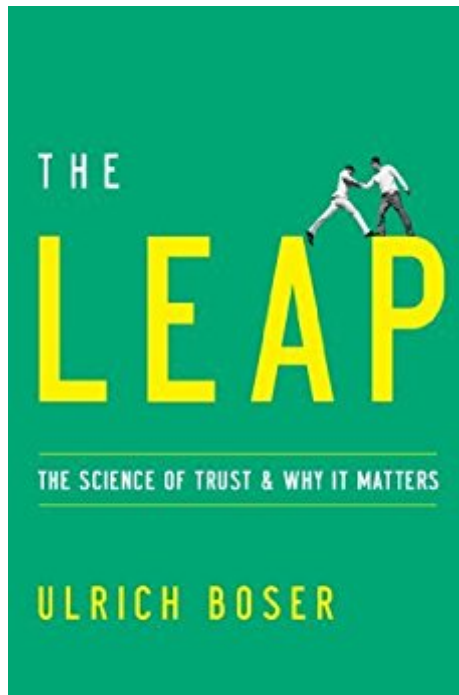




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The Leap: The Science Of Trust And Why It Matters



Synopsis

We're not supposed to trust others. Look at the headlines. Read the blogs. Study the survey data. It seems that everyone is wary, that everyone is just looking out for themselves. But a sense of social trust and togetherness can be restored. In *The Leap*, best-selling author Ulrich Boser shows how the emerging research on trust can improve our lives, rebuild our economy, and strengthen society. As part of this engaging and deeply reported narrative, Boser visits a radio soap opera in Rwanda that aims to restore the country's broken trust, profiles the man who brought honesty to one of the most corrupt cities in Latin America, and explains how a college dropout managed to con his way into American high society. Boser even goes skydiving to see if the experience will increase his levels of oxytocin, the so-called "trust hormone." A powerful mix of hard science and compelling storytelling, *The Leap* explores how we trust, why we trust, and what we can all do to deepen social trust. The book includes insightful policy recommendations along with surprising new data on the state of social trust in America today.

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Customer Reviews

I had high hopes for this book given the endorsements. Unfortunately, I found it lacking in real scholarship (I failed to see the science, unless you want to concentrate on oxytocin) or any particularly revelatory insights. There seems to be an over-reliance on other limited studies, correlated but not causative conclusions reached and some extremely trite analogies (Paris Hilton?, Really?). Reinhold Niebuhr's "Moral Man and Immoral Society:" is denser and not an easy read, but is so much more insightful than this offering from Ulrich Boser. Understanding our place in society is the beginning of understanding trust and this attempt to give a scientific basis (which there certainly is) failed in this book.

Quite a comprehensive look into trust at both individual and social levels. Backed by social experiments and research findings, the book helps readers to learn about trust and how to build it amongst human interaction.

Reminds me a bit of Dubner and Levitt in that he uses a lot of statistics and examples of how and when trust does and does not work/how it has and has not worked in the past. I have not yet finished it but am thoroughly enjoying it. A stimulating read.

Very interesting..

If you like books by authors such as Malcolm Gladwell (Tipping Point, Outliers) or Steven Levitt (Freakonomics) you will like this book. I think of these as "science lite" books, an outline of current research in fields like psychology or economics sprinkled with antidotes and a bit of history. It is pretty easy reading, and you will learn something while being entertained. This book does a good job of usually providing references to the actual research. But sometimes the author presents an idea and glosses over the science. For example, he maintains that two research studies show that there is an inverse relationship between political trust and homicide rates. The implication given in the book is that this relationship is causal. However, it could easily be correlational. For example, in elementary schools on average reading ability increases with shoe size, those with bigger shoes tend to read at a higher level. So can we conclude that kids with big feet are smarter? Nope, a little thinking and one realizes that older kids have bigger feet, and older kids usually read better than younger kids. That relationship (shoe size and reading ability) may be statistically significant, but it masks an underlying variable of age. It is a correlational relationship, not a causal one.

Unfortunately here (at least in the advanced reader copy) he does not provide the references to the

actual research, so I was unable to look up the source material. And two studies are not enough for a conclusion. So, you need to have a little skepticism about some of the conclusions. However, I did find the book thought provoking, especially the chapter on politics and trust. Bosner makes some interesting points, especially about how politicians are caught in a Catch 22, berate the government to get elected, and then become part of that government you just disparaged as being untrustworthy, making it harder to get anything done. If you would like a straightforward and entertaining read about current research on trust, and realize that if you really want to understand some of these issues you are going to need to dig a little deeper this is a good read.

I'm especially leery (distrustful) of technical material written by lay people. Why? It's simply far too easy to cherry-pick findings to support about any conclusion relevant to the topic desired. (I'm also generally distrustful of technical material written by 'experts,' for the same reason - though typically the slanting isn't as egregious. That innate distrust zooms upward if the material lacks any support from recognized experts within the field. Unfortunately, such is the case with Bosner's "The Leap: The Science of Trust." Generally I immediately put down such books, sensing their untrustworthiness. However, that was literally impossible in this instance as I'd obtained the book free, in an e-version. So, what the heck - Author Bosner contends that humans have evolved to work with others, have a deep-seated urge to be fair and warmhearted, and trust between us is a type of social glue that helps build social capital and create social networks. Research on what happens to prisoners in solitary confinement (some go mad) supports a general need to socialize. His objective is to provide ways to improve social trust, show how we can make altruistic concerns for each other outweigh our natural self-interest. Bosner prefers the definition of trust offered by Denise Rousseau et al: "Trust is when you assume vulnerability with an optimistic expectation of someone else." He also cites research finds that if you're stuck in a group of untrustworthy people, it pays to distrust. Bosner immediately disappoints me and goes off the rails, citing findings from chimpanzee studies. Generalizing from chimpanzees to humans (or from any other non-human source) requires not only making a strong case that the material accurately represents chimpanzee behavior, but that this generalizes to humans as well. However, if the latter could be credibly asserted, there'd be no point in looking at chimpanzee behavior in the first place! Overall, the book reminds me of the 'Freakonomics' series by Dubner and Levitt - numerous 'feel-good' stories that seemed credible, given the bases provided - however, closer examination by others found numerous errors in the material, thanks to cherry-picking. Bottom-Line: 'The Leap' cannot be credibly established as anything other than garbage cloaked in pseudo-science.

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