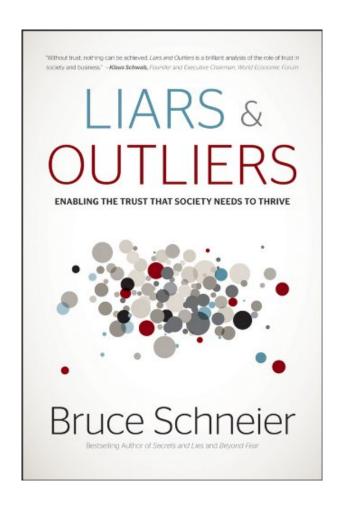
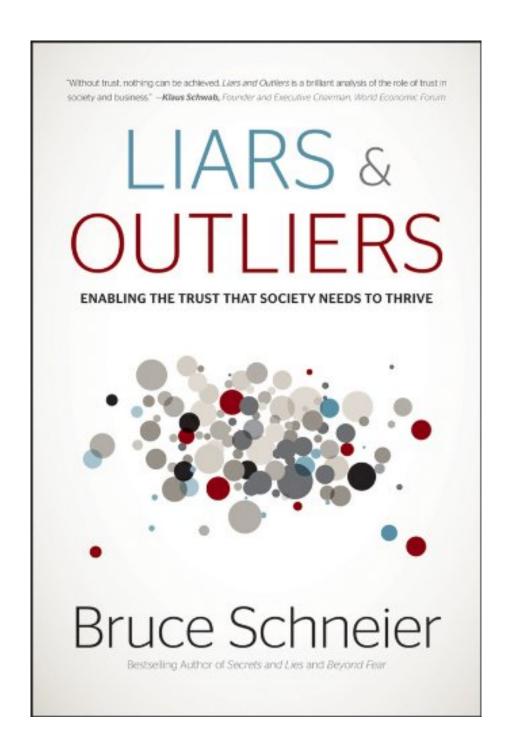
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Amazon.com Review

Q&A with Bruce Schneier, Author of Liars and Outliers

Bruce Schneier, Author In your book, Liars and Outliers, you write, "Trust and cooperation are the first problems we had to solve before we could become a social species--but in the 21st century, they have become the most important problems we need to solve again." What do you mean by trust?

That is the right question to ask, since there are many different definitions of trust floating around. The trust I am writing about isn't personal, it's societal. By my definition, when we trust a person, an institution, or a system, we trust they will behave as we expect them to. It's more consistency or predictability than intimacy. And if you think about it, this is exactly the sort of trust our complex society runs on. I trust airline pilots, hotel clerks, ATMs, restaurant kitchens, and the company that built the computer I'm writing these answers on.

### What makes people trustworthy?

That's the key question the book tackles. Most people are naturally trustworthy, but some are not. There are hotel clerks who will steal your credit card information. There are ATMs that have been hacked by criminals. Some restaurant kitchens serve tainted food. There was even an airline pilot who deliberately crashed his Boeing 767 into the Atlantic Ocean in 1999. Given that there are people who are naturally inclined to be untrustworthy, how does society keep their damage to a minimum? We use what I call societal pressures: morals and reputation are two, laws are another, and security systems are a fourth. Basically, it's all coercion. We coerce people into behaving in a trustworthy manner because society will fall apart if they don't.

You introduce the idea of defectors--those who don't follow "the rules." What are defectors? One of the central metaphors of the book is the Prisoner's Dilemma, which sets up the conflict between the interests of a group and the interests of individuals within the group. Cooperating--or acting in a trustworthy

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What major news stories of the past decade were triggered by failed trust? How can we prevent these failures in the future?

The story I had in most in mind while writing the book was the global financial crisis of a few years ago, where a handful of people cheated the system to their own advantage. Those were particularly newsworthy defectors; but if you start looking, you can see defectors and the effects of their defection everywhere: in corrupt politicians, special interests subverting the tax system, file sharers downloading music and movies without paying for them, and so on. The key characteristic is a situation where the group interest is in opposition to someone's self-interest, and people have been permitted to follow their own self-interest to the greater harm of the group.

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As our systems--whether social systems like Facebook or political systems like Congress--get more complex, the destructive potential of defectors becomes greater. To use another term from the book, the scope of defection increases with more technology. This means that the societal pressures we traditionally put in place to limit defections no longer work, and we need to rethink security. It's easy to see this in terms of terrorism: one of the reasons terrorists are so scary today is that they can do more damage to society than the terrorists of 20 years ago could--and future technological developments will make the terrorists of 20 years from now scarier still.

What do you hope readers will take away from reading Liars and Outliers?

I can do no better than quote from the first chapter: "This book represents my attempt to develop a full-fledged theory of coercion and how it enables compliance and trust within groups. My goal is to rephrase some of those questions and provide a new framework for analysis. I offer new perspectives, and a broader spectrum of what's possible. Perspectives frame thinking, and sometimes asking new questions is the catalyst to greater understanding. It's my hope that this book can give people an illuminating new framework with which to help understand the world."

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How does society function when you can't trust everyone?

When we think about trust, we naturally think about personal relationships or bank vaults. That's too narrow. Trust is much broader, and much more important. Nothing in society works without trust. It's the foundation of communities, commerce, democracy—everything.

In this insightful and entertaining book, Schneier weaves together ideas from across the social and biological sciences to explain how society induces trust. He shows how trust works and fails in social settings, communities, organizations, countries, and the world.

In today's hyper-connected society, understanding the mechanisms of trust is as important as understanding electricity was a century ago. Issues of trust and security are critical to solving problems as diverse as corporate responsibility, global warming, and our moribund political system. After reading Liars and Outliers, you'll think about social problems, large and small, differently.

### **AUTHOR BIO**

BRUCE SCHNEIER is an internationally renowned security technologist who studies the human side of security. He is the author of eleven books; and hundreds of articles, essays, and academic papers. He has testified before Congress, is a frequent guest on television and radio, and is regularly quoted in the press.

"The closest thing the security industry has to a rock star."

—The Register

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# Most helpful customer reviews

70 of 72 people found the following review helpful. explains what holds society together (+ a terrific primer on game theory) By Adam Thierer

How does society function when you know you can't possibly trust everyone in it? That's the question at the heart of Bruce Schneier's enlightening new book, "Liars and Outliers." There is no single or simple answer, Schneier explains. Instead, four "societal pressures" combine to help create and preserve trust within society. Those pressures include: (1) Moral pressures; (2) Reputational pressures; (3) Institutional pressures; and (4) Security systems. By "dialing in" these societal pressures in varying degrees, trust is generated over time within groups.

Of course, these societal pressures also fail on occasion, Schneier notes. He explores a host of scenarios -- in organizations, corporations, and governments -- when trust breaks down because defectors seek to evade the norms and rules the society lives by. These defectors are the "liars and outliers" in Schneier's narrative and his book is an attempt to explain the complex array of incentives and trade-offs that are at work and which lead some humans to "game" systems or evade the norms and rules others follow.

Indeed, Schneier's book serves as an excellent primer on game theory as he walks readers through complex scenarios such as prisoner's dilemma, the hawk-dove game, the free-rider problem, the bad apple effect, principle-agent problems, the game of chicken, race to the bottom, capture theory, and more. These problems are all quite familiar to economists, psychologists, and political scientists, who have spent their lives attempting to work through these scenarios. Schneier has provided a great service here by making game theory more accessible to the masses and given it practical application to a host of real-world issues.

The most essential lesson Schneier teaches us is that perfect security is an illusion. We can rely on those four societal pressures in varying mixes to mitigate problems like theft, terrorism, fraud, online harassment, and so on, but it would be foolish and dangerous to believe we can eradicate such problems completely. "There can be too much security," Schneier explains, because, at some point, constantly expanding security systems and policies will result in rapidly diminishing returns. Trying to eradicate every social pathology would bankrupt us and, worse yet, "too much security system pressure lands you in a police state," he correctly notes.

Despite these challenges, Schneier reminds us that there is cause for optimism. Humans adapt better to social change than they sometimes realize, usually by tweaking the four societal pressures Schneier identifies until a new balance emerges. While liars and outliers will always exist, society will march on.

You can read my longer review of Schneier's "Liars & Outliers" over at Forbes.

33 of 33 people found the following review helpful.

Brilliant analysis of how trust works and its inherent complexities

By Ben Rothke

It is said that the song Wipe Out launched a generation of drummers. In the world of information security, the classic Applied Cryptography: Protocols, Algorithms, and Source Code in C by Bruce Schenier may have been the book that launched a generation of new cryptographers.

Schenier latest work of art is Liars and Outliers: Enabling the Trust that Society Needs to Thrive. For those that are looking for a follow-up to Applied Cryptography, this it is not. In fact, it is hard to classify this as an information security title and in fact the book is marked for the current affairs / sociology section. Whatever section this book ultimately falls in, the reader will find that Schneier is one of the most original thinkers around.

In Applied Cryptography Schneier dealt with the pristine world of mathematical cryptography where aspects of pure mathematics could be demonstrably proven. For example, non-repudiation is absolutely provable.

In Liars and Outliers, Schneier moves from the pristine world of mathematics into the muddy world of human trust. Non-repudiation is no longer an absolute in a world where a Windows kernel can be compromised and end-users can be victims of social engineering.

The book addresses the fundamental question of how does society function when you can't trust everyone. Schneier notes that nothing in society works without trust. It's the foundation of communities, commerce, democracy, in truth - everything. And Schneier deals extensively with social and moral pressures that effect trust.

Liars and Outliers is very similar to books Umberto Eco, that have a Renaissance feel to them; bringing myriad and diverse topics together. Schenier does this here and intertwines topics such as game theory, evolution, surveillance, existentialism and much more. Schneier's brilliance is that he is able to connect seemingly disparate dots around information security and society, and show how they are in truth tightly coupled.

In the book, Schneier makes note of those that don't follow the rules. He calls these people defectors, and these are the liars and outliers of the book. The book notes that everything is a trade-off, and these defectors are the ones that try to break the rules.

An overall theme of the book, in which Schneier touches and references sociology, psychology, economics, criminology, anthropology, game theory and much more, is that society can't function without trust. He writes that in our complex interconnect and global society, that we need a lot of trust.

Schneier makes frequent reference to Dunbar's number, which he first references in chapter 2. Dunbar's number was first proposed by British anthropologist Robin Dunbar and is a theoretical cognitive limit to the number of people with whom one can maintain stable social relationships. It is generally in the area of 150. So when someone sees a person with 3,000 Facebook friends, something is clearly amiss.

In chapter 9 on institutional pressures, Schneier takes a very broad look at threats facing society today. One of the biggest perceived threats we have today is terrorism, and the book astutely notes that we can never ensure perfect security against terrorism.

If Schneier had his way, the TSA budget would be measured in the millions, not billions of dollars. He

incisively observes that all the talk of terrorism as an existential threat to society is utter nonsense. As long as terrorism is rare enough (which it is), and most people survive (which they do), society will survive. He writes that while that observation is true, it is not politically viable for our leaders to come out and say that.

While the book is heavy on the people focus, Schneier also acknowledges that sometimes and for some people, the incentives to commit crimes are worth the risk. To deal with those, that is where security technologies come into play.

An interesting observation made in chapter 10 around technology is that sometimes the technological changes have absolutely nothing to do with the societal dilemma being secured. For example, he notes that between the ubiquity of keyboards and the tendency for teachers to focus on standardized tests, cursive is no longer being taught that much in schools. The result is that signatures are more likely to be either printed text is an illegible scrawl; making them easier to forge. Which in turns creates new security risks.

In the book Schneier makes scores of astute observations on how society functions around security. He notes in chapter 16 that we are currently in a period of history where technology is changing faster than it ever has. The worry is that if technology changes too fast, the attackers will be able to innovate so much faster than society can that the imbalance become even greater; with failures that negatively affect society.

In many of the examples in the book, Schneier paints a dark picture given the advantage that the attackers and defectors have. But he also notes that we are in a period of history where the ability for large-scale cooperation is greater than it has ever been before. On that topic, he refers to the book The Penguin and the Leviathan: How Cooperation Triumphs over Self-Interest by Yochai Benkler where he writes that the Internet can and has enabled cooperation on a scale never before seen. And that politics, backed by science, is ready to embrace this new cooperation.

On the lighter side, in chapter 17, Schneier notes that Mussolini didn't make the trains run on time; he just made it illegal to complain about them.

Schneier notes at the end of the book that its lesson isn't that defectors will inevitably ruin everything for everyone. Rather that we as a society need to manage societal pressure to ensure that they don't.

Liars and Outliers is an absolutely fascinating and groundbreaking book. In this election year where the candidates attempt to make sweeping simplistic promises to fix complex problems, Schneier simply answers that in our complex society, there are no simple answers.

In Applied Cryptography Bruce Schneier demonstrated he was quite the smart guy. In Liars and Outliers, he shows he is even smarter than most of us first thought.

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

A detailed systemic examination of the abstract concept of trust.

By Teresa Merklin

"Liars and Outliers: Enabling the Trust that Society Needs to Thrive" is a departure from Bruce Schneier, who is widely regarded for his cryptography books and as a highly respected computer security commentator. Moving away from the hard core mathematics required for effective modern cryptography, in his latest offering Schneier constructs a framework for understanding trust and the various systemic forces that act upon it.

This innovative systems perspective of trust as it relates to security in general represents a profound breakthrough which should have considerable influence on discussions and debate within the security community. The detailed analysis of how pressures, incentives, and penalties influence individuals and

organizations is extremely useful for understanding potential and probable results of various policy and control initiatives.

Schneier also provides an excellent explanation for why criminal organizations are inherently more agile and adaptable than business and law enforcement agencies. This inherent agility is very apparent in computer and network security where the pace of new exploits and attack vectors at times seems to overwhelm traditional defense mechanisms.

The conclusions drawn in this book describe the importance of trust and how it will not diminish over time in the future. Schneier deftly summarizes how the trust framework must be well understood when designing and implementing societal pressures and how "perfect security" is an absolute illusion. While no specific policy recommendations are offered, this book should provide foundational knowledge for fueling effective and informed debate in the security arena.

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# LIARS AND OUTLIERS: ENABLING THE TRUST THAT SOCIETY NEEDS TO THRIVE BY BRUCE SCHNEIER PDF

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O&A with Bruce Schneier, Author of Liars and Outliers

Bruce Schneier, Author In your book, Liars and Outliers, you write, "Trust and cooperation are the first problems we had to solve before we could become a social species--but in the 21st century, they have become the most important problems we need to solve again." What do you mean by trust?

That is the right question to ask, since there are many different definitions of trust floating around. The trust I am writing about isn't personal, it's societal. By my definition, when we trust a person, an institution, or a system, we trust they will behave as we expect them to. It's more consistency or predictability than intimacy. And if you think about it, this is exactly the sort of trust our complex society runs on. I trust airline pilots, hotel clerks, ATMs, restaurant kitchens, and the company that built the computer I'm writing these answers on.

### What makes people trustworthy?

That's the key question the book tackles. Most people are naturally trustworthy, but some are not. There are hotel clerks who will steal your credit card information. There are ATMs that have been hacked by criminals. Some restaurant kitchens serve tainted food. There was even an airline pilot who deliberately crashed his Boeing 767 into the Atlantic Ocean in 1999. Given that there are people who are naturally inclined to be untrustworthy, how does society keep their damage to a minimum? We use what I call societal pressures: morals and reputation are two, laws are another, and security systems are a fourth. Basically, it's all coercion. We coerce people into behaving in a trustworthy manner because society will fall apart if they don't.

You introduce the idea of defectors--those who don't follow "the rules." What are defectors?

One of the central metaphors of the book is the Prisoner's Dilemma, which sets up the conflict between the interests of a group and the interests of individuals within the group. Cooperating--or acting in a trustworthy manner--sometimes means putting group interest ahead of individual interest. Defecting means acting in one's self-interest as opposed to the group interest. To put it in concrete terms: we are collectively better off if no one steals, but I am individually better off if I steal other people's stuff. But if everyone did that, society would collapse. So we need societal pressures to induce cooperation--to prevent people from stealing.

There are two basic types of defectors. In this example, the first are people who know stealing is wrong, but

steal anyway. The second are people who believe that, in some circumstances, stealing is right. Think of Robin Hood, who stole from the rich and gave to the poor. Or Jean Valjean from Les Miserables, who stole to feed his starving family.

Why are some defectors good for society?

Cooperators are people who follow the formal or informal rules of society. Defectors are people who, for whatever reason, break the rules. That definition says nothing about the absolute morality of the society or its rules. When society is in the wrong, it's defectors who are in the vanguard for change. So it was defectors who helped escaped slaves in the antebellum American South. It's defectors who are agitating to overthrow repressive regimes in the Middle East. And it's defectors who are fueling the Occupy Wall Street movement. Without defectors, society stagnates.

What major news stories of the past decade were triggered by failed trust? How can we prevent these failures in the future?

The story I had in most in mind while writing the book was the global financial crisis of a few years ago, where a handful of people cheated the system to their own advantage. Those were particularly newsworthy defectors; but if you start looking, you can see defectors and the effects of their defection everywhere: in corrupt politicians, special interests subverting the tax system, file sharers downloading music and movies without paying for them, and so on. The key characteristic is a situation where the group interest is in opposition to someone's self-interest, and people have been permitted to follow their own self-interest to the greater harm of the group.

What makes Liars and Outliers so relevant in today's society?

As our systems-whether social systems like Facebook or political systems like Congress-get more complex, the destructive potential of defectors becomes greater. To use another term from the book, the scope of defection increases with more technology. This means that the societal pressures we traditionally put in place to limit defections no longer work, and we need to rethink security. It's easy to see this in terms of terrorism: one of the reasons terrorists are so scary today is that they can do more damage to society than the terrorists of 20 years ago could--and future technological developments will make the terrorists of 20 years from now scarier still.

What do you hope readers will take away from reading Liars and Outliers?

I can do no better than quote from the first chapter: "This book represents my attempt to develop a full-fledged theory of coercion and how it enables compliance and trust within groups. My goal is to rephrase some of those questions and provide a new framework for analysis. I offer new perspectives, and a broader spectrum of what's possible. Perspectives frame thinking, and sometimes asking new questions is the catalyst to greater understanding. It's my hope that this book can give people an illuminating new framework with which to help understand the world."

#### Review

"One of the best books I've read this year is by a security technologist, Bruce Schneier. In Liars and Outliers, he sets out to investigate how trust works in society and in business, how it is betrayed and the degree to which technology changes all of that, for the better or the worse. Schneier absolutely understands how profoundly trust oils the wheels of business and of daily life." (Margaret Heffernan, CBS MoneyWatch)

"This book will appeal not only to customers interested in computer security but also on the idea of security and trust as a whole in society." (The Bookseller, 16th December 2011)

"This book should be read by anyone in a leadership role, whether they're in the corporate or political sphere... an easy read and the ideas and thoughts are profound." (Naked Security, February 2012)

"By concentrating on the human angle and packing the book with real world examples he has successfully stretched its appeal outside that of the security specialist to the more general reader." (E & T Magazine, March 2012)

#### Review

### ADVANCE PRAISE FOR LIARS AND OUTLIERS

- "A rich, insightfully fresh take on what security really means!"
- —DAVID ROPEIK, Author of How Risky is it, Really?
- "Schneier has accomplished a spectacular tour de force: an enthralling ride through history, economics, and psychology, searching for the meanings of trust and security. A must read."
- —ALESSANDRO ACQUISTI, Associate Professor of Information Systems and Public Policy at the Heinz College, Carnegie Mellon University
- "Liars and Outliers offers a major contribution to the understandability of these issues, and has the potential to help readers cope with the ever-increasing risks to which we are being exposed. It is well written and delightful to read."
- —PETER G. NEUMANN, Principal Scientist in the SRI International Computer Science Laboratory
- "Whether it's banks versus robbers, Hollywood versus downloaders, or even the Iranian secret police against democracy activists, security is often a dynamic struggle between a majority who want to impose their will, and a minority who want to push the boundaries. Liars and Outliers will change how you think about conflict, our security, and even who we are."
- —ROSS ANDERSON, Professor of Security Engineering at Cambridge University and author of Security Engineering
- "Readers of Bruce Schneier's Liars and Outliers will better understand technology and its consequences and become more mature practitioners."
- —PABLO G. MOLINA, Professor of Technology Management, Georgetown University
- "Liars & Outliers is not just a book about security—it is the book about it. Schneier shows that the power of humour can be harnessed to explore even a serious subject such as security. A great read!"
- —FRANK FUREDI, author of On Tolerance: A Defence of Moral Independence
- "This fascinating book gives an insightful and convincing framework for understanding security and trust."
- —JEFF YAN, Founding Research Director, Center for Cybercrime and Computer Security, Newcastle University
- "By analyzing the moving parts and interrelationships among security, trust, and society, Schneier has identified critical patterns, pressures, levers, and security holes within society. Clearly written, thoroughly interdisciplinary, and always smart, Liars and Outliers provides great insight into resolving society's various dilemmas."
- —JERRY KANG, Professor of Law, UCLA
- "By keeping the social dimension of trust and security in the center of his analysis, Schneier breaks new

ground with an approach that both theoretically grounded and practically applicable."

- —JONATHAN ZITTRAIN, Professor of Law and Computer Science, Harvard University and author of The Future of the Internet—And How to Stop It
- "Eye opening. Bruce Schneier provides a perspective you need to understand today's world."
- —STEVEN A. LEBLANC, Director of Collections, Harvard University and author of Constant Battles: Why We Fight
- "An outstanding investigation of the importance of trust in holding society together and promoting progress. Liars and Outliers provides valuable new insights into security and economics."
- -- ANDREW ODLYZKO, Professor, School of Mathematics, University of Minnesota
- "What Schneier has to say about trust—and betrayal—lays a groundwork for greater understanding of human institutions. This is an essential exploration as society grows in size and complexity."
- —JIM HARPER, Director of Information Policy Studies, CATO Institute and author of Identity Crisis: How Identification is Overused and Misunderstood
- "Society runs on trust. Liars and Outliers explains the trust gaps we must fill to help society run even better."
- —M. ERIC JOHNSON, Director, Glassmeyer/McNamee Center for Digital Strategies, Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College
- "An intellectually exhilarating and compulsively readable analysis of the subtle dialectic between cooperation and defection in human society. Intellectually rigorous and yet written in a lively, conversational style, Liars and Outliers will change the way you see the world."
- —DAVID LIVINGSTONE SMITH, author of Less Than Human: Why We Demean, Enslave, and Exterminate Others
- "Schneier tackles trust head on, bringing all his intellect and a huge amount of research to bear. The best thing about this book, though, is that it's great fun to read."
- —ANDREW MCAFEE, Principal Research Scientist, MIT Center for Digital Business and co-author of Race Against the Machine
- "Bruce Schneier is our leading expert in security. But his book is about much more than reducing risk. It is a fascinating, thought-provoking treatise about humanity and society and how we interact in the game called life."
- —JEFF JARVIS, author of Public Parts: How Sharing in the Digital Age Improves the Way We Work and Live
- "Both accessible and thought provoking, Liars and Outliers invites readers to move beyond fears and anxieties about security in modern life to understand the role of everyday people in creating a healthy society. This is a must-read!"
- —DANAH BOYD, Research Assistant Professor in Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University
- "Trust is the sine qua non of the networked age and trust is predicated on security. Bruce Schneier's expansive and readable work is rich with insights that can help us make our shrinking world a better one."
- —DON TAPSCOTT, co-author of Macrowikinomics: Rebooting Business and the World
- "An engaging and wide-ranging rumination on what makes society click. Highly recommended."
- —JOHN MUELLER, author of Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National

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