

# Survey Incentives and Recent Advances in Trust Theory

Ferenc Mújdricza, Methodology Department



[ferenc.mujdricza@ksh.hu](mailto:ferenc.mujdricza@ksh.hu)

New  
Techniques and  
Technologies for  
Statistics 2021

#NTTS2021

ONLINE CONFERENCE  
09 – 11 March 2021

## Rationale

Eleanor Singer (2018)

- Declining response rates in spite (because?) of using incentives!
- we need **'more theory instead of basing practice on past practice. (...)**  
**Because otherwise you are sort of flying by the seat of your pants. (...)**  
**[W]e can't rely on hunches anymore.'**

Trust: crucial in survey cooperation (Dillman 1978, 2007, 2014)

- Obsolete trust concepts of survey (non)response theory (Dillman 1978, 2007, 2014, Groves & Couper 1998, Saßenroth 2013, Dillman et al. 2014)
- Better conceptual understanding is needed to avoid ineffective or counterproductive practices of enhancing willingness to respond.
- Conceptual analysis

## Trust: the elusive concept

- Survey (non)response trust concept: Blau's (1964) outdated Social Exchange Theory (SET) approach (Dillman 1978, 2007, 2014, etc.)

Trust is assumed to be learnt in the course of recurring cost–benefit calculations in social exchange situations.

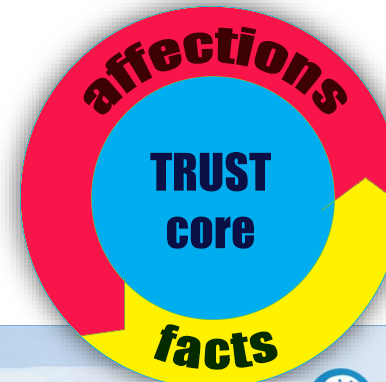
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## Trust: a noncognitive disposition

- Noncognitive approaches (Baier 1986, Becker 1996, Jones 1996, Lagerspetz 2015, etc.):
  - Expectation of benevolence
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- Problems: conscious trust? Naïveté?
- Reconciliation: essentially noncognitive, based on existential anxiety
  - Trust is an emanation of Tillich's (1952) courage to be in the presence but in spite of the possibility of betrayal.
  - Affirms the other → enables their trust → accumulation (virtuous circle) of trust
  - Emotions weaken or strengthen, reliance supports it

## Implications

- Incentive designs based on the conceptual dead-end of SET trust concepts cannot evoke the norm of reciprocity or trigger trust and survey cooperation (Dillman 1978, 2007, Groves & Couper 1998, Saßenroth 2013, Dillman et al. 2014)
- An unconditional incentive in this framework is
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  - Decrease of response rates (Church 1993),
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## Conclusions

The decades-long, manipulative incentivisation may well be a factor in the downward trends of survey response.

### Possible solution:

- Demonstration of *genuine, truly unconditional* trust is crucial to enable respondents' trusting: deal with basic distrust towards respondents!
- 'Trust-provoking' → fight learnt distrust: the new role of incentives!

**Framework:** properly tailored an *honest* leverage-saliency design (Groves et al. 2000)

**Contents:** the attitude and actions of the survey institute throughout the entire lifetime of a survey.

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# Read and reach out



Mújdricza F. (2019) The Roots of Trust

<https://doi.org/10.5708/EJMH.14.2019.1.6>



[ferenc.mujdricza@ksh.hu](mailto:ferenc.mujdricza@ksh.hu)



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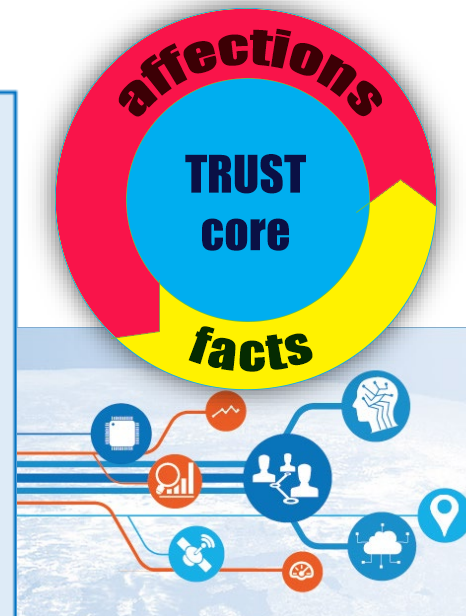
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