making a decision and, importantly, will not seek to violate the moral standards of the relationship (e.g., Simmel, 1978; Giddens, 1991; Sztompka, 1999; Weber and Carter, 2003; Crossley, 2011; Luhmann, 2017). Similarly, distrust is linked to an incongruence between the values and motivations of individuals and/or the negative expectations that one individual has of another person within a particular social setting (Jones and George, 1998; Sztompka, 1999; Luhmann, 2017).

Unsurprisingly, trust and distrust have very different implications for our interactions and relationships. When we have confidence in the 'words' and 'deeds' of other people, our mutual

dealings become more efficient and authentic (Arrow, 1974). Indeed, the presence of trust has a number of important benefits for workers such as cooperation, strong relationships, collegiately, confidence, wellbeing, communication, openness, empowerment, and productivity (Kramer, 1999; Kramer and Cook, 2004). In the context of community sport coaching, Gale et al.'s (2019) participants commented on how their working relationships with trusted individuals were notably different to those with other, less trusted (or distrusted), colleagues. For example, the coaches explained that their relations with contextual others who they deemed trustworthy were more cooperative, relaxed, and personable in nature. They also shared how they were able to talk openly (and honestly) about working processes, issues, and other colleagues, as well as share aspects of their private lives that they did not disclose to the majority of organisational stakeholders with whom they were required to work.

It is also important to acknowledge the various ways in which distrust can permeate relationships. As trust declines, people are increasingly unwilling to take risks (Tyler and Kramer, 1996). They are also more likely to 'engage in self-protective actions and continually make provisions for the possibility of opportunistic behaviour on the part of others' (Limerick and Cunnington, 1993, pp. 95-96). As you would expect, such matters have the potential to create a number of interpersonal workplace issues (e.g., lack of integrity, weak relationships, conflict, feelings of anxiety and insecurity, a strong desire to monitor the behaviours and possible motives of others, and dysfunctional workplace practices) (Govier, 1992; Fuller, 1996; Levi, 2000). When examining the notion of distrust in community sport coaching contexts, Gale et al. (2019) found that distrust significantly affected workplace interactions and relationships. For example, the participant coaches outlined how a 'degree of wariness' characterised interpersonal interactions with colleagues whom they did not trust. They also explained how this 'air of caution' or 'protective guard' resulted in them trying to reduce the

relative frequency of their (direct) interactions with these distrusted individuals. Moreover, they refrained from discussing sensitive and potentially problematic matters relating to both work and non-work life. Thus, while distrust served to protect the participants 'against losses that would follow from taking the risk of cooperating with [certain] others,' it can also be problematic in terms of blocking 'even the attempt at cooperation' (Hardin, 2002, p. 94). Martyn's experiences as a community sport coach echo these points:

> I have been working in community sport for the best part of 10-years and during that time I have been employed by a variety of organisations, companies, and clubs. Some were incredible places to work, while others were chaotic and dysfunctional. I think I have seen both sides of the coin. However, what I would say is that trusting relationships are a critical factor in doing productive community sport coaching work. I have always done my best work when I am around people that I trust. It enables you to build strong relationships where you can feel comfortable, confident, and willing to cooperate with others. If there is trust, then you can direct all your focus on being productive and ensuring quality delivery. A lack of trust, however, has the opposite effect. You can feel anxious and insecure, and it can lead to suspicion, disputes, and conflict, which ultimately has a negative impact on both your own performance and that of the organisation.

Trust and encapsulated interests

In the *Russell Sage Foundation Series on Trust*, Hardin (2002) and Cook et al. (2005) explored the role of (dis)trust and trustworthiness in establishing and maintaining cooperative behaviour in an array of social, economic, and political contexts. A central feature of these discussions were the reformulation of interpersonal trust as an *encapsulated interest*, which is grounded in

ongoing interpersonal interactions between a truster and a trusted: 'I trust you because your interests encapsulate mine, which is to say that you have an interest in fulfilling my trust' (Hardin, 2002, p. 3). According to Hardin (2002) and Cook et al. (2005), there are three common reasons for why the trusted would encapsulate the truster's interests as part of his or her own interests: 1) We are in an ongoing relationship that I want to maintain because it is valuable to me, 2) I consider you my friend, or I love you, or 3) I value my general reputation, which could be harmed if I am untrustworthy in my dealings with you. Trust, therefore, exists when person A believes that person B has incentive (e.g., financial interests, emotional ties, reputation) to maintain the ongoing relationship with them. As Martyn explains below:

> The manager at the first company that I worked for took a real interest in me as an individual. I was young, bright, and enthusiastic but my thoughts were often overlooked by other team members because of my youthfulness. I was undertaking a university degree at the time and I had a whole range of fresh ideas, activities, and things that I wanted to put into practice. My manager was incredibly supportive. He gave me the freedom to experiment in my coaching sessions and was not overly critical when things did not work. He gave me help, support, and advice when I needed it and it enabled me to develop into a much more effective coach. I was always grateful for the faith he had in me and I sought to repay that trust by delivering high quality coaching sessions whenever I worked for the company. I guess we both benefitted in the end. My manager ended up with a young coach who was enthusiastic, motivated, and was providing a constant flurry of fresh ideas and perspectives which, ultimately, enhanced the appeal and reputation of the company. Whereas I had the opportunity to experiment and develop my own ideas, which enhanced my ability as a coach as well as my employability.

Distrust, on the other hand, is the opposite of trust (Cook et al., 2005). Person A is likely to distrust person B if they think that person B's interests are detrimental to, or oppose, their own, and that person B will not take person A's interests into account in their actions (Hardin, 2006). From this viewpoint, Hardin (2002, 2006) and Cook et al. (2005) conceptualised (dis)trust as a relational, fluid, and dynamic commodity that is grounded in one party's assessment of another's morality, reciprocity, and self-interest over time. As Martyn illustrates below:

> There is one coach in my team that I simply do not trust. I remember being sat in the office with him one day when he began talking about another coach (who was not present in the room at the time). They spoke quite negatively and disparagingly about this individual. My first thought was, 'Wow, if they are being this disrespectful about another coach behind their back, then is this guy having similar conversations about me when I am not in the room?' They are also notorious for doing anything possible to further their own interests. If another member of the team makes a mistake, however small, then you can guarantee that this coach is straight into the manager's office to let them know about it. It feels like we are all climbing a ladder and this guy will do anything to get to the top first, even if that means pulling people down a few rungs. We are all supposed to be part of a team, yet he comes across as being selfish. If I ever need help, I very much doubt he will provide it, unless it benefits him in some way. I am very careful about what I say or divulge when he is around, because I know that there is always a risk that he will tell someone else or twist it so that he can use it for his own personal agenda.

While we find the analytical lens of Hardin (2002, 2006) and Cook et al. (2005) to be useful for understanding why an individual may (dis)trust other social actors, it arguably does not

provide a framework to interpret those interpersonal strategies that a community sport coach might use to determine the trustworthiness of other people. We now turn to Goffman's (1969, 1974) dramaturgical ideas to better illustrate how a community sport coach may judge the trustworthiness of contextual stakeholders.

Interacting strategically to judge the trustworthiness of others

Goffman's work addressing *Strategic Interaction* (1969) provides a useful starting point for analysing how a community sport coach may judge the trustworthiness of others. In this classic text, Goffman (1969, p. x) adopted a game analogy to address the 'calculative, gamelike aspects of mutual dealings.' Central to his analysis is the belief that people can engage in *expression games* during face-to-face interaction to gather information that permits them to respond productively to their social environment (Goffman, 1969). Using the metaphor of a secret agent, Goffman (1969) considered how, in expression games, individuals often seek to control the impressions they give to others, while simultaneously seeking to uncover the intentions and ulterior motives behind others' actions, and to do so while trying to 'feign a breezy nonchalance' (Scott, 2015, p. 218). The objective of expression games is, therefore, to employ appropriate 'moves' to 'understand [another] person's perspective, how they feel, think, and experience the world, so that you can exploit them or foil their efforts to exploit you' (Shulman, 2017, p. 230).

One of these strategic moves is called the *uncovering move*. Here, individuals seek to 'crack, pierce, penetrate, and otherwise get behind the apparent facts' by using some form of examination, such as studying 'the tracks the subject leaves, his spoor, as it were,' to reveal the real motives and intensions of another individual (Goffman 1969, p. 18-19). In other words,

the uncovering move involves an individual engaging in covert dialogue when in the presence of another in an effort to delicately gain access to the subjects guarded information, so they can decide if they are trustworthy (or not) (Scott, 2015). In the context of Martyn's community sport coaching practice:

> When I became a line manager, I remember placing one of our senior coaches into a school where I had a good working relationship with the Head Teacher. One week, the Head Teacher called me and said that the coach had turned up 10-minutes late for a session, and that this had been a common occurrence during the previous couple of weeks. I wanted to find out if I could trust this coach, so the next time he was in the office, I decided to do some subtle questioning: '*How are you finding the school?*' 'Good, everything is going well.' '*Is your timekeeping good?*' 'Yeah, I always turn up early to set up.' '*What about last week?*' 'Yeah, I was on time.' '*Are you sure?*' 'Well, I might have been a minute or two late.' '*What about other weeks?*' 'No, no. That was just a one off because of the traffic. All the other weeks I was on time.' It was clear from the conversation that he was being dishonest. I already knew the answer to each of my questions; it was just a case of seeing if he would answer honestly – which he did not! From that point on I was always wary about what this coach told me. The element of trust had been broken, and I made an implicit effort to keep a much closer eye on whether his words and actions matched up.

Goffman (1974) also identified that to strategically gather information about others, individuals can engage in *secret monitoring*. This idea refers to an individual's attempts to gain access to social performances that the observer would not normally be party to. Specifically, he noted:

… in everyday life it seems routine that however the individual presents himself on any occasion before any audience, there will be other places, times, and audiences when he quite properly conducts himself in a manner that would discredit this performance were his other conduct to be vividly brought to life. (Goffman, 1974, pp. 168-169).

Such activity, according to Goffman (1974), can function to undermine the monitored individual's activities and render their performance discreditable (Burns, 1992). As Martyn explains in the context of his own community sport coaching practice:

During the summer, I was responsible for running weeklong football camps in two separate locations. I primarily had to deal with the administrative side, so the delivery was left to a small team of community sport coaches. However, with each camp running from different venues, it was impossible for me to be at two locations at the same time and so I had to trust the staff to deliver high quality coaching practice. I heard a rumour that one coach had taken a somewhat lackadaisical approach to delivery when I was not present at their location, so I dropped in unannounced and watched them coaching from afar. It was the perfect opportunity to assess their delivery. Were they still maintaining high standards when they thought that I was not watching? I also made an effort to speak with the participants: 'What did you do in the session this morning?' 'Did you enjoy the session?' 'What do you think about the coach?' It is amazing how much information you can gather about a coach from the participants that they work with. By using these secret monitoring strategies, I was able to find out that the coach was slacking off when senior members of staff were not around; information that I would probably not have gotten if I had only spoken to the coach or simply stood on the side of the pitch when they were coaching.

Goffman (1974) further expanded on the way people may seek to acquire, reveal, and conceal information during everyday interactions. Specifically, Goffman outlined how social actors may use *fabrications*, which he defined as 'the intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that a party of one or more others will be induced to have a false belief about what is going on' (Goffman, 1974, p. 83). In relation to community sport coaching, Gale et al. (2019) found that for some participants, attempts to establish the trustworthiness of colleagues went beyond the strategic interactional practices of *uncovering moves* and *secret monitoring*. These individuals explained how they also purposely laid 'traps' to test the loyalty and character of co-workers (Goffman, 1974). This often involved sharing confidential and sensitive information with peers and superiors 'and then waiting to see if indeed it comes to pass that the information has been divulged' (Goffman, 1974, p. 97). By way of example, two coaches reported:

> Feed them something small to begin with, and see how it goes. If they can be trusted with the information, you may start giving them more. Or, if they can't, you give them nothing ever again. I did this with a work colleague, slightly senior to me … I used it to gauge his trustworthiness, if the information leaked out I would know where it came from … When you give someone sensitive information it's always a huge worry that it may get out as common knowledge. (Gale et al., 2019, pp. 249-250)

> I purposively gave a colleague some 'confidential' council information concerning the council's intention to buy a piece of land. After disclosing, I went to speak to this person's co-worker to see if this information was fed back to me. I soon learnt that my

colleague was unwilling to be respective of my wishes for it to remain a conversation between the two of us. (Gale et al., 2019, p. 250).

The participants behaviours in such social situations arguably reflects Goffman's (1974) notion of *vital tests*, which involves deception and ulterior motives. The participants knew that they were deliberately disclosing this information to achieve a hidden agenda, namely, to uncover the trustworthiness of a co-worker (Smith, 2006; Manning, 2007). However, this version of reality was unbeknown to said co-worker; they were simply unaware that the participants primary motive for divulging this information was to gauge if the co-worker was trustworthy (or not) (Persson, 2019). In summary, then, Goffman's (1969, 1974) work helps to shine an analytical light on the ways that community sport coaches can, and often do, manipulate social interactions and situations, in an attempt to uncover the trustworthiness of contextual others (cf. Jacobsen and Kristiansen, 2015).

Convincing others of our trustworthiness

In this section of the chapter, we will introduce the *five facets of trust* (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000) in an attempt to understand how a community sport coach may establish themselves as a trustworthy individual to key contextual partners (e.g., participants, parents, peers, managers, or funding partners). According to this framework, individuals can promote trust relations by demonstrating *benevolence*, or the attitude of goodwill, by showing consideration or sensitivity for others' interests, acting in a way that protects the rights of others, and/or refraining from exploiting their vulnerabilities for personal gain. In the below extract, Martyn explains how and why he seeks to demonstrate benevolence in his own community sport coaching work:

I try to develop positive relationships with the people that I work alongside and one strategy that I utilise is demonstrating goodwill and camaraderie. It is about proving that you are a supportive, team player and that you will look out for those around you. I often find that it is the small actions or gestures that contribute towards this. If a coach is ill or needs an evening off, I will often offer to cover their session. On one occasion, a coach had forgotten their bag of footballs, so I leant them mine for the day. When the manager was short of staff during the summer, I cancelled my annual leave so that I could fill the gap. Each of these acts of goodwill contribute towards building a trusting relationship, and my assumption is that they will be reciprocated when I need similar help at some point in the future.

Openness and *transparency* may also help a community sport coach to prove their trustworthiness to others. They may, for example, share relevant information and technologies, including professional secrets, strategies, equipment, and materials in the interest of helping others to succeed. An environment of reciprocity is also implied by the notion of openness in which the community sport coach and the truster (e.g., participant, colleague, parent, or manager) are able to share their thoughts and ideas without the fear of being exploited by the other. As Martyn explains:

I happen to be slightly older than some of my colleagues, many of whom are apprentices or in their first coaching role. I try to be open and transparent with them by sharing my knowledge and experience. Every lunchtime, I will sit in the office and try to impart some of my experience on these younger coaches. I am happy to share ideas for drills and practices. If a coach has an issue, then I will suggest a solution. I do not have all of the answers, but I find that I can offer decent advice for most of the challenges they

encounter. I endeavour to ensure that there is no secrecy with me – if I have knowledge or expertise that can help others, I will share it. I genuinely just want to help these younger coaches to improve and succeed. I also love telling stories about my own successes and experiences as a coach, but I am just as open about my mistakes and failures. In community sport coaching, I think that such transparency is a rarity – everyone seems to be so secretive about their ideas and unwilling to share or collaborate. However, I feel it enables the team to trust and respect me more.

Relatedly, the behaviours the community sport coach must confirm that they are *honest* and authentic, demonstrating integrity through corresponding statements and actions, upholding commitments, and an acceptance of responsibility for one's deeds, avoiding the shifting of blame to another. In the words of Martyn:

> When things are going well and you are having success, honesty comes easily. However, when things are failing or mistakes are being made, then there is a tendency for people to try to shift the blame. For me, you demonstrate your honesty, authenticity, and integrity when things are not going well. When a programme that I delivered failed to reach the expected number of participants, I accepted responsibility, made no excuses, and avoided blaming others. This demonstrated my authenticity to both my line manager and colleagues. Furthermore, does what I say align with what has actually occurred? If not, and people see the discrepancy, I lose integrity. When a child was injured during a session, I was honest with the parent about how that injury had occurred. Be honest with those around you, regardless of if the scenario reflects positively or negatively on yourself, and people will be more willing to trust you.

If a community sport coach demonstrates the above three facets, they arguably further demonstrate *reliability*; that is a predictability that they will act in good faith and come through on the commitments they have made to another. Put another way, a community sport coach is deemed to be reliable when the truster (e.g., participant, colleague, parent, or manager) does not have to invest energy into worrying or making alternative arrangements because they know the coach can be counted on to meet their needs. For example:

> Reliability is all about consistency. As a coach, I want those around me to know that they can count on me and that I can be trusted to perform my responsibilities. It is the basics. Be punctual. Be organised. Hit your targets. Meet your deadlines. In terms of delivery, it is about making sure that you deliver high quality coaching in every session that you do. There is no point doing one brilliant session and then four mediocre ones. It is about consistently performing at a high level. If a manager knows that I am a reliable coach, they are more likely to assign me extra hours. If a fellow coach knows that I am reliable, they will be happy for me to work with them or cover their sessions. If a parent knows that I am a reliable coach, they are more likely to send their child to my session and recommend it to others. Reliability breeds success and opportunity. Ultimately, if I prove myself to be reliable to my manager, then they will trust me more. The more that they trust me, the more likely they will be to give me extra hours, have my contract extended, or offer me a promotion. If a manager sees me as being trustworthy and reliable now, then it facilitates greater employment opportunities in the future.

Of course, these behaviours in themselves would mean little unless the community sport coach also demonstrates *competence*, especially when there is some level of skill or knowledge

involved in fulfilling the expectation. For example, as noted by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999, p. 188), 'the patient of a young surgeon may feel that this doctor wishes very much to heal the patient, but if he or she has a poor performance record, the patient will likely not trust in the physician.' In a community sport coaching context:

> There is often a misconception that community sport coaches are not as competent or knowledgeable as their counterparts who work at an elite level. However, I wholeheartedly disagree. Being able to plan, deliver, and manage a community session with 30 children of varied abilities and interests requires just as much skill and competence (arguably more) when compared to a session delivered in an elite setting. Community sport coaching is so diverse that you need to be able to react to varied challenges. Competence is being able to plan an appropriate session. It is being able to manage the behaviour of participants. It is about making sure that sessions are enjoyable, yet still provide learning opportunities. In an environment where organisations are constantly competing for the same corner of the market, competent coaches are those that are trusted by managers, parents, and participants. Being competent makes you an extremely valuable asset.

These five facets of trust, according to Hoy and colleagues, are fundamental to establishing and maintaining trustworthiness. Individuals must demonstrate benevolence, openness, honesty, reliability, and competence during their interactions to garner the trust of others. Although all five facets of trust carry significant importance, they are interconnected with the relative weight of each facet being dependent upon the specific relational context.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to illustrate the value of exploring the notions of (dis)trust in community sport coaching work. Through presenting some of the core theoretical ideas from Hardin, Cook, Goffman, and Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, we have sought to raise awareness on a) how a community sport coach's decision to (dis)trust others can be based on encapsulated interests, b) that community sport coaches can use a range of strategies to judge the trustworthiness of contextual others, and c) the ways in which community sport coaches can establish themselves as trustworthy individuals.

Of course, there remains much more to explore in this topic area. For example, we know very little about how and why (dis)trust between community sport coaches changes over time or, indeed, how community sport coaches seek to utilise the trust of others to achieve desired ends (Purdy et al., 2013). Equally, a further worthwhile line of inquiry would be to examine how community sport coaches seek to cultivate, maintain, and, where necessary, repair their trustworthiness in the eyes of others (cf. Lewicki et al., 2006; Williams, 2007). Finally, and in responding to recent calls for more nuanced understandings of the emotional dimensions of sports work (e.g., Potrac et al., 2017; Roderick et al., 2017), we invite researchers to consider the specific emotions that feature in the development and maintenance of (dis)trust between individuals (cf. Williams, 2007; Lee and Selart, 2011; Niven et al., 2012).

Finally, it is important to note that, while we decided to pay attention to the theorising of Hardin, Cook, Goffman, and Hoy and Tschannen-Moran to make sense of trust and distrust in community sport coaching, we are not suggesting their work is the only option to theoretically explore and understand these notions. Rather, their work presents just a range of theories that could be utilised to further our understanding of this topic in community sport coaching. As

such, we would recommend that scholars consider the applicability of alternative frameworks

of trust and distrust (e.g., Luhmann, 2017; Mistzal, 1996; Sztompka, 1999).

Critical questions

Consider the following questions within a community sport coaching setting of your choice:

1. Think of a time when you have experienced trust or distrust. What was the situation and who was involved?

2. Do your interactions and relationships differ between those you trust compared to those you distrust? How and why?

3. Consider when you have attempted to gauge the trustworthiness of a key contextual stakeholder. What strategies did you employ to judge if another is trustworthy or not?

4. Is it important that other people view you as trustworthy? If so, why? What strategies would you use to garner their trust?

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