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Swift Trust and Temporary Groups

DEBRA MEYERSON
KARL E. WEICK
RODERICK M. KRAMER

January 1, 1991. The Grand Kempinski Hotel, Dallas, Texas. 9:00 a.m. "Crew Call." About 35 people gather. Some are local. Some flew in overnight from here or there. Some drove in. The 35 encompass almost that many different technical disciplines. Many are meeting each other for the first time. Ten and one-half hours from now they will tape a two hour lecture (given by the author), which will become the centerpiece of an hour-long public television show. They'll tape it again the next day. Then they'll disperse, never again to work together in the same configuration.

Peters, *Liberation Management*
(1992, p. 190)

This is the "Dallas Organization." As Peters and others have noted, temporary groups of this sort are becoming an increasingly common form of organization

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(Kanter, 1989; Peters, 1992). In many respects, such groups constitute an interesting organizational analog of a "one-night stand." They have a finite life span, form around a shared and relatively clear goal or purpose, and their success depends on a tight and coordinated coupling of activity.

As an organizational form, temporary groups turn upside down traditional notions of organizing. Temporary groups often work on tasks with a high degree of complexity, yet they lack the formal structures that facilitate coordination and control (Thompson, 1967). They depend on an elaborate body of collective knowledge and diverse skills, yet individuals have little time to sort out who knows precisely what. They often entail high-risk and high-stake outcomes, yet they seem to lack the normative structures and institutional safeguards that minimize the likelihood of things going wrong. Moreover, there isn't time to engage in the usual forms of confidence-building activities that contribute to the development and maintenance of trust in more traditional, enduring forms of organization. In these respects, temporary groups challenge our conventional understandings regarding the necessary or sufficient antecedents of effective organization.

These observations come together in a fascinating puzzle. Temporary systems exhibit behavior that presupposes trust, yet traditional sources of trust—familiarity, shared experience, reciprocal disclosure, threats and deterrents, fulfilled promises, and demonstrations of nonexploitation of vulnerability—are not obvious in such systems. In this respect, temporary systems act as if trust were present, but their histories seem to preclude its development.

In the following discussion we argue that one way to resolve this puzzle is to look more closely at the properties of trust and of temporary systems. A closer look suggests that temporary groups and organizations are tied together by trust, but it is a form of trust that has some unusual properties.[1] In other words, we propose that the trust that occurs in temporary systems is not simply conventional trust scaled down to brief encounters among small groups of strangers. There is some of that. But as we will show, the trust that unfolds in temporary systems is more accurately portrayed as a unique form of collective perception and relating that is capable of managing issues of vulnerability, uncertainty, risk, and expectations. These four issues become relevant immediately, as soon as the temporary system begins to form. We argue that all four issues can be managed by variations in trusting behavior, and if they are not managed, participants act more like a permanent crowd than a temporary system. It is the configuration of these variations in behavior that accounts for the unique form that trust assumes in temporary systems, a form that we call *swift trust.*

The argument that swift trust is a useful concept for understanding the functioning of temporary systems will be developed in the following way. First, borrowing from Goodman and Goodman (1976), we describe social

constraints and resources found in temporary systems that provide the context for trust and influence its form. Second, we describe three concepts of trust to explain referent situations other than temporary systems. Accompanying each description, we suggest how each concept could be adapted to the conditions of a temporary system and help us understand better how that system is held together and what effect these ties have on outcomes. Third, having discussed systems and trust separately, we interweave them to capture the unique configuration we call swift trust in temporary systems. Finally, we consider the social and cognitive mechanisms that may contribute to the resilience and fragility of swift trust. In doing so, we begin to grasp what makes for more and less successful temporary systems and we begin to gain a better understanding of how trust in general unfolds, builds, and dissipates in organized settings.

Temporary Systems

Goodman and Goodman were among the earliest investigators to think systematically about temporary systems—and among the few to do so. These authors based their ideas predominantly on the systems that formed around theater productions (Goodman, 1981, chap. 4; Goodman & Goodman, 1972), although they also examined auditing teams and research and development projects. They define a temporary system as "a set of diversely skilled people working together on a complex task over a limited period of time" (Goodman & Goodman, 1976, p. 494). Such a system differs from a more stable system in several ways. The tasks as well as the personnel are less well understood in a temporary system, which means they cannot be assigned in ways traditionally relied on to achieve the most effective use of resources. Furthermore, although a temporary system resembles an organic system (Burns & Stalker, 1961), it also differs because it includes "members who have never worked together before and who do not expect to work together again" (p. 495) and members who represent a diversity of functions or skills.

Goodman and Goodman suggest that four concurrent problems provide the context within which any temporary system forms and operates. The first problem, and the one that is most central in our analyses, involves interdependence. "The task is complex with respect to interdependence of detailed task accomplishment, so that it is not easy to define tasks clearly and autonomously. The members must keep interrelating with one another in trying to arrive at viable solutions" (1976, p. 495). This continuous "interrelating" keeps the issue of trust salient throughout the life of a temporary system. The other three components of context include the uniqueness of the task relative to routine procedures available in the organization, the significance of the task in that

the organization is willing to create a new structure to deal with it, and the use of clear goals to define the task and impose a time limit for its completion.[2]

Examples of temporary systems described by Goodman and Goodman (1976, p. 495) include presidential commissions, Senate select committees, theater and architectural groups, construction, auditing, negotiating teams, juries, and election campaign organizations.[3] In thinking through the issues of trust and temporary systems, we have also considered film crews (Kawin, 1992), auctions (e.g., Clark & Halford, 1980), cockpit crews in planes (Weiner, Kanki, & Helmreich, 1993), paramedics (e.g., Mellinger, 1994), music composition in films (e.g., Faulkner, 1983), investment banking (Eccles & Crane, 1988), fire-fighting crews (e.g., Klein, 1993), diagnostic teams (e.g., Orr, 1990), nuclear power plant operators (e.g., Gaddy & Wachtel, 1992), and AIDS outreach work (e.g., Suczek & Fagerhaugh, 1991). Although these represent specific settings in which "a set of diversely skilled people work together on a complex task over a limited period of time," part of the impetus for this chapter has arisen from the observation that an increasing number of settings in all organizations involve temporary systems. Temporary systems have become common as a result of more subcontracting, fewer people to handle more diverse assignments, time compression in product development, more use of temporary workers, intensified competition that requires immediate adaptability, loss of valuable experience in response to early retirement programs, and more "network" organizations.

The characteristics of temporary systems, which have potential relevance for the formation of trust, include the following:

1. Participants with diverse skills are assembled by a contractor to enact expertise they already possess.
2. Participants have limited history working together.
3. Participants have limited prospects of working together again in the future.
4. Participants often are part of limited labor pools and overlapping networks.
5. Tasks are often complex and involve interdependent work.
6. Tasks have a deadline.
7. Assigned tasks are nonroutine and not well understood.
8. Assigned tasks are consequential.
9. Continuous interrelating is required to produce an outcome.

To convert the individual expertise of strangers into interdependent work, when the nature of that interrelating and work is not obvious, people must reduce their uncertainty about one another through operations that resemble trust. Interdependent strangers faced with a deadline also face the need to handle issues of vulnerability and risk among themselves. As we will see

shortly, people handle these three issues by the ways in which they entrust their fate to others and the way they act when others entrust their fate to them. To trust and be trustworthy, within the limits of a temporary system, means that people have to wade in on trust rather than wait while experience gradually shows who can be trusted and with what: Trust must be conferred presumptively or *ex ante*.

In temporary systems, there is a premium on making do with whatever information is available in advance of close monitoring so that interdependent work is initiated quickly. Swift judgments about trustworthiness can't be avoided, because they enable people to act quickly in the face of uncertainty. People have to make consequential presumptions: no system, no performance. It's as basic as that. Which is not to say it's as simple as that. By no means is this conversion simple. But neither is it slow. To see some of what is involved, we turn next to three quite different accounts of trust, each of which helps us understand better what role trust plays in a temporary system and how that trust develops.

On Framing Swift Trust

In this section we examine three definitions of trust and suggest how swift trust might be represented using the imagery of each definition.

Trust and Vulnerability

The first set of definitions comes from Baier (1986). Her first approximation of a definition of trust is "accepted vulnerability to another's possible but not expected ill will (or lack of good will) toward one" (p. 235). Trust, in this view, is defined by two things: (a) the grounds for expecting that others will not take advantage of one's vulnerability and varieties of vulnerabilities and (b) the grounds for expecting that one will not be harmed by those who are entrusted with the valued items, even though they could derive from such diverse sources as the reality of the interdependence, implicit or explicit threats from the truster or from the network in which the activity occurs, norms in the setting, institutional and cultural categories, role clarity, inability of trustee to conceal harm-doing, and prospect of repeated interactions.

Vulnerability is defined in terms of the goods or things one values and whose care one partially entrusts to someone else, who has some discretion over him or her. Because self-sufficiency is rare in interdependent activities, divisions of labor, and complex tasks, vulnerability is common. Goods entrusted include reputations, conversation, health, safety, investments, political position, and music. Some of these goods are "intrinsically shared" (e.g., chamber

music, conversation) and some rely on the behavior of others during certain situations (e.g., safety during fire-fighting missions, health during a serious illness). These situations require us to "allow many other people to get into positions where they can, if they choose, injure what we care about, since those are the same positions that they must be in order to help us take care of what we care about" (Baier, 1986, p. 236).

Given these ideas, the challenge is to see if swift trust can be singled out by the unique goods that are entrusted in these situations and/or the unique grounds that are invoked for expecting others to not take advantage of these vulnerabilities. In the case of the Dallas Organization, reputations are entrusted and the realities of task interdependence forestall intentional harm-doing to those reputations. The Dallas Organization forms around a task that cannot be executed by any one person. The organization is assembled by a "contractor" who may be the link pin (Likert) on which trust is focused (each of the 35 people trusts the contractor's selection criteria for the other 34). Thus, the contractor's reputation as much as the reputation of the performers is at stake—if the 35 or any significant subset foul up, future opportunities for the contractor to assemble an organization will dry up. In the Dallas Organization, individuals know that their specialty is crucial *and* worthless without links to other specialties. They also know of the implicit threat imposed on their own reputations if they don't perform. When all of these pieces are combined, they suggest the existence of vulnerabilities (e.g., reputations and outputs are at stake) and significant grounds for expectations of good will (e.g., threats, the reality of interdependence, and prospects for future interactions).

If membership in a temporary system is a one-shot event with little prospect of future interaction, and if there is low dependence on any one project for continuing work, as well as limited diffusion of information about the project outcomes outside the system, then little is at stake reputationally. Vulnerability is low, as is the need for trust. However, as the size of the pool from which members are selected gets smaller, talent becomes thinner, and information about performance diffuses more effectively, then reputations become vulnerable. In the words of one studio executive, "If someone in, say, makeup doesn't show up or shows up drunk to the set, they will be dead. They won't work for a very long time" (personal communication, 1993). Also, because the prospect of future interaction among the members within this limited labor pool is relatively high, grounds for expectations that members will not act with ill will increases.

Newcomers with fewer opportunities for work and those on the periphery of a network are more vulnerable than veterans who have more opportunities and are central. Well-positioned, high-status, seasoned individuals have more resilient reputations (and are therefore less vulnerable) and can withstand periodic failures or self-centered behaviors. This is a familiar pattern in

Hollywood. And people who work in systems tied together by weak ties (acquaintances and contacts) have less control over the diffusion of their reputations and are more vulnerable than those in networks of *strong* ties (friendship and family). Networks characterized by weak ties should result in wider dissemination of information because networks are less likely to overlap with one another. Here, an implicit threat of significant reputational damage imposed by the nature of the social network increases vulnerability, yet this threat can create the grounds for expecting trustworthy behavior among participants.

In general, we suggest that perceptions of the nature of the network and labor market available for temporary systems can have an impact on the form and incidence of trust in temporary systems through its effects on perceptions of vulnerability. People who are scarce freelance specialists and tied into minimally overlapping networks should perceive their position in temporary systems to be more vulnerable. Their reputation is entrusted to others who can do considerable damage in multiple networks. But in a situation of high interdependence, everyone is comparably vulnerable. Each controls the other's fate and thereby imposes the same threat. Although such a mutual threat may produce wariness, it could also lay the grounds for participants to expect and be receptive to trust and trustworthy behavior. In some temporary systems there is a high need to trust, partly because that is the only viable option. Overtures that address this need, such as short-term promises that are kept (Kouzes & Posner, 1987), should trigger reciprocal behavior.

If we assume that a condition of vulnerability is unsettling and people try to reduce it, then they can do so in one of three ways. First, they can reduce their dependence on others by cultivating alternative partners, projects, and networks. This is a form of "hedge," which we will discuss later. However, that avenue is often blocked, especially for newcomers. Second, because (inter)dependence may be inherent in the nature of the task, the vulnerability can be reduced by cultivating adaptability and the feeling of mastery that "I can handle anything they throw at me" (Faulkner, 1971, p. 136), coupled with "distancing" oneself (Faulkner, 1983, p. 153) from the settings. The feeling of mastery can be a cognitive illusion of sorts, which will also be discussed as a mechanism that can build resilience into the system. Third, one can presume that the other people in the setting are trustworthy. If one acts toward them in a trusting manner, the presumption of trust often acts like a self-fulfilling prophecy and creates the trusting behavior that was presumed to be there (Baier, 1985, chap. 15). The choice among these paths is driven as much by one's own social position, background expectancies generated by the context, and disposition as it is by any characteristics of one's associates. The nature of this choice is one way in which swift trust in temporary systems assumes a distinctive form.

When people in temporary systems entrust important things, such as reputation, to the care of others, they accept the possibility of ill will but usually do not expect it. This suggests that a closer look at the grounds of their expectations may give further clues regarding the shape of trust in temporary systems. We have already seen two possible reasons why people do not expect ill will even though they are vulnerable: implicit threats within the system (e.g., mutual fate control) and the prospect of future interaction. A third reason is role clarity. If people in temporary systems deal with one another more as roles than as individuals—which is likely because the system is built of strangers interacting to meet a deadline—then expectations should be more stable, less capricious, more standardized, and defined more in terms of tasks and specialties than personalities. Moreover, those roles are predicated, in turn, on a stable body of effective principles and practices. As Dawes (1994) noted,

> We trust engineers because we trust engineering and believe that engineers are trained to apply valid principles of engineering; moreover, we have evidence every day that these principles are valid when we observe airplanes flying. We trust doctors because we trust modern medicine, and we have evidence that it works when antibiotics and operations cure people. (p. 24)

What is ironic, if we set the issue of expectations up this way, is that people who enact roles (Fondas & Stewart, 1994) in an innovative, idiosyncratic manner could incur distrust. Because it is harder to draw boundaries around their apparent unpredictability, this could mean that this same unpredictability could extend to how they handle whatever one entrusts to them.

The scenario suggests that an increase in role clarity leads to a decrease in expected ill will, and an increase in trust presumes that roles in temporary systems are clear, that people act toward one another in terms of roles and have a clear understanding of others' roles. Change in any of these three variables should produce a change in trust. Again, we want to underline the general argument. What is often distinctive about temporary systems is that they form among people who represent specialties, and the relating in a temporary system is among roles as much as people. The content of any role description largely excludes expectations of "ill will" and highlights, instead, contributions that can legitimately be expected of the role occupant.

There are, of course, exceptions to this line of argument, and some of the most glaring ones occur in Hollywood. There is role clarity in film production, just as there is in other temporary systems, but with one big difference. The background expectancy among occupations within the industry is often one of expected ill will. Stories of hollow promises and backstabbing characterize the industry, as a conversation (paraphrased) with one Hollywood executive illustrates:

> I have lots of friends in the industry, but these are friends because we have something to offer each other. I don't expect anyone to be my friend when things aren't going well or when I stop having something they want. I expect people to backstab me anytime and the only reason they don't is that I could backstab them back. (personal communication, 1993)

If people in Hollywood talk the talk of cooperation but walk the talk of competition and self-interest, then role clarity is a predictable mixture of hyperbole, euphemism, hollow promises, and side bets. Trust of sorts could still develop in this context, but it would require other grounds, such as network-based threats or prospects of future interactions, to mediate the background expectations of ill will. But trust based on mutual expectations of hype is likely to translate into distancing and hesitant interdependence, which means the temporary system is not really much of a system. Dubious credibility is especially likely when high expectations are institutionalized as part of the everyday rhetoric and uttered noncontingently in the context of budgets and deadlines by people who don't know what they are talking about (as one producer said, "Now, since this story is set in France, we should hear lots of French horns," Faulkner, 1983, p. 141). These are the realities of filmmaking.

More generally, expectations of ill will or good will form in temporary systems just as they do in other sites. Because there is insufficient time for these expectations to be built from scratch, they tend to be imported from other settings and imposed quickly in categorical forms. Expectations defined in terms of categories are especially likely because people have little time to size up one another (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Categories invoked to speed up perception reflect roles, industry recipes, cultural cues, and occupational- and identity-based stereotypes. As Brewer (1981) has noted in her observations of the "minimal group paradigm," social categories, such as those derived from common membership in a social identity group,

> can serve as a rule for defining the boundaries of low-risk interpersonal trust that bypasses the need for personal knowledge and the costs of negotiating reciprocity with individual others. As a consequence of shifting from the personal level to the social group level of identity, *the individual can adopt a sort of "depersonalized trust" based on category membership alone.* (p. 356, emphasis added)

These categorization effects appear to be quite robust, emerging even when the basis of social unit formation is arbitrary, transient, and objectively meaningless.

With some exceptions (such as in the film industry and stereotypes of some social identity groups), most social categories invoke expectations of good will rather than ill will from one's associates. Trust (or distrust) in temporary

systems can develop swiftly because the expectations that are invoked most quickly tend to be general, task based, plausible, easy to confirm, and stable, all of which implies that the care of valuable things can be entrusted to individuals who seem to fit these institution-driven categories.

We see that the fate of trust in temporary systems is disproportionately influenced by the context in which the system forms. Context defines vulnerability and expectations. And context affords or withholds the resources that encourage or discourage people from managing their vulnerability, quickly, with overtures of trust. Trust, in response to vulnerability, is mediated by conditions of the labor pool from which the system forms, and trust in response to expectations of ill will is mediated by background expectancies consisting of categorical assumptions and interpretive frames (Zucker, 1986, pp. 57-59) derived from the context of the temporary system.

Before moving to other formulations of trust, we want to highlight the quality of interdependence that may be found in temporary systems. Swift trust in temporary systems seems to flow from the nature and magnitude of the interdependence in the setting and the implicit threat that stems from this interdependence. We suspect that a key variable in temporary systems is the degree to which interdependence is in fact high. So far we have assumed that interdependence is high, which means that vulnerability of any one person is high because that person's contribution and reputation are affected by others, as are their contributions and reputations.

In temporary systems, interdependence is crucial. But it should not be extreme. Variations in interdependence affect the extent to which trust is a big deal. It is our hunch that swift trust occurs when the demands of interdependence are in line with the importance of what is being entrusted and the probability that others will care for what is entrusted with good will. There are no certainties anywhere in these calculations, only implicit probabilities. Modest interdependence leaves actors with sufficient control over their contributions, which means the actors are only moderately vulnerable to associates who probably will not take advantage of those vulnerabilities. That's enough to trigger trust. And to do so quickly. If modest dependence is sufficient, then vulnerability and expectations also will be manageable, as will the amount of trust that must be initiated to tie the setting together.

Trust and Uncertainty

A second portrait of trust is found in Gambetta (1988), who argues that

> trusting a person means believing that when offered the chance, he or she is not likely to behave in a way that is damaging to us, and trust will *typically* be relevant when at least one party is free to disappoint the other, free enough to avoid a risky

> relationship, *and* constrained enough to consider that relationship an attractive option. (p. 219)

For Gambetta, trust is an issue of monitoring, as it often is for economists and game theorists:

> Trust (or, symmetrically, distrust) is a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action, both *before* he can monitor such action (or independently of his capacity ever to be able to monitor it) *and* in a context in which it affects his own action. (p. 217)

Trust involves an estimation about whether the trustee will do something beneficial or detrimental before the truster can really know for sure. And the estimate itself is focused. It is a

> threshold point, located on a probabilistic distribution of more general expectations [expectations expressing such things as the reputation of others], which can take a number of values suspended between complete distrust (0) and complete trust (1), and which is centered [*sic*] around a mid-point (0.50) of uncertainty. (p. 218)

Trust, in other words, is coincident with uncertainty. And uncertainty is coincident with temporary structures enacted to deal with transient events singled out from ongoing change. The uncertainty tends to focus on the ease with which others can disappoint our expectations.

> If other people's actions were heavily constrained, the role of trust in governing our decisions would be proportionately smaller, for the more limited people's freedom, the more restricted the field of actions in which we are required to guess *ex ante* the probability of their performing them. (Gambetta, 1988, p. 219)

A ruler of a slave society, for example, only has to trust that slaves are not going to commit mass suicide. As coercion and power diminish from this point, there are more ways in which trustees can disappoint. As the number of different ways in which trustees can disappoint increases (i.e., their freedom of action increases), so too should the probability that one or more of these ways could be activated immediately (e.g., an actor may disappoint in numerous ways—by walking off the movie set, through inattention to the director's suggestions, failure to follow the producer's timetable, or failure to say the writer's scripted lines). Disappointments take varying spans of time to develop. If there is a preponderance of swift, immediate disappointments that could unfold in a relationship, then we would expect to find a more rapid

development of trust (or distrust). What we would not expect to see is a postponement of choices involving trust. The open field of actions does not allow that luxury.

Gambetta contributes a simple but important insight to our emerging view of swift trust and temporary systems. Uncertainty on matters of trust is highest when there is a 50-50 chance ("a midpoint of uncertainty") that an unmonitored person will take advantage of our trust. This suggests at least two things. First, it suggests that people should be motivated to avoid the uncertainty of a .5 probability of harm, because this requires monitoring that uses up valuable information-processing capability (Brehmer, 1991, p. 196). In a temporary system with deadlines and specific goals, anything that subtracts from task performance, such as distracted attention, should be a glaring threat. Faced with high uncertainty, people should be inclined either toward complete trust (1.0) or complete distrust (.0), both of which provide more certainty and use up less attention in monitoring. Swift trust, then, might occur when uncertainty is high and unacceptable and when some cues in the setting favor an interpretation of the other as trustworthy rather than as untrustworthy. That is, in an effort to avoid uncertainty, the person is likely to be more trusting or more distrusting than the data warrant, simply in the interest of reducing uncertainty and getting on with the task. Such acts reflect the necessary willingness to suspend doubt. In this way, temporary systems may be suggestible systems.

A second implication of Gambetta's analysis is that if people find it hard to resolve uncertainty quickly with a move toward either unwarranted trust or unwarranted distrust, then we would expect to see more idiosyncratic resolutions of trust uncertainty consistent with personality predispositions and a priori implicit theories of trust. There is widespread agreement that when faced with uncertainty and weak situations, people respond dispositionally. In particular, we would expect that a priori tendencies toward high or low trust (Rotter, 1980) would have a strong impact in determining the pattern of trust to be observed in a temporary system, especially when uncertainty is high. Furthermore, implicit theories of trust should exert more influence. Here we take our lead from Good (1988, p. 33), who argued that "trust is based on an individual's theory as to how another person will perform on some future occasion, as a function of that target person's current and previous claims, either implicit or explicit, as to how they will behave." As uncertainty increases, not only should implicit theories, predispositions, and categorical assumptions be more influential, but people should try more urgently to confirm them.

Thus, to understand swift trust in temporary systems is to appreciate the fact that relative strangers are uncertain caretakers of one's goods, especially when opportunities for early and continuous monitoring of their actions are

negligible. To reduce this uncertainty, people fall back on predispositions, categorical assumptions, and implicit theories to move them toward the greater certainty of clear trust or clear distrust. Trust that flows from dispositions, assumptions, and theories is swift because to some extent it occurs independent of the object of perception. An individual's associates in a temporary system function essentially as a pretext to access over-learned tendencies and cognitive structures that provide guidelines for trust or mistrust.

Trust and Risk

The final suggestion of how to conceptualize trust, and by extension how to conceptualize swift trust, is Luhmann's (1988) rich distinction between confidence and trust. Luhmann argues that trust and confidence are different ways of asserting expectations that may lapse into disappointment. Trust and confidence are also different ways in which people gain a sense of self-assurance, or in Gambetta's terms, act in the face of uncertainty.

For Luhmann, trust is about risk, and risk is about the choice to expose oneself to a situation where the possible damage may be greater than the advantage that is sought (p. 98). This stipulation is crucial because, without it, whatever risks one faces are within the acceptable limits of rational choice, and trust plays no part in the decision to proceed. Luhmann alerts us to look more closely at risk in temporary systems.

The close relationship between trust and systems we are trying to work out is anticipated by Luhmann's (1988) observation that "a system requires trust as an input condition in order to stimulate supportive activities in situations of uncertainty or risk" (p. 103). Trust, which is a way people assert expectations, presupposes a situation of risk and the possibility of disappointment, which depends in part on our own previous behavior and choices. Luhmann pulls these strands together this way: Trust "requires a previous engagement on your part. It presupposes a situation of risk." You may or may not buy a used car that turns out to be a "lemon." You may or may not hire a baby-sitter for the evening and leave him or her unsupervised in your apartment; he or she may be a "lemon." You can avoid taking the risk, but only if you are willing to waive the associated advantages. You do not depend on trusting relations in the same way you depend on confidence, but trust also can be a matter of routine and normal behavior. The distinction between confidence and trust thus depends on perception and attribution. If you do not consider alternatives (every morning you leave the house without a weapon!), you are in a situation of confidence. If you choose one action in preference to others in spite of the possibility of being disappointed by the actions of others, you define the situation as one of trust. In the case of confidence, you will react to disappointment by external attribution and alienation. In the case of trust, you will have to consider an internal attribution and eventually regret your

trusting choice (pp. 97-98). Situations of confidence can turn into situations of trust if it becomes possible to avoid the relationship (p. 98), and trust can change into confidence if people lose their ability to influence the relationship. Trust, therefore, "is an attitude that allows for risk-taking decisions" (p. 103). Without trust, risk is avoided, innovative activities dry up, only routine actions are available for retrospective sensemaking, and uncertainty remains unresolved.

These observations about trust, in general, when adapted for temporary systems, alert us to several issues. To understand trust in temporary systems, one should not overrely on the fact that such systems are short-lived, transient, and fleeting. To do so is to miss the equally important point that in a temporary system, everything is risked, every time. It is rare for risks to be small and for disappointments to be a mere nuisance. Temporary systems form in the context of large risks where the damage incurred could outrun the advantages gained. Trust, rather than rational calculation, is necessary to deal with this imbalance. In film production, for example, the exact nuance needed from an actor may be given only once. If it is missed by the person running the camera, it is missed forever. Sidney Pollack noted that because movies are shot out of sequence, only the director knows where the emotional tone of the picture has to be at the moment any scene is shot. This is what creates the high stakes in the temporary system of film production. Nicholas Kent (1991, p. 170), citing a Pollack remark, shows how small moments can be monumental in filmmaking:

> "In film, as opposed to theater, an actor doesn't have to understand at all how they did what they did or why they have to do what they do. You just have to do it once and the camera has to be rolling." The tragedy [for Pollack] is seeing an actor give him what he wants before he can capture the moment on film.

What all of this has to do with trust is that the potential for damaged reputations and failed investments is substantial in temporary systems devoted to filmmaking. This in turn suggests that something more than rational choice is necessary for success in such a system. That something more is trust—trust in the cinematographer, the actor's willingness to take direction, and the executives staying out of the editing suite while the film is being cut.

The more general point we want to make is that "temporary" does not mean "trivial." Typically, the formation of a temporary system signals the unavailability of any existing structure to handle what has become a significant but nonroutine issue that needs a novel set of specialists who can meet a deadline. Failure to handle the issue means big losses for the people who authorize the system and the people who run it. In Luhmann's terminology, the magnitude of potential damage is greater than the potential gain. So trust is an issue right from the start. The moment the system is envisioned, assessments of potential damage figure into its design: "Unless the system is

formed things will get worse, but even if it is formed, there are no guarantees that we'll be better off" (Luhmann, 1988, p. 103). The system is formed in spite of these threats, which is itself an exercise of trust because the output could turn out to be a "lemon." The temporary system itself must comprise trust because it faces a future of potential disappointments and unstable collaboration among near strangers.

Luhmann's ideas about risk also point to a different aspect of temporary systems—namely, their preoccupation with action. Swift trust may be a by-product of a highly active, proactive, enthusiastic, generative style of action. This possibility comes about because risks, choices, actions, and trust have an unusual, self-reinforcing character, as suggested earlier. Luhmann puts it this way:

> Trust is based on a circular relation between risk and action, both being complementary requirements. Action defines itself in relation to a particular risk as external (future) possibility, although risk at the same time is inherent in action and exists only if the actor chooses to incur the chance of unfortunate consequences and to trust. (1988, p. 100)

To act one's way into an unknown future is to sharpen the element of risk in that projected action, which gives character to the action and substance to the risk. Each creates the necessity for trust, the grounds to validate it, and the potential for invalidation and disappointment. All of this gets triggered basically because forceful action can never guarantee a specific outcome. That's the risk that is made tolerable by trust.

Our point is simply that as action becomes more forceful, the qualities of risk associated with that action become clearer, which then clarifies the action even more and adds to its forcefulness, which further sharpens perceptions of risk, and so on. As these "complementary requirements" build on one another, the person becomes more willing to incur the chance of unfortunate consequences and to trust. The more forceful the action, the greater the willingness to trust and the more rapidly does trust develop. Hence, temporary systems that are high in their capability to generate activity and whose cultures value the generation of activity could, by virtue of these tendencies, also heighten perceptions of risk, the willingness to take risks, and the willingness to trust.

Interweaving Trust and the Temporary

There is no shortage of claims that trust is indispensable to social life. Simmel (1978) is representative:

> Without the general trust that people have in each other, society itself would disintegrate, for very few relationships are based entirely upon what is known with certainty about another person, and very few relationships would endure if trust were not as strong as, or stronger than, rational proof or personal observation. (pp. 178-179)

Relative to such abundant and strong claims about the importance of trust, our theories about it remain few and weak. As we said at the beginning of this chapter, our interest here is in the increasingly common collective known as a temporary system in which trust appears to flourish even though its usual antecedents seem to be missing. Having taken a closer look at properties of temporary systems and trust, we feel that trust does appear in temporary systems, but it does so in response to a different set of antecedents than investigators usually examine. Furthermore, because swift trust forms in response to a different set of antecedents, its development is also as different as is its effect on outcomes.

An inquiry into swift trust in temporary systems starts with propositions such as the following ones, which restate themes introduced earlier:

Proposition 1. The smaller the labor pool or network from which personnel in a temporary system are drawn, the more vulnerable the people who are drawn; the stronger the grounds for not expecting harmful behavior, the more rapidly will trust develop among people. The presumption here is that people in a small labor pool have a higher chance of interacting with one another again in the future, which means their reputations as competent or incompetent people whom others can trust or distrust will follow them and shape these future contacts. Reputations are implicitly threatened in any given project to the extent that chances of future interaction increase. In Axelrodian (Axelrod, 1984) terms, the "shadow of the future looms larger" in such groups. However, people in overlapping networks or networks of weak ties may face more reputational vulnerability because a damaged reputation would disseminate across a wider group of people.

Proposition 2. Role-based interaction leads to more rapid development of trust than does person-based interaction. This presumes that role expectations tend to be more stable, less capricious, more standardized, and defined more in terms of tasks and specialties, all of which diminish the anticipation of ill will and help reinforce and sharpen expectations.

Proposition 3. Inconsistent role behavior and "blurring" of roles will lead to a slower build of trust. This presumes that role blurring heightens uncertainty. People who exhibit inconsistent role behavior raise questions about

what they will do with whatever is entrusted to them. Attempts to answer these questions slow the development of trust.

Proposition 4. People under time pressure in temporary systems make greater use of category-driven information processing, emphasizing speed and confirmation rather than evidence-driven information processing that is focused on accuracy. The presumption here is that interpersonal perception in temporary systems is subject to the same patterns in a speed-accuracy tradeoff as is perception in other kinds of systems. The time-limited nature of a temporary system tends to be reflected in perceptual tradeoffs that favor speed.

Proposition 5. Category-driven information processing in temporary systems is dominated by institutional categories that are made salient by the context in which the systems form. The presumption here is that categories imported to accelerate interpersonal perception disproportionately reflect local organizational culture, industry recipes, and cultural identity-based stereotypes. These categories affect expectations of good will or ill will and encourage swift trust or swift distrust. In some cases, trust may develop even more swiftly when imported categories also produce behavioral confirmation. When this happens, not only do perceivers look for data that confirm their initial categorization, but their behavior itself increases the likelihood that the target will behave in the manner anticipated. This combination of selective perception and behavioral confirmation produces data relevant to trust more quickly, which means trust itself is enacted sooner.

Proposition 6. Greater reliance on category-driven information processing in temporary systems, with its attendant pressure for confirmation, leads to a faster reduction of the uncertainty associated with trust but to a higher risk that subsequent action will disconfirm the trust and produce damage. The presumption here is that swift trust, especially in response to category-driven perception, overlooks a great deal. Although these oversights leave room for behavioral confirmation and self-fulfilling prophecies, they also allow for actions that disrupt trust (Zucker, 1986, p. 59) and for errors in misplaced trust.

Proposition 7. Swift trust is more likely at moderate levels of interdependence than at either higher or lower levels. The presumption here is that moderate interdependence creates moderate vulnerability, which can be handled with the moderately strong expectations of good will that flow from placement of a trustee in a salient institutional category. People who fit salient categories are to be trusted more so as the degree of trust needed is modest.

At higher levels of interdependence, conformity of action with expectations based on general categories alone is too little data for too high stakes. This combination represents a greater amount of perceived vulnerability than the data can address. Trust will be shaky rather than solid, slow rather than swift, and actions will be tentative rather than firm.

Although this sampler of propositions suggests something of the mind-set necessary to interweave trust and the temporary, it does not direct sufficient attention toward what we regard as a critical ingredient in the emergence and maintenance of swift trust in many temporary groups: the role of the contractor. Below, we focus briefly on the contractor and revisit this role in subsequent sections.

The Role of the Contractor in Temporary Systems

In discussing the teamwork necessary for film production crews to function productively, Kawin (1992) notes the following about the director:

> Of all the people on the set, the director is the one who ought—who needs—to respect the contributions of every member of the production team. The director provides artistic and practical guidance—in a word, *direction*—for the project. The director's guiding vision can inspire the crew, can give them the sense that they are all working together on a good and worthwhile picture, not just putting in their time and building up their résumés. When a studio executive says "Trust me," there may be something in the voice that suggests piranha in the swimming pool. When a director says "It'll work" and it doesn't—when a stunt kills an actor, to take an extreme example—trust can be forfeited permanently. Most people know not to trust executives who say "Trust me," just as it is difficult to believe someone who keeps saying "To tell you the truth. . . ." But on the set, where time is money, nerves may be frayed, and reputations are at stake, the director and the heads of the production categories must be able to be trusted. (pp. 403-404)

Faulkner (1983) comes at the same setting from the other side when he remarks that the conflicts and uncertainties of filmmaking "are locked into a short-term contracting arrangement which places the filmmaker in a position of dependence on outsiders—freelance specialists—with the attendant risk of having to trust the professional judgments and craft instincts of these employees" (p. 121). Each party in filmmaking is dependent on the other, which creates vulnerability, uncertainty, and risk. The trust necessary to act in the face of vulnerability will be there quickly, depending on the perceptual categories that are imported for sizing up one another and the probability for good or ill will associated with the category. The reputation of the contractor and the

expectation of good will on his or her part may be all that is necessary to create the general background expectation of good will, independent of information about the other participants.

Swift Trust: Fragile or Resilient?

An analysis that presumes swift trust plays a central role in the life of the temporary group should consider whether such trust is fragile or resilient. To be efficacious, swift trust should be resilient enough to survive those moments and incidents that occur during the life of a temporary group and call into question or threaten to disrupt trust. At the same time, swift trust must not be so resilient as to lead individuals to trust beyond the point where doing so is adaptive or sensible.

Researchers have generally argued that different forms of trust vary considerably in their fragility and resilience. For example, the trust associated with close personal relationships has generally been characterized as a "thick" form of trust that is relatively resilient and durable: Once in place, it is not easily disrupted, and once shattered, it is not easily restored (cf. Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Putnam, 1992). Other forms of trust, in contrast, have been characterized as fragile or "thin" because they are conferred gingerly and withdrawn readily. One might observe this kind of trust in a newly formed exchange relation or collaboration: Expectations are high, but so are reservations. One foot is in the water, but the other is braced firmly on solid ground.

The question of the thickness or thinness of trust that is appropriate in a given social or organizational context raises difficult and also revealing questions about how individuals initially calibrate and update their expectations about others' trustworthiness. With respect to temporary systems, this entails deciding, among other things, when there is a lesson to be learned from a specific experience with another group member and when there isn't. In other words, it includes knowing or deciding when one should suspend or rescind further trust and when one should put aside one's doubts for another day.

Most conceptions of how trust gets developed and updated have emphasized that trust is a history-dependent process (Lindskold, 1978; Rotter, 1980) in which individuals operate like Bayesian statisticians drawing inferences based on relevant but limited samples of experience. Boyle and Bonacich's (1970) characterization is typical: Individuals' "expectations about trustworthy or cooperative behaviors will change in the direction of experience and to a degree proportional to the difference between this experience and the initial expectations applied to them" (p. 130). According to such conceptions, trust builds incrementally and accumulates.

Such perspectives imply that, to the extent it entails expectations about the possible benefits of collaboration, along with attendant fears about vulner-

ability and exploitation, swift trust should thicken or thin as history unfolds. However, as noted earlier, temporary groups typically lack the requisite history on which such incremental and accumulative confidence-building measures are predicated. There is, quite literally, neither enough time nor opportunity in a temporary group for the sort of experience necessary for thicker forms of trust to emerge. It may be useful to consider, therefore, how history—or, more accurately, substitutes or proxies for history—might contribute to the development of trust in temporary systems.

There is substantial evidence that the "mere" process of group formation alone may provide an initial foundation for the emergence of a protean sort of swift trust. As suggested earlier, even when the basis for group formation appears arbitrary, a presumptive, depersonalized form of trust may emerge (Brewer, 1981).

The existence of such cognitive bases for conferring trust on other group members is augmented, of course, by other psychological mechanisms that reduce perceptions of vulnerability as well as expectations of disappointment in groups. First, and quite obvious, is the simple fact that the formation of a temporary group is neither arbitrary nor meaningless. Individuals enter such groups with a strong and reasonable presumption that the boundary that defines inclusion or exclusion is informative. Inclusion is presumed to imply selectivity on the part of the contractor, and these judgments, in turn, are presumed to be predicated on sensible and more or less conscious criteria.

Here, the credibility of the contractor—in terms of his or her reputation for creating and composing successful temporary groups—serves as a useful substitute for interpersonal history. For example, certain directors such as Woody Allen, John Cassavettes, and Francis Ford Coppola have established strong reputations for assembling remarkable and successful ensemble casts and crews. Based on such reputations, individual actors at the margin are often willing to "sign on" to their films, knowing very little about the concrete details of their projects. They simply trust things to work out.

We suspect further that, on top of whatever reputational capital such directors enjoy, they are skillful at conveying the criteria for inclusion and its legitimacy. In putting together a film crew for the making of *House of Games,* David Mamet chose a cast and crew that consisted only of close friends. Doing so allowed each member of the group to focus on the task at hand and not worry about problems of trust. "That energy (small or large, but inevitable)," he noted, "that is devoted to establishing bona fides in an artistic collaboration between strangers ('How much does this other guy know? Can I trust him, is he going to hurt me?') was in our movie devoted to other things" (cited in Kent, 1991, p. 164). By using such criteria—and using them explicitly—the contractor solves his or her trust dilemma. They also go a long way toward solving the trust dilemma that other group members confront when deciding whether to join a temporary group.

Other psychological mechanisms may help reduce initial perceptions of vulnerability, allowing swift trust to get a toehold. Recent research on positive illusions (Taylor & Brown, 1988), for example, identifies a number of psychological mechanisms that presuppose individuals toward trusting their environments and their experiences. In particular, research on illusions of control and perceived invulnerability suggests that most individuals have in place an array of cognitive strategies that help them maintain confidence that they will be masters rather than victims of their experience. Along similar lines, research on unrealistic optimism (Weinstein, 1980) has shown that individuals often expect their own futures to be significantly better and brighter than others. Even when they view the world as a place in which bad things might happen, they underestimate the likelihood such things will happen to them. Thus, even in a world in which they know trust can be violated, they tend, all else equal, to assume that others will be disappointed and not themselves (cf. Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

Recent research further suggests that these illusions of control, invulnerability, and optimism extend to individuals within group settings. Evidence suggests that individuals enter groups expecting better things to happen to them compared to the average group member. Moreover, they often feel, *ex post,* that they did better and got more from their participation compared to the average other group member (see Paulus, Dzindolet, Poletes, & Camacho, 1993; Polzer, Kramer, & Neale, 1993; Schlenker, Soraci, & McCarthy, 1976). These attributional tendencies should contribute to the resilience of swift trust in a temporary group.

There is also an important sense in which evidence of the reasonableness and appropriateness of swift trust (in terms of positive expectation of benefits and reduced risks from participation) is provided by the actions of the temporary group itself. In a temporary group, people often act *as if* trust were in place. And, because trust behaviors are enacted without hesitation, reciprocally and collectively, they may provide what Cialdini (1993) has termed *social proof* that a particular interpretation of reality is correct. Thus, by observing others acting in a trusting manner, individuals can infer that such a stance is neither foolish nor naive. In this respect, each individual enactment of swift trust in the group, no matter how small, contributes to the collective perception that swift trust is reasonable. In this sense, the individuals in the temporary group, especially early in its life, when expectations are still fragile and forming, resemble the bystanders at the scene of an emergency who look around at the impassive faces of other bystanders and decide not to act because the others act as if there is no emergency (Darley & Latane, 1968). This cognitive process serves as another trigger to self-fulfilling cycles that further increase the resiliency of swift trust.

These psychological orientations and social mechanisms are well-known and do not provide special insight into the dynamics of swift trust in temporary

systems, other than to suggest the readiness with which individuals might be predisposed toward conferring trust swiftly, on relatively minimal grounds, and setting off cycles that build trust. There are, however, other bases for swift trust.

First, although the members of a temporary group may lack history with respect to previous contact with each other, there is a sense in which the temporary group itself is not without history. As suggested earlier, there is a collective presumption that each member's inclusion in the group is predicated on a rich and relevant history. Each member assumes that the contractor has either had the requisite experience with others, or, at the very least, that he or she has "asked around" and "checked them out." Thus, trust in the contractor's presumed care in composing the temporary group serves as a proxy for individual knowledge or experience with others' reliability or competence. In this sense, the relevant history of the temporary group resides outside the group: It is tacitly understood by all group members that the necessary experience and learning were gained elsewhere but are nonetheless in place and do not need to be verified or negotiated.

In this regard, the contractor's reputation for putting together the "right kind" of group to get the work of the temporary group done is similar in function to the sorts of institutional mechanisms, such as board certifications and professional degrees, that enhance trust in various professional encounters (Zucker, 1986). For example, we trust board-certified medical specialists because certification signals professional competence, as judged by other competent specialists. Such reputational proxies are quite effective in professional encounters and within industries such as filmmaking in that individuals are often willing to commit to joining a temporary group, knowing very little about what they are getting into and relying only on the judgment of another professional.[4]

Hedges also play an important role in the development and maintenance of swift trust. The aim of a hedge is to reduce the perceived risks and vulnerabilities of trust by reducing interdependence and thus its perceived costs. Hedges guard against or minimize the dangers of misplaced trust, when, in Baier's terms, the goods are of high value. Hedges imply an attitude that is somewhat equivocal: One trusts the other, but not completely. The existence of a hedge allows one to enter into a risky activity because the "worst-case" outcome is anticipated and covered. In this respect, hedges function much like the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA) in a negotiation. BATNAs free negotiators to press their case because they reduce the perceived downside should bargaining fail. The "backup" job offer has the same liberating effect in a job interview when it comes to pressing one demand's for a better salary.[5]

As a cognitive process, hedging entails the creation of psychological "fail-safe" mechanisms that provide reassurance, reducing dependence and

vulnerability to a moderate level. The posture of hedging is reflected in Weick and Roberts's (1993) observation, based on their research on accidents in flight operations off nuclear carriers, that people who avoid accidents in such situations live by the credo, "Never get into anything without making sure you have a way out" (p. 640). Having a way out allows one to act in a trusting manner because there is a way out. A simple example illustrates this approach: Most people would be very reluctant to trust someone with the sole copy of a manuscript. Creating a backup of the manuscript as a hedge enables one to trust others, even others with whom people have had little or no prior experience. Hedges imply an orientation that resembles the attitude of wisdom described by Meacham (1983) as a stance of simultaneously believing and doubting, understanding and questioning.

This initial trusting behavior can set off a familiar cycle in which trust becomes mutual and reinforcing: Trust allows one to engage in certain behaviors, and these behaviors, in turn, reinforce and strengthen members' trust in each other. There is, of course, a functional irony here in that hedges, which represent acts of partial distrust, allow cycles that enact and reinforce trust within groups to get started.

Although we view hedges as contributing significantly to the resilience of swift trust, we should note that the process of hedging is not without its own risks and disadvantages. First, if others discover that what they initially believed was an act of trust was, in actuality, predicated on a hedge or an act of partial distrust, the self-reinforcing cycle we described earlier may be undermined. In this respect, contractors and others who acquire a reputation for playing it *too* safe by covering all of their bases, including always having a backup, may not inspire much trust at all. Second, having a hedge may sometimes reduce or diminish commitment to the group. When the going gets a little rough, those with attractive alternatives may decide to act on them and go elsewhere. Hedged trust may be abandoned too readily precisely because it *can* be abandoned. This is the intuition behind behavioral self-management strategies that posit that decision makers who want to maximize their commitment to a course of action should "burn their bridges" so that retreat from commitment is not possible (see Schelling, 1984).

Additionally, hedges may contribute to a false sense of invulnerability and security by fostering an exaggerated confidence in one's ability to manage whatever problems are encountered during the life of the temporary group. If perceived risk and vulnerability decrease sufficiently, according to Luhmann, one becomes confident (and sometimes overconfident) and need not rely on trust. As Steven Bach's (1985) account of the making of the film *Heaven's Gate* documents, decision makers who *think* they have control over all of their risks and vulnerabilities may fail to protect themselves or question their confidence when it would be appropriate. Steven Bach and David Field, studio

executives, continually underestimated their dependence on director Michael Cimino, thinking they could, at any time, call his bluff. They therefore felt inappropriately secure because they failed to realize the full extent to which they were, in fact, unable to control Cimino. Thus, their *perceived* hedge was not really a hedge at all.

Another potential danger associated with hedging is perhaps less obvious. The process of creating hedges requires anticipatory ruminations about things that might go wrong. Although intended as an adaptive form of preemptive pessimism (cf. Norem & Cantor, 1986), there is evidence that the cognitive strategy of engaging in such "worse-case" thinking can lead to unintended effects, such as unrealistically diminished expectations (e.g., see Kramer, 1994; Kramer, Meyerson, & Davis, 1990).

We have described several cognitive and social processes that contribute to the development of swift trust. The question of the fragility or resilience of swift trust also entails, however, questions about how trust is sustained throughout the life of the temporary group. Groups that have clear expectations and stable role systems would seem less vulnerable to problems of disruption of trust than those lacking such clarity and stability. However, by their very nature, the relatively "thin" expectations and role systems associated with the temporary group almost inevitably must lapse or break down on occasion. In temporary groups, such as filmmaking groups on location, many things happen or fail to happen, and they do so quickly and often. For this reason, we suspect that collective trust may be more resilient within those temporary groups in which members are skilled in the art and *attitude* of improvisation. The attitude of improvisation requires careful attention, listening, and mutual respect. In other words, truly competent role performance of the sort we have associated with behavior in temporary groups often entails doing something different when something different has to be done.

Although our argument here may seem somewhat tautological (i.e., swift trust allows for improvisation, which in turn predicts swift trust), our observation may be more revealing of a double interact than faulty logic. As Putnam (1992) noted, trust not only "lubricates cooperation," but "cooperation itself breeds trust" (p. 171). This "steady accumulation of social capital" plays a central role in the maintenance of collective trust.

Temporary systems engaged in filmmaking illustrate this point nicely. The ability of the director, cinematographer, lighting technicians, and others to improvise inspires confidence that unexpected but unavoidable setbacks, difficulties, and crises are surmountable and survivable. Examples of this dynamic abound in filmmaking lore, and Robert Altman, Francis Ford Coppola, and Steve Spielberg are among those reputed to have especially keen improvisational skills (and, equally important, skill at eliciting improvisations from others when needed!). For example, during the filming of *Raiders of the*

Lost Ark, director Steven Spielberg had planned a marvelous fight scene between the whip-wielding Indiana Jones (played by Harrison Ford) and an Arabian swordsman (recounted in Taylor, 1992). He had carefully scripted this scene to be the best sword fight ever, "the most definitive whip versus sword fight in cinematic history" (p. 107). When the time came to shoot the scene on location in Tunisia, both Spielberg and Ford were suffering from heat exhaustion. In addition, Ford had developed gastroenteritis and was not up to the arduous physical demands of the proposed scene. On the spot, they improvised a scene in which Indiana Jones, confronted by the swordsman, simply pulls out his gun and shoots the swordsman. What was to become one of the most memorable scenes in the film was entirely improvised. The ability and *willingness* of the director to retreat from his original vision and discover a superior one, we suggest, can inspire a powerful kind of collective trust that things will work out, especially when they have to.

Another feature of temporary groups, we argue, may contribute to the maintenance of swift trust—a structural feature that, a priori, one might argue would hinder it. This is the constrained time a temporary group has to do its work. The pace at which activity unfolds in many temporary groups and the required focus of attention on the task at hand may obviate the chance for certain kinds of dysfunctional group dynamics to occur. Because time is short and concentration is crucial, there may be less opportunity in temporary groups for the kinds of corrosive interpersonal and group dynamics that often plague more enduring groups. All of the messy things that go along with "thicker" interpersonal relationships (conflicts, jealousy, misunderstandings, hurt feelings, revenge fantasies, and pursuit of hidden agendas) have less opportunity to surface and play themselves out in the life cycle of temporary social systems. There is simply not enough time for things to go wrong. In contrast, groups that have more time for their tasks also have more time to develop complex relations that could go sour. Thus, the bounded life of the temporary group may make the mind concentrate on the task at hand and thereby keep interpersonal relations out of trouble.

Because swift trust is often centered around and bounded by trust in each individual's competent and faithful enactment of a critical *role,* out-of-role behavior can breed distrust. Individuals' expectations surrounding their own and others' behavior in temporary groups, as we noted earlier, are predicated on what Barber (1983) has characterized as a form of fiduciary trust. The "expectation of technically competent role performance for those involved with us in social relationships and systems," he observes, reflects an "expectation that partners in interaction will carry out their duties" (p. 9). In this sense, the act of conferring swift trust entails rendering judgments more about other individuals' professionalism than their character. Deviations from or violations of group norms and presumptions about competent role behavior

call into question the "professionalism" of the transgressor. Not only are they noted and frowned on, but they are likely to be punished.

Again, we suspect the contractor may play an important role here in being not only the architect and facilitator of swift trust but also its centurion. In talking about the highly effective and cohesive film production team he had put together, Alan Ladd, Jr. noted, "When it's your money, and someone isn't performing, you get rid of them, no matter how much you like them; you've got a responsibility to others, including yourself, and you can't afford to let a ship sink because one person can't pull his or her weight" (quoted in Barsh, 1982, p. 19). A contractor must be cooperative and forgiving but also provocable (Axelrod, 1984).

The net result of all of this is that, in an odd sort of way, the very lack of time, along with the collective impatience for lapses in role performance it necessitates, may work in favor of the temporary group's mission. Although such factors may hinder the development of thicker forms of trust, they may sustain swift trust.

As we have tried to suggest in this section, the development and maintenance of trust in temporary groups depend on a variety of subtle psychological processes and social mechanisms. To the extent that such factors operate convergently, swift trust is overly determined. In this regard, swift trust may be subtle, but it also may be rather resilient.

Conclusion

Our analysis suggests a rather rich and complex phenomenology associated with trust in temporary systems. In closing, we should note that what may be most distinctive about swift trust in temporary systems is that it is not so much an interpersonal form as it is a cognitive and action form. Trust work, in the preceding analyses, largely was tied to the level of interdependence. We suggested that swift trust is most likely when interdependence is kept modest through a combination of distancing, adaptability, resilience, interacting with roles rather than personalities, and viewing one's participation as partly voluntary (trust) and partly involuntary (confidence). In short, swift trust is less about relating than *doing*.

The portrait we have drawn of swift trust in temporary systems may be a little too "cool" for some people's taste. There is less emphasis on feeling, commitment, and exchange and more on action, cognition, the nature of the network and labor pool, and avoidance of personal disclosure, contextual cues, modest dependency, and heavy absorption in the task. That's what seems to give swift trust its distinctive quality. Swift trust is not surrender. But neither is it calculated aloofness. Instead, it is artful making do with a modest

set of general cues from which inferences are drawn about how people might care for what we entrust to them. Those inferences are driven by generic features of the setting rather than by personalities or interpersonal relations. In this sense, swift trust is a pragmatic strategy for dealing with the uncertainties generated by a complex system concocted to perform a complex, interdependent task using the specialized skills of relative strangers. Given those complexities, unless one trusts quickly, one may never trust at all.

Ultimately, of course, knowing when to confer trust quickly, and when to withhold or withdraw it, may be crucial to the success of the temporary system.

Notes

1. So much so that Robert Cialdini (personal communication, 1994) suggested that the form of trust-like behavior observed in temporary groups might more accurately be characterized as a sort of pseudo-trust or "trustoid" behavior. This is a provocative suggestion. However, for reasons that will become more obvious as our analysis unfolds, we regard trust in temporary groups as a very real form of trust and not merely trust-like.

2. Somewhat unexpected as a characteristic of such systems is the high probability that experience in temporary systems may *not* promote professional growth and learning and may, in fact, slow career progress. Because people are selected to apply their special knowledge to a specific problem, they tend to be selected "for their current capabilities rather than for any learning value the assignment may have for them" (Goodman & Goodman, 1976, p. 496). Repetition of what people already know is especially likely when the temporary system functions with a structure of clarified roles in which specialties interact with specialties. This contrasts with a system in which people interact, at least for some portion of the time, on the basis of blurred roles or changing expectations. High role clarity and stability of expectations are associated with an adequate performance that tends to be low on innovation and individual learning. A move toward more blurred roles, as when members interact in a manner more like Likert's participative system four (Goodman, 1981, pp. 7, 135; Goodman & Goodman, 1976, pp. 499-500), produces more innovation and learning.

3. There are a variety of spontaneous or "ephemeral" organizations and groups, such as improvisational jazz ensembles or pick-up basketball teams, in which swift trust seems to play an important role (Eisenberg, 1990; Lanzara, 1983; Weick, 1990; Weick & Roberts, 1993). However, we wish to focus in this chapter on temporary groups whose products or outputs are more consequential.

4. There is irony and danger here. As March (1994) notes, those who rise to positions of leadership, such as contractors, may do so on a history of accidental successes that, although giving themselves and others a sense of confidence, is predicated at best on shaky evidence and ambiguous performance.

5. There is an important asymmetry here, of course, in that most group members probably prefer that they have good alternatives in place themselves while preferring that others *don't*. They want others to have no choice but be *really* committed, and they prefer to hedge our own bets.

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