

# 2023 TRUSST Lab Report:

## *Advancing the Social Science of Trust*

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### Lab Alumni

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- **Dr. Amanda Isabel Osuna** – University of Tampa, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
- **Dr. Jenna Van Fossen** – Clemson University, Department of Psychology

### Vision

The Teaching, Researching, and Understanding the Social Science of Trust Lab was initiated in January of 2020 as a scholarly incubator for PhD-student led trust research with two overarching goals.

- **Goal #1:** We bring together students with varied contexts of interest and disciplinary orientations to collectively work to refine theoretical arguments on trust, focusing especially on leveraging students' unique perspectives to challenge and build upon existing approaches.
- **Goal #2:** By integrating our diverse backgrounds, experiences, and practitioner networks, we also collectively work to ensure the practical impact of our efforts, especially by developing relationships with agencies and institutions with an interest in supporting public trust.

### Structure

The lab is currently made up of eight students and a faculty supervisor. The lab meets every other week to report on the status of our lab and synergistic projects, and to work collectively in advancing them. The lab is graciously funded by an anonymous donation. Funding decisions within the lab are collective.

- **Lab projects (LP)** are those that were proposed by a lab student and approved by the lab for inclusion. These projects are conducted entirely within the lab (though they may include outside faculty as collaborators) and are encouraged to make requests for funding from the lab. All lab projects are supported by the entire lab which works collaboratively during the meetings to develop ideas, refine measures, and interpret findings, but authorship is reserved for students who take an active role in data collection, analysis, or writing.
- **Synergistic projects (SP)** are those that are not technically conducted within the lab but that involve at least one lab student and are supported by discussions within the lab. Dissertations are a key example as students must, by definition, take complete ownership of these projects. Funding may be requested for these projects as it is available.

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# 2023 Progress Report

## Theoretical Contributions

The first overarching goal of our lab is to increase the theoretical rigor of our work. Humans, as fundamentally unable to completely control their environment, are necessarily vulnerable to a variety of harms. We spend a great deal of our individual and collective energy working to identify and negate this potential for injury, in many cases, by developing relationships with individuals or groups that we believe have some level of control over them: That is, when we feel vulnerability, we look for individuals we can trust to protect us but surprisingly little work has been done to understand the different kinds of vulnerability we feel and the different roles they play with regard to trust.

Addressing this gap in the literature has been a primary focus of our efforts. In particular, much of our work has focused especially on how ostensible trustors experience their vulnerability. [LP4](#) explores this conceptually, using feminist theory to theorize how social power structures create and reinforce the potential for injury. Dr. Osuna's leadership on [LP2](#), [LP12](#), and [SP5](#) has pushed us to take a more empirical approach in the higher education context and suggests that there are a variety of ways that students feel they can be hurt but that major themes center around (intentional and unintentional) messaging about whether the institution prioritizes its own vulnerability over students'. This work serves as an important basis for our current work which explores the vulnerabilities that students feel to AI ([SP9](#)) as well as how they intersect with betrayal in the city of Flint, Michigan ([LP13](#)) and in the context of military sexual assault ([SP8](#)).

We have also explored the impacts of vulnerability on a variety of relevant outcomes. [LP5](#) builds on the projects above, collecting the vulnerabilities that individuals feel toward the courts when seeking to resolve a landlord/tenant dispute. We find that the way we engage with the courts matters (in small claims courts, via a mediator, or in an online dispute resolution) and that the vulnerabilities we feel have real implications for our willingness to engage with the courts. [LP1](#) builds on this finding and conceptualizes contact tracing during COVID as a particularly risky form of cooperation with government: We demonstrate that the vulnerabilities that individuals feel regarding their health and their finances have distinct impacts. [LP6](#) continues this line of reasoning, finding that the impact of trust and risk on cooperation depends on the kind of cooperation such that we will comply with a National Hurricane Center's evacuation order (thereby reducing our risk to the hurricane) primarily when we feel that the hurricane poses a risk. Trust, however, plays the key role when we are being asked to (potentially) increase our risk by not evacuating. [SP3](#) integrates this work to argue that the perception of unprotected vulnerability is the key mechanism that locks communities in a state of distrust. This, in turn, suggests that successfully addressing distrust requires specific attention to salient vulnerability.

Our collective insights into the experience and impacts of vulnerability has fostered significant conceptual development in the construct. As we developed and fielded each of these projects, we found ourselves thinking in an increasingly nuanced way about what it means to be vulnerable and how those vulnerabilities are, or become, relevant to our relationships. Dr. Darcy's dissertation ([SP1](#)) and contributions to [SP4](#) focused on integrating this work to distinguish what she calls imposed, focal, and emergent vulnerability which refer to the vulnerability to harm we all experience by virtue of being human, the vulnerability we feel specifically to our interaction partner, and the vulnerability that develops over the course of a relationship.

## Practical Contributions

The second overarching goal of our lab efforts is been to ensure that our work has practical implications, primarily by working directly with practitioners for whom trust is important. MSU has been a key partner. As a university that has seen its share of trust-challenging experiences, our administration has had significant interest in our work. Reports generated from [LP2](#) and [LP12](#) were shared with our, then, Provost who found them helpful enough to fund SP5 in its entirety, allowing Dr. Osuna to collect focus group data from students across campus as part of the Speak Up MSU initiative. The Michigan Supreme Court Administrative Office has also been a close collaborator whose interest in [LP5](#) and [SP2](#) motivated them to hire John Ropp, thus creating the unusual opportunity to collect his dissertation data from within the organization ([SP6](#)). The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has also engaged with the lab and requested our help in conducting the social science portion of an EPA grant they received ([LP3](#)).

Our work has also benefited from the engagement of academics in a variety of disciplines. Our work in Flint, Michigan ([SP3](#)) has leaned heavily on faculty in public health and generated connections to Dr. Jennifer Gómez (Boston University, School of Social Work) who will collaborate with Dr. Osuna on an upcoming project aimed to test Dr. Gómez' work on cultural betrayal ([LP13](#)). Similarly, Dr. Osuna's work at MSU ([LP2](#) and [SP5](#)) generated a connection to Dr. Sarah Prior (MSU Department of Sociology) who is helping to build out the implications of [LP12](#). Finally, the lab's interest in the role of trust in negating the impacts of vulnerability facilitated a connection to Dr. Jamie Bernard (MSU Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology) and her clinical collaborators in the Henry Ford Health System's Head and Neck Oncology Department. Together, the group will collect trust data from patients recently diagnosed cancer patients to determine the impact of trust on patient reported outcomes ([LP14](#)).

## Contributions to Student Training

The TRUSST Lab supports student development in a variety of ways (see Student Perspectives below), most critically including collegial and intellectual support for their dissertations, several of which have been funded ([SP5](#)- the Office of the MSU Provost; [SP8](#)- the National Institute of Justice; [SP9](#)- Michigan Interdisciplinary Training in Education and Social Science Fellowship) or supported by external agencies ([SP6](#)- Michigan Supreme Court Administrative Office).

- [SP1](#). Dissertation Research: Exploring Institutional Sexual Assault, Betrayal, And Trust-Based Harm (complete)
- [SP5](#). Dissertation Research: Understanding Vulnerability in the Student/University Relationship (complete)
- [SP6](#). Dissertation Research: The Influence of Judicial Attitudes on Efficiency, Satisfaction, and Legitimacy Perceptions among Court Users (in progress)
- [SP8](#). Dissertation Research: Military Sexual Trauma Among Female Veterans in Michigan: Exploring Experiences, Dynamics, and Responses (in progress)
- [SP9](#). Dissertation Research: Assessing Research University Stakeholder's Trust in and Acceptance of AI Technology (in progress)
- [SP10](#). Dissertation Research: Third-party contractors and education stakeholder trust (in progress)

## Expenditures

Although we remain relatively successful in securing direct funding ([LP5](#)- MSU College of Social Sciences) and other external support ([LP1](#)- MSU Institute for Public Policy and Social Research; [LP2](#)- MSU Registrar's Office; [LP3](#)- MDHHS via a USEPA award) for our work, lab funds have been critical in ensuring their impact. In particular, we have used a significant portion of our funding to support lab students presenting their work at the First International Network of Trust meetings in Charleston, SC ([LP5](#), [SP1](#), & [SP5](#)) and Helsinki, Finland ([LP6](#) & [LP7](#)) which has had an important impact on student development (see Student Perspectives below). We have also used lab funding for direct participant recruitment ([LP8](#): note that although the project was abandoned by its lead, Joe is working with students in his regression course this semester to publish on this data). [LP13](#) will likely benefit from lab funding and exploratory, high-impact work like [LP14](#) would simply not be possible without this support.

## Student Perspectives

### **Olatayo Bakare, Current Lab Member**

I am a political science PhD student and have been a member of the TRUSST Lab since Fall 2022. My primary research interests are public trust in government and the (in)accessibility of public services. During my time in the lab, I have been fortunate to be involved in collaborative research projects related to these endeavors. Specifically, my colleagues and I presented original research on the dynamics of public trust in government agencies at the First International Network on Trust (FINT) in June 2023. Our findings demonstrated that citizens' perceptions of federal agencies are critical in determining whether they decide to cooperate with government agencies on disaster mitigation. At FINT, I was also able to further my professional development and network with academic researchers studying similar topics. After the conference, we incorporated the feedback from the audience into a manuscript that we plan to submit to academic research journals. All in all, being in the TRUSST Lab has been an incredibly positive experience for both my intellectual and personal growth. I am incredibly grateful to Joe for introducing me to this lab and its vibrant community. His leadership and guidance have been indispensable in helping me navigate graduate school and develop an interdisciplinary research agenda on institutional trust. I am also grateful for the lab community and its warm reception of me as an emerging scholar and person. The community is full of bright, curious individuals interested in exploring trust in diverse contexts and their perspectives have not only enriched the quality of my own work but also helped me think more critically about the type of academic I want to be in the future as well as the relationships I want to build with external stakeholders.

### **Makayla Burden, Current Lab Member**

I am new to the TRUSST Lab, and I have still benefited greatly from being a student member. I am a Doctoral Candidate in the School of Criminal Justice, and my dissertation is on the military sexual trauma (i.e., sexual harassment and assault) of female veterans in Michigan with a portion of my study examining feelings of institutional betrayal among participants. Fellow lab members and Dr. Hamm have provided invaluable feedback on my study materials and on the topic of institutional betrayal. Furthermore, lab meetings have allowed me the opportunity to learn more about trust generally, as well as the trust topics included in my fellow lab members' studies. The interdisciplinary nature of the lab is incredibly beneficial and allows us to hear different perspectives and ideas from areas outside of our own. Being in the TRUSST Lab has been a great experience and I wish I had joined sooner!

### **Estefania Grignon, Current Lab Member**

Joining the TRUSST Lab in October 2023 and meeting Joe and all the laboratory members significantly changed my academic journey. Despite my short time participating in the group and alongside my international legal career, my experience in the laboratory was genuinely transformative, influencing my aspirations, including my new goal of pursuing a PhD. The interdisciplinary nature of the TRUSST Lab broadened my perspective on the role of trust in legal and social relationships. Interacting with experts from various disciplines enriched my understanding and sparked a deep interest in exploring how the dynamics of trust intertwine with legal frameworks. The collaborative discussions and insights gained in the lab were instrumental in revealing the multifaceted role of trust in societal governance and legal institutions. This led to a significant change in my professional approach, inspiring me to integrate these multidimensional perspectives on trust into my legal practice in Brazil. Looking to the future, my participation in the TRUST Lab is a fundamental step toward achieving my doctoral aspirations. The lab is providing intellectual growth, inspiring me to significantly contribute to the discourse on trust and the use of technologies in political decision-making. I am eager to integrate the multidisciplinary knowledge acquired here into future doctoral research, confident that it will enrich my academic endeavors and professional practice.

### **Travis H. Olson, Current Lab Member**

Serendipitously, I came across the TRUSST Lab in the fall of 2022 just as my own research on technology adoption in education was pointing me towards the importance of understanding trust and vulnerability. At that time, I joined an online conversation with graduate students across the world that Dr. Hamm had advertised on Twitter, and I have become steadily more involved with the lab since. In the past year, I have: (1) completed an independent study with Dr. Hamm on trust theory, (2) presented the final term paper of that independent study at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), (3) developed and prepared to launch a survey on trust and AI implementation in higher education, (4) collaborated with fellow lab members and alumni on two manuscripts, and (5) discussed and shared this work and the work of other students' at our regular lab meetings. Dr. Hamm and my fellow TRUSST Lab members have become invaluable collaborators as I move towards proposing and completing my dissertation. I am deeply grateful for this interdisciplinary and supportive space and how it has advanced my scholarship. I look forward to continuing to contribute to the lab in my last three semesters at MSU and afterward.

## **Tiffany Williams, Current Lab Member**

I am a doctoral student in the department of Sociology and I recently joined the TRUSST lab in 2023. Prior to joining, I had been seeking a research lab to join, as I appreciate the unique opportunity to collaborate with and learn from other scholars that a lab provides. Joining the TRUSST lab made sense for me, as I have an interest in conducting research regarding trust in science and incorporating that into my dissertation. The TRUSST lab has already provided me with valuable scholarly experiences, as I have been invited to collaborate on two projects that I would not have had access to had I not been a lab member. Being able to brainstorm ideas and engage in discussions of trust and related topics with Dr. Hamm and fellow lab members exposes me to many perspectives outside my discipline and research areas, thus helping me have a deeper understanding of the subject. Furthermore, Dr. Hamm has provided invaluable leadership and mentorship; organizing lab meetings, connecting current and past students and giving valuable feedback on students' current projects. I am greatly appreciative of the benefits I have received from the lab thus far and I look forward to future collaborations with fellow students and alumni.

## **Dr. Kathleen Darcy, University of Michigan – Dearborn, Lab Alum**

Being an alumni member of the TRUSST lab has continued to help further my research in the area of trust, even as I get further from membership as a student. First, Joe continues to be an incredible and supportive mentor, looping me into theoretical conversations and research in a way that has provided incredible opportunities and pushed my own thinking in important ways. In addition, because of the close relationships I made in the lab, we revived some research from a few years ago in the lab and were able to bring in Travis's expertise (and make connections outside the lab with Dr. Sarah Prior) to be able to draft a manuscript. That never would have been possible without the lasting personal and professional relationships that were made because of the lab. I continue to be grateful and inspired by the work of the current and alumni members!

## **Dr. Amanda Isabel Osuna, University of Tampa, Lab Alum**

As an alumni of the TRUSST Lab there are not enough praises that I can give it. Through the TRUSST Lab not only did I get to delve deeper into vulnerability research, but it set me up to be an effective collaborator. I have now had the opportunity to collaborate with multiple scholars in various disciplines (both in and out of the lab setting) who value my insights on vulnerability. I am most excited for the work I am doing on vulnerability and intersecting oppressions. I am also very thankful for the friendships that rose out of the TRUSST Lab for me. Lastly, and most importantly, I am grateful for the mentorship and supervision of Dr. Joe Hamm. His feedback during my doctoral thesis project was invaluable and I would not be the scholar that I am today without that support. I cannot wait to have a research lab of my own that mimics the qualities that I appreciate of the TRUSST Lab.

## **Dr. Jenna Van Fossen, Clemson University, Lab Alum**

I can unequivocally say that collaborating with Joe as part of his lab has and continues to have a meaningful impact on my career. I have current projects and planned projects that are directly related to trust research, and without having been a part of Joe's lab, I likely would not have continued to be engaged in this research stream. As part of the lab, Joe took the time to hold a journal club in seminal trust literature that provided me with a foundation and stimulated my thinking on trust theory. Joe also provided valuable opportunities to conduct primary research on trust. As a result, research on trust has continued to be one of my research areas, and I can confidently say that participating in the TRUSST lab supported my career and facilitated me in becoming a tenure-track assistant professor in Industrial-Organizational psychology at a R1 university.

# Lab Projects

## LP1. Exploring Trust, Risk, and Political Ideology in Covid-19 Contact Tracing (complete)

### Abstract

**Objective:** Contact tracing (CT) can limit the spread of infectious diseases, however its effectiveness hinges on public participation. We evaluated perceptions of the financial and health risk posed by COVID-19 and trust in information about COVID-19 provided by the state health department that manages CT as predictors of comfort and willingness to comply with CT. We further examined the moderating effect of political ideology on these relationships.

**Methods:** We used structural equation modeling to test hypotheses in data from a cross-sectional survey completed by a representative sample of Michigan residents (N = 805) in 2020.

**Results:** Perceptions of the risk of COVID-19 to one's health (but not finances) was negatively related to comfort and willingness to participate in CT. Trust in information about COVID-19 and liberalism were positively related to comfort and willingness. There was also a moderating effect of political ideology, such that conservatives were less comfortable and willing at greater perceptions of health risk.

**Conclusions:** Conservatives and those who perceive a greater health risk may require targeted messaging and more deliberate engagement strategies to increase CT participation.

### Highlights:

- Trust in information predicted willingness to comply with contact tracing.
- COVID-19 health risk perceptions were negatively related to willingness.
- Liberals were more willing to comply with contact tracing.
- Conservatives were less willing at higher perceptions of health risk.

### Citation

Van Fossen, J. A., Ropp, J. W., Darcy, K., & Hamm, J. A. (2022). Comfort with and willingness to participate in COVID-19 contact tracing: The role of risk perceptions, trust, and political ideology. *Social Science & Medicine*, 306, 115174.

Van Fossen, J. A., Ropp, J. W., Darcy, K., & Hamm, J. A. *Willingness to participate in COVID-19 contact tracing: The role of risk perceptions, trust, and political ideology*. Presented at the 2022 First International Network of Trust meeting in Charleston S.C.

## LP2. Understanding Student Vulnerability at a Higher Education Institution during the Covid-19 Pandemic (complete)

### Executive Summary

The COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted higher education both through the structural changes that comprise university responses and through student experiences of their real and perceived effects. Research has begun to attend to these impacts, and to date, most seek to understand how these responses can best position universities to adapt (e.g., Gonzalez et al., 2020; Reimers et al., 2020; Toquero, 2020). Less work, however, has considered how these adaptations affect students and virtually none has considered these impacts through students' eyes. Addressing this gap in knowledge is important because these perspectives may reveal unintended and even surprising impacts of the decisions made by universities as they navigate the pandemic.

This report presents the results of a qualitative analysis of data collected via an online survey of Michigan State University (MSU) students conducted in September of 2020. The purpose of the survey was to understand trust and harm in higher education from a student perspective. To this end, the survey asked students to discuss both experienced and potential harms controlled by their university and, as might be expected given the timing of the survey, harms related to the COVID-19 Pandemic emerged naturally. These COVID-specific responses were then categorized into four somewhat overlapping themes. Students discussed educational and financial harms, especially regarding the perceived decrease in the quality and value of instruction as courses moved online and university decisions that left students in expensive housing contracts. Students also discussed failures to mitigate student injury, a related but distinct set of harms that arose from situations where they felt that the university could have alleviated some of the injuries to students by taking a slightly different approach, even to the same end. Key among these were the timing and transparency of the university's communications, which some participants felt were intended to reduce university harm at student expense. The final set of harms focused specifically on the university's stay-at-home order where students highlighted a lack of consistency and fairness in its application.

Although our data are limited—both in that the survey was not initially designed to collect COVID-specific harms and in that they were collected at only one university—our data provide an important window into student experiences during the first year of the pandemic. In particular, our results highlight (1) the need for universities to engage in effective and timely communication with students to position them to make informed decisions, especially regarding their finances, (2) a need to think proactively about the resources students need to be successful in the new environments created by responses to crises, and (3) an overarching need to demonstrate unwavering concern for student welfare.

#### *Citation*

Osuna, A. I., Darcy, K., Woessner, Z. W., & Hamm, J. A. (2021). Perceived student vulnerabilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Available at <http://trusstlab.com/resources>

### **LP3. Managing CyanoHABs in Michigan (complete)**

#### *Executive Summary*

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) can lead to health problems in people and animals. The number of HAB outbreaks has increased in Michigan over the last few years, and this survey study was conducted to assess the perceptions held by people who live in and/or recreate on bodies of water in Michigan towards HABs and agencies tasked with managing HABs.

Participants were recruited during late summer and early fall of 2020. A Facebook sample (n = 383) was recruited via closed Facebook Groups for lakes that had experienced a HAB, and a Listserv sample (n = 113) was recruited via email listservs held by MDHHS. Participants were predominantly white, educated, and liberal. Most participants reported spending at least one month staying on waterfront property during the year and spending time participating in a variety of recreational activities on Michigan lakes or rivers (swimming, fishing, boating, etc.). Half of the participants had some previous exposure to HABs.

Regarding subjective knowledge of HABs, the majority of the sample felt that they had at least some degree of knowledge about HABs and felt at least somewhat confident in their ability to identify and keep themselves safe from HABs. Nonetheless, most respondents did not correctly answer objective knowledge questions about the number of HABs in Michigan or change in HABs in Michigan and were unable to correctly identify HABs in a photo identification task.

In terms of perceptions of risk from HABs, participants were only somewhat concerned and up to one-third of participants did not perceive any risk. These individuals were more likely to feel they know more about HABs, be older, less educated, have a lower income, and be more politically conservative. The majority of participants, however, thought that HABs were at least somewhat likely to cause various complications. HABs were thought to present the greatest risk to tourism and the environment.

Concerning perceptions of agencies, respondents generally viewed the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) as at least somewhat trustworthy across six dimensions. They held the most positive perceptions of MDHHS' concern for them but had lower perceptions of MDHHS' communication, fairness, and shared values. A subset of participants (one-fifth) were especially negative regarding the MDHHS' trustworthiness. These participants were more likely to be white, conservative, and perceive less risk from HABs. Participants similarly tended to view local health departments and lake associations as at least somewhat trustworthy across dimensions but had lower estimations of their ability as compared to MDHHS. Regarding the agencies most trusted to manage HABs, participants generally reported the most positive responses for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE).

For cooperation with management efforts, participants who perceived more the risk from HABs, were older, and white were more likely to report greater intentions to cooperate with HABs management in the future. White participants and those who claimed greater subjective knowledge were more likely to cooperate with cooperation requests within the survey itself.

#### *Citation*

Van Fossen, J. A., Ropp, J. W., Darcy, K., Woessner, Z., Osuna, A. I., Meier, E., & Hamm, J. A. (2020). CyanoHAB Outreach in Michigan: Survey Report. Report prepared for research partners [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services]. Available at <http://www.trusstlab.com/resources>

### **LP4. Exploring Power, Vulnerability, and Trust in Public Governance through the Lens of Feminist Intersectionality (complete)**

#### *Abstract*

At the center of the relationship between governance entities and the publics they serve are power imbalances. Feminist theory has, from its outset, explored how power structures enable and constrain individual behavior on the basis of gender. Further, it brings an inherently multi-level analysis, exploring individual identity and contextualizing it against power structures.



Intersectionality builds on this foundation and the foundation of Black Feminist scholars to consider multiple intersecting identities and how these might relate to when and why individuals feel more or less vulnerability in governance relationships and become more or less willing to accept it. This chapter highlights feminist intersectionality as an especially important lens for unpacking power and its impact on vulnerability in trust in governance. Two case examples explore how an intersectional lens can add nuance to understanding governance relationships and why trust might differ among individuals by more fully considering power structure and intersecting identities.

#### *Citation*

Darcy, K., Meier, E., Osuna, A. I., Van Fossen, J. A., Ropp, J., & Hamm, J. A. (in press). Exploring power, vulnerability, and trust in public governance through the lens of Feminist Intersectionality. In F. Six, E. van Zimmeren, J. A. Hamm, K. Verhoest, & D. Latusek (Eds.) *Handbook on Trust in Public Governance* (pp. x). Edward Elgar.

## **LP5. Mobilizing the Law: The Role of Vulnerability and Court Process in the Decision to File a Small Claims Suit (in progress)**

### *Abstract*

This study explores the role of individual perceptions of vulnerability, and how they relate to various dispute resolution processes, in the decision to mobilize legal processes to address a legitimate claim. A sample of MTurk workers completed a survey in response to a hypothetical landlord-tenant dispute. In the survey, respondents were randomized to one of three common dispute resolution methods (i.e., small claims trial, alternative dispute resolution, online dispute resolution) and a control group, and subsequently responded to questions about their willingness to use, and anticipated experiences with, the court via the assigned process. We found that respondents perceived categorical differences in the anticipated harms associated with different processes. Particularly, anticipated experiences with online dispute resolution evoked unique concerns compared to in-person processes. Furthermore, the perception of vulnerability was a significant predictor of a respondent's willingness to mobilize legal processes for the resolution of the hypothetical dispute. Given these results, we recommend that researchers more fully consider the ways vulnerabilities may change as a result of the type of court interaction that may occur. Additionally, greater emphasis should be placed on exploring the individual factors that may motivate an individual to mobilize the law to resolve legal disputes.

### *Citations*

- Ropp, J. W., Meier, E., Van Fossen, J., Osuna, A. I., Darcy, K., Woessner, Z., Hamm, J. A. (in preparation). Mobilizing the law: The role of vulnerability and court process in the decision to file a small claims suit.
- Ropp, J., Hamm, J. A., Meier, E., Darcy, K., Osuna, A., Van Fossen, J., & Woessner, Z. *Choosing to access the courts: The role of vulnerability and court process in the decision to file a small claims suit*. Presented at the 2021 Law and Society Association meeting [held online because of COVID].
- Ropp, J., Darcy, K., Meier, E., Osuna, A. I., Van Fossen, J. A., Woessner, Z., & Hamm, J. A. *Mobilizing the law: The role of vulnerability and court process in the decision to file a small claims suit*. Presented at the 2022 First International Network of Trust meeting in Charleston S.C.
- Ropp, J. W., Darcy, K., Meier, E., Osuna, A. I., Van Fossen, J., Woessner, Z., Hamm, J. A. (2020). Public expectations regarding online dispute resolution: A comparison of dispute resolution processes during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Available at <http://www.trusstlab.com/resources>

## **LP6. Disentangling Trust and Risk as Drivers of Compliance with a Governance Agency (in progress)**

### *Progress*

Jenna is leading a manuscript with Tayo, Travis, Joe, and Dr. Adam Zwickle (MSU Department of Community Sustainability) which investigates the impact of the perceived risk posed by a hurricane as relative to trust in the National Hurricane Center in driving public willingness to follow the Center's directives to evacuate versus not evacuate. The results suggest that evacuation—as a risk reducing behavior—is more connected to the extent to which the individual feels that the hurricane poses a risk. Not evacuating however—as a risk increasing behavior—is more connected to trust in the Center. The analyses are now complete, and the team is writing up the manuscript.

### *Citations*

Van Fossen, J., Bakare, O., Olson, T., & Zwickle, A. Hamm, J. A., (in preparation). Disentangling trust and risk as drivers of compliance with a governance agency.

Van Fossen, J., Hamm, J. A., Bakare, O., & Zwickle, A. *Disentangling trust and risk as drivers of compliance with a governance agency*. Presented at the 2023 First International Network of Trust meeting in Helsinki, Finland.

## **LP7. Is Trust Self-Reinforcing? Insight into the Dynamics of Perceived Trustworthiness and Organizational Trust (in progress)**

### *Abstract*

Modern trends in public administration consider public trust as a key indicator of agency performance. Yet although public trust may be critical for public administration, little is known about the dynamics of public trust, including what prompts changes in trust. We surveyed Florida residents (N = 97) on their perceptions of ability, benevolence, integrity, and trust in the National Hurricane Center over 25 weeks. We estimated two-level time series models to examine reciprocal relationships between trustworthiness and trust. Trustworthiness and trust exhibited significant intraindividual variability, with ability perceptions having the greatest variability. Previous-week trustworthiness perceptions were significant predictors of trust, and previous-week trust predicted trustworthiness, although several relationships weakened with two-week lags. Further, people with higher average integrity perceptions tended to have more stable trust. Results point to ability perceptions as a key lever for public administrators to increase public trust, and to integrity perceptions for steady levels of trust.

### *Citations*

Van Fossen, J. A., Bakare, O., Olson, T., Zwickle, A., & Hamm, J. A. (under review). The dynamics of trust in (and trustworthiness of) a government agency: A longitudinal perspective. *Public Administration Review*.

Van Fossen, J., Hamm, J. A., Bakare, O., & Zwickle, A. *Is trust self-reinforcing? Insights into the dynamics of perceived trustworthiness and organizational trust*. Presented at the 2023 First International Network of Trust meeting in Helsinki, Finland.

## **LP8. Exploring the Correlates of Fear of Police Harm (abandoned)**

### *Progress*

This project was abandoned as the student lead (Travis C.) left the lab. The data collected has been moved to Joe's regression course (CJ 906) with the expectation of publishing a manuscript as a class rather than within the lab.

## **LP9. Navigating Vulnerability: How Sexual and Gender Minorities Seek Help after Intimate Partner Violence Experiences (abandoned)**

### *Progress*

This project was abandoned as the student lead (Jed) left the lab.

## **LP10. Trust and the IRS (abandoned)**

### *Progress*

This project was abandoned as the student lead (Tayo) redirected their attention to [LP6](#) and [LP7](#).

## **LP11. The Role of Trust in Chinese Students' Pursuit of Higher Education in The United States during the Covid-19 Pandemic (abandoned)**

### *Progress*

This project was abandoned as the student lead (Vincent) redirected their attention to other out-of-lab projects.

## **LP12. Students Experienced Harm at Higher Education Institutions: A Qualitative Study (in progress)**

### *Abstract*

Student well-being is a critical concern within higher education, as universities bear the responsibility of safeguarding students from potential harm arising from institutional decisions and the conduct of students and staff (Smith & Freyd, 2013). This harm can manifest in different ways, from physical dangers such as COVID-19 or sexual assault, to intangible harm that affects students' identities due to decisions harming the university's reputation. The concept of trust plays a significant role in this context, where students must acknowledge that universities might unintentionally cause harm through their choices (Hamm et

al., 2019). Trust, in this sense, refers to the psychological state wherein students accept the possibility of harm. Understanding the interplay between trust and harm is crucial, as it becomes essential to recognize the types of harm universities can control and those that students perceive as relevant when comprehending, fostering, and restoring trust in higher education. Regrettably, recent years have brought to light numerous concerns about harm within university settings. Examples include the response to high-profile cases of sexual violence (Prior & de Heer, 2022) and the handling of infection control and instructional quality issues by large university administrations during the COVID-19 pandemic (Osuna et al., 2021). To address trust and harm, this study builds upon existing climate surveys conducted at various institutions and aims to investigate the specific harms students have experienced at their universities. The research question guiding this study is what are the experienced harms of students at higher education institutions (HEIs)? By qualitatively analyzing the experiences of thirty-nine students from a large Midwestern university, this research provides valuable insight into the nature of harm that students encounter in academic environments.

#### *Citation*

Osuna, A. I., Darcy, K., Prior, S., Olson, T. & Hamm, J. A. (under review). Students' experienced harm at higher education institutions: A qualitative study.

Osuna, A. I., Darcy, K., Woessner, Z., Van Fossen, J. A., Meier, E., Carter, T., Green, B., & Hamm, J.A. *Student's perceived vulnerability and trust in higher education institutions: A qualitative study*. Presented at the 2022 First International Network of Trust meeting in Charleston, SC.

### **LP13. Examining the Intersection of Generational (Dis)Trust and Cultural Betrayal in Flint, Michigan (in progress)**

#### *Progress*

Dr. Osuna is leading a team with Estefania, Tiffany, Joe and Dr. Jennifer M. Gómez (Boston University) that will explore the intergenerational nature of trust, distrust, and betrayal. Communities of color often face systemic neglect, driven by entrenched socioeconomic disparities (Banaji et al., 2021). The Flint, Michigan water crisis exemplifies this institutional failure as local authorities ignored predominantly Black residents' concerns about water quality, resulting in preventable health crises and fatalities. This neglect is part of a broader pattern of systemic failures disproportionately affecting minority communities (Flint Water Advisory Task Force, 2016). One of the theories that we can use to understand the experiences of communities of color is Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory (e.g., Gómez, 2023). Applying this theory to the institutional betrayals in Flint offers a nuanced understanding of the multi-dimensional impact of trust erosion. Investigating this nexus illuminates not only the immediate repercussions of institutional failure but also the broader, culturally embedded dynamics of betrayal that exacerbate feelings of distrust. Our study aims to understand how trust operates in communities facing disadvantages and challenges. We seek to investigate whether decreased trust indicates institutional failure or betrayal. We will examine various aspects, such as trust itself, situations where cultural or institutional trust is broken, the influence of generations, and the injustices related to trust. Our goal is to enhance the theoretical understanding of trust in these communities. In this context, our research scrutinizes how cultural institutions have contributed to or failed to address the Flint crisis and how these actions or inactions have affected public trust within marginalized communities. By employing CBTT as our analytical framework, we aim to explore the hypothesis that institutional trauma can be an extension of interpersonal betrayal. Our findings will offer both theoretical contributions and practical guidelines for policymakers and community stakeholders.

### **LP14. Trust in Providers, Community, and Family as Moderators of Cancer Patient Reported Outcomes (in progress)**

#### *Progress*

Joe is leading a lab project exploring the extent to which trust moderates the relationship between severity of diagnosis patient-reported outcomes among cancer patients. The project theorizes that the extent to which patients trust the groups and individuals they hold responsible for protecting their potential for harm after receiving a recent cancer diagnosis can serve to insulate them from the most significant impacts on their subject well-being, perceived disease progression, and prognosis. Dr. van Fossen, Researchers in MSU's Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, and the Henry Ford Healthcare system's Patient Reported Outcome Measures unit will collaborate with the lab to collect trust data within their standard PROM collection process.

# Synergistic Projects

## SP1. Dissertation Research: Exploring Institutional Sexual Assault, Betrayal, and Trust-Based Harm (complete)

### Abstract

Shocking stories of institutional sexual assault (ISA; assault occurring in institutional settings or between institutional actors) have been brought to light in numerous settings, including prisons, the military, higher education, sports, medicine, religious institutions and more. Theories to understand harm that stems from ISA suggest that trust is at the center such that betrayal trauma and institutional betrayal are linked to mental health, physical health and relationship harms distinct from sexual assault more broadly (Delker & Freyd, 2014; Freyd, 1996; Smith & Freyd, 2014). The dissertation investigated harm in the context of institutional sexual assault using trust as a lens to identify potential for harm (1) at different stages of the trust process and (2) in interpersonal versus institutional trust relationships. Findings illuminated how stages of the trust process aligned with different harms and trust relationships, adding understanding to imposed and focal vulnerability, trustworthiness, and what I call “emergent vulnerability.” Risk taking in a relationship might relate to increased dependence, which can create a vulnerability to exploitation especially when relationships have a power imbalance (Misztal, 2012). Emergent vulnerability refers to the vulnerability that arises from risk taking in a trust relationship. Results of a scoping review identified harms for both interpersonal and institutional trust as concrete (e.g., physical, financial) where identity, context, and power mattered, and as amorphous (e.g., professional, privacy, emotional). Interpersonal trust articles identified mechanisms to understand emotional harm (moral injury and betrayal), whereas only (institutional) betrayal arose in institutional trust. Next, qualitative analyses using the victim impact statements given at the sentencing trial of Dr. Larry Nassar compared how victims who experienced different trust relationships (interpersonal and multilevel) spoke to vulnerability, trustworthiness, and harm. Vulnerability related to identity and context, differing by type of trust. Both groups described multiple reasons to trust, but only the multilevel group identified institutional factors. Moral injury and betrayal again helped understand harm, but the multilevel group identified harms tied to institutional responses (e.g., putting institutional interests above its members). The final chapter connected empirical results to the trust process framework. Legal and practical implications of the findings are discussed, where improved understanding of victims’ experiences can better shape efforts at prevention, improve reporting, and better tailor legal remedies to victims’ needs.

### Citation

Darcy, K. (2022). Exploring Institutional Sexual Assault, Betrayal, and Trust-Based Harm [Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University]. *ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global*.

Darcy, K., *Institutional sexual assault, trust, betrayal, and harm*. Presented at the 2022 First International Network of Trust meeting in Charleston S.C.

## SP2. Michigan Supreme Court Virtual Courtroom Survey (complete)

### Abstract

The current work explores three potential facilitators of judicial performance. Participants in a state-wide survey of judicial officers (response rate=33.9 per-cent) completed self-report measures of self-efficacy, prosocial impact, and self-legitimacy as well as subjectively perceived performance. Objective performance data collected by the state court administrative office were then merged with the survey data. Latent variable analysis confirmed the three predictor constructs’ separability, and although all four concepts were correlated, self-efficacy was the sole independent predictor of subjective performance. An unplanned mediation analysis suggested significant indirect effects of self-legitimacy and prosocial impact on subjectively assessed performance through self-efficacy. Regarding objective performance, self-efficacy emerged as the only significant correlate or predictor. The research therefore empirically demonstrates the empirical distinctiveness of self-efficacy, prosocial impact, and self-legitimacy and provides some exploratory support for a causal model whereby self-efficacy provides the proximal impact on performance but is itself facilitated by prosocial impact and self-legitimacy.

### Evidence for Practice

- Judicial officers’ self-report assessment of their performance (subjective judicial performance) is associated, primarily, with the extent to which they feel efficacious in their work (self-efficacy).
- The extent to which judicial officers feel they have positive impacts on society (prosocial impact) and are legitimate legal authorities (self-legitimacy) may serve as sources of judicial self-efficacy.
- Time to disposition (objective judicial performance) is only associated with the extent to which judicial officers feel efficacious in their work (self-efficacy)

### *Citation*

- Hamm, J. A., Ropp, J. W., Witwer, A., & Scott, B. A. (2023). Self-efficacy, prosocial impact, and self-legitimacy as psychological predictors of judicial officer performance. *Public Administration Review*. doi: 10.1111/puar.13723
- Hamm, J. A., Ropp, J. W., Scott, B., & Witwer, A. R. (2021). Virtual Courtroom Survey: Analysis Report. Report prepared for research partners [Michigan Supreme Court Administrative Office]. Available at <http://www.trusstlab.com/resources>
- Viviano, K., Hutzel, L., Hamm, J. A., & Latusek, J. (2021). COVID-19 and the Virtual Courtroom. Presented at the Michigan Judicial Institute Annual Judicial Conference, Online.

## **SP3. Trust and Distrust as Alternative Stable States (complete)**

### *Abstract*

Despite the universally recognized importance of fostering trust and avoiding distrust in governance relationships, there remains considerable debate on core questions like the relation between (dis)trust and the evaluations of the characteristics that make a governance agent appear (un)worthy of trust. In particular, it remains unclear whether levels of (dis)trust simply follow levels of (dis)trustworthiness—such that building trust is primarily a question of increasing evidence of trustworthiness and avoiding evidence of distrustworthiness, or if their dynamics are more complicated. The current paper adds novel theory for thinking about the management of trust and distrust in the governance context through the application of principles borrowed from resilience theory. Specifically, we argue that trust and distrust exist as distinct, self-reinforcing (i.e., stable) states separated by a threshold. We then theorize as to the nature of the self-reinforcing processes and use qualitative data collected from and inductively coded in collaboration with Flint residents as part of a participatory process to look for evidence of our argument in a well-documented governance failure. We conclude by explaining how this novel perspective allows for clearer insight into the experience of this and other communities and speculate as to how it may help to better position governance actors to respond to future crises.

### *Citation*

- Hamm, J.A., Carrera, J., Van Fossen, J., Key, K., Woolford, S. J., Bailey, S. B., McKay, A., Evans, L., Calhoun, K. (2023). Conceptualizing trust and distrust as alternative stable states: Lessons from the Flint Water Crisis. *Ecology and Society*. 28(3), art. 14. doi: 10.5751/ES-14410-280314
- Hamm, J. A., Carrera, J., Van Fossen, J., Key, K., Woolford, S. J., Bailey, S. B., McKay, A., Evans, L., & Calhoun, K. Conceptualizing trust and distrust as alternative stable states: Lessons from the Flint Water Crisis. Presented at the 2023 First International Network of Trust meeting in Helsinki, Finland. [Finalist for the FINT Best Paper: High Societal Relevance award]

## **SP4. Integrating Focal Vulnerability as an Antecedent of Trust (in progress)**

### *Abstract*

Trust—most often defined as the trustor’s willingness to accept vulnerability—matters across almost every facet of modern life. Significant bodies of research have been devoted to understanding the propensities of the trustor and the perceived characteristics of the trustee, but much less has directly considered the specific nature of the vulnerability at the core of its definition. The current article addresses this gap, elucidating the concept of focal vulnerability—the portion of the trustor’s individualized, total potential for experiencing harm that is perceived, relational, and contemporaneous with their assessment of trust—as the vulnerability that a trustor is, by definition, willing to accept when they feel trust. Following work in other literatures, we then explore the systematic ways in which these focal vulnerabilities are likely to vary, and argue that this variability can be meaningfully captured by assessing the extent to which the focal vulnerability elicits the trustor’s felt concern. We then conclude by exploring the implications of this argument and outline several untested assumptions that are ripe for future research.

### *Citation*

- Hamm, J. A., Möllering, G., & Darcy, K. (in revision). Integrating focal vulnerability into trust research. *Journal of Trust Research*.

## **SP5. Dissertation Research: Understanding Vulnerability in the Student/University Relationship (complete)**

### *Abstract*

Trust is an essential pillar of higher education that facilitates positive student experiences and well-being and has been linked to enrollment, retention, and continued involvement after graduation (Ghosh et al., 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998). Understanding student trust in higher education institutions (HEI) is an important task, and research on trust in various contexts positions vulnerability as a critical concept (Mayer et al., 1995). In most situations where individuals engage with more powerful entities, students look to their HEI to make decisions that reduce the likelihood and severity of various potential injuries (Smith & Freyd, 2013). Trust is generally understood to exist when these individuals, more or less consciously, recognize their vulnerability and feel willing to accept it. Unpacking how students come to understand their vulnerability to their HEI and why they are willing, unwilling, or unsure of their willingness to accept their vulnerabilities is important as it may provide insight into a general understanding of trust in the context of institutional victimization.

The present dissertation addresses this by qualitatively asking 1) how do students come to understand their vulnerabilities in their relationship with their HEI? and 2) how do students become willing, unwilling, or unsure of their willingness to accept the risk of being harmed by their HEI? Findings from Study One suggest that students experience varying types of trust in their relationship with their HEI, where their vulnerability exists on a continuum from generally unaware to a broader understanding of vulnerability. In Study Two, findings suggest that students experienced distrust in their relationships with their HEI rooted in the students' negative experiences, devalued perceptions, and cultural vulnerability. Furthermore, findings from Study Three suggest that students were unsure of their willingness to accept vulnerability due to engaging in self-protection, varying levels of engagement with the HEI, and the adverse history of the HEI. The last chapter integrates all three studies to explain an improved understanding of student vulnerabilities that can better shape efforts to build, maintain, and repair trust relationships within HEIs.

### *Citation*

Osuna, A. I. (2023). Understanding vulnerability, trust, and distrust in the student-university relationship. *ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global*. doi: 10.25335/3d27-j717

Osuna, A. I. *Understanding vulnerability, trust, and distrust in the student-university trust relationship*. Presented at the 2023 First International Network of Trust meeting in Helsinki, Finland.

Osuna, A. I., Scarpelli, S., Chan, W., Finley, D., & Hamm, J. A. (2023). *Speak Up MSU: Understanding student vulnerability, trust, and distrust at Michigan State University*. Report prepared for research partners [Michigan State University Office of the Provost]. Available on request to research partner.

## **SP6. Dissertation Research: The Influence of Judicial Attitudes on Efficiency, Satisfaction, and Legitimacy Perceptions among Court Users (in progress)**

### *Progress*

John has successfully proposed a dissertation that will use data collected as part of his role with the Michigan Supreme Court Administrative Office to understand relationship between judicial officer attitudes and court user experiences through interviews with Michigan judges and data collected as part of the statewide court user satisfaction survey. The research proposes two primary contributions. First, the work will theoretically integrate the competing propositions of the process-based and dialogic models of legitimacy. Specifically, the proposal hypothesizes that the attitudes of the legal authority itself should relate to the likelihood of an individual experiencing a procedurally fair interaction with a judicial officer. Second, the research identifies three theoretically relevant attitudes that may collect the important variance in judicial officer perceptions. These attitudes are self-legitimacy, self-efficacy, and trust in the public.

## **SP7. (Dis)Trust, Community Health, and Subjective Well-Being (in progress)**

### *Progress*

Trust research has long attested to a variety of positive outcomes of trust in governance agencies for communities. In general, the argument goes that communities who trust agencies more, better facilitate the agencies in accomplishing their responsibilities through increases in compliance and cooperation, and through decreases in efforts to monitor or control the agency. Less work, however, has considered the direct impacts of trust despite long-running evidence of the psychological costs of feeling distrust in a valued domain. The current project contributes to this small but growing body of literature by assessing the impact of distrust in government on subjective well-being. In his role as Lead of the Community Engagement Core of the MSU Superfund Research Center, Joe is currently preparing a survey that will be distributed to residents in three

communities in Michigan that are dealing with dioxin contamination. The survey will assess the extent to which participants are concerned about the contamination as well as other community health challenges. They will then complete a battery of questions measuring their trust in the agencies responsible for ensuring community health and measures of subjective health and well-being. We expect that concern will have a negative impact on subjective health and well-being but hypothesize that this impact will be attenuated for individuals who report greater trust in the agencies responsible for keeping them safe. More plainly, we argue that—when faced with a salient community health concern—trust plays an inoculating role, severing the impact of that concern on subjective well-being.

### **SP8. Dissertation Research: Military Sexual Trauma Among Female Veterans in Michigan: Exploring Experiences, Dynamics, and Responses (in progress)**

#### *Abstract*

The purpose of the project is to understand the military sexual trauma (MST) experiences, which includes sexual harassment and sexual assault, of female veterans in the state of Michigan while they were serving in the U.S. military. The study will address if the structure and culture of the military affects disclosure and reporting. A portion of the research will examine the violation of trust that victims experience from the military; this is often called institutional betrayal. A unique contribution will be examining whether there were any technological aspects (e.g., messages, photographs, videos) involved in the MST. A variety of consequences related to experiencing MST will be evaluated such as the impact on their military career, personal lives, and mental health. Resource availability, including the resources they need in the state of Michigan will be evaluated. In partnership with veteran affairs agencies across the state of Michigan, project activities include utilizing a mixed methods design where participants are recruited across the state to complete a survey followed by in-depth interviews for participants who want to further their participation in the study. Results will shed light on whether the military's culture and power dynamics are harmful to victims, the consequences of MST, and what the state of Michigan can do to support and provide for survivors.

#### *Author*

Makayla Burden, MSU School of Criminal Justice

### **SP9. Dissertation Research: Assessing Research University Stakeholder's Trust in and Acceptance of AI Technology (in progress)**

#### *Abstract*

There is potential for artificial intelligence (AI) technologies driven by big data to help improve organizational efficiencies, increase educators' effectiveness, and assist in addressing educational inequities. At the same time, the implementation and sustained use of these technologies requires the development of new norms between university leaders, employees, and students. The power of AI creates new vulnerabilities, including the potential loss of employees' autonomy and perpetuation of bias within organizational processes. Qualitative studies have shown that concerns over these vulnerabilities and a lack of trustworthiness in leaders and higher education data infrastructure are barriers to new technology use within higher education. In this quantitative survey-based study, I explore staff, faculty, and student perceptions of trustworthiness and their willingness to accept different applications of AI. In addition to introducing new methods and conceptual frameworks for exploring technology adoption in higher education, this study will have practical implications for how organizational leaders can improve trust relationships within changing colleges and universities.

#### *Author*

Travis H. Olson, MSU Department of Educational Administration

### **SP10. Dissertation Research: Third-party contractors and education stakeholder trust (in progress)**

#### *Abstract*

Public schools are supported by public funds and are available to families irrespective of their ability to pay; However, the use of for-profit companies to provide school support services has increased over the past forty years. As a result, lunch, classroom aid, health, social work, and staffing provisions are now managed by contractors. While businesses are legally able to provide services in public schools, the use of these entities could negatively impact the quality of school services while also undermining trust in local education institutions – especially in urban communities. Although urban schools are traditionally less resourced, community members often depend on schools for employment, physical safety, and other social services that foster systems of support and trust. Business could disrupt trust through inequitable employment opportunities and service standards. Research has determined that private hiring practices are often discriminatory toward minority and poor applicants

– the very community public school contractors often service. Additionally, because profit driven companies often use cost cutting strategies that lower the dollar amount spent on services to produce a greater return on profit, the quality of services provided to schools could be diminished. This research explores how contracting school services to for-profit companies impacts urban school communities. I ask the following research questions: (1) How does the use of third-party contractors influence school employment overtime? (2) Does the use of contractors lead to increased satisfaction among employees, school staff, students, or parents? (3) How do perceptions of contractors (and stakeholder dissatisfaction) impact trust in schools?

*Author*

Antonia Gordon, MSU Department of Political Science

## **SP11. The Roles of Control, Trust, and Vulnerability, Postsecondary Data Use (in progress)**

*Abstract*

In this conceptual paper, I use sociological theories of quantification and trust to explore how the adoption of big digital technologies in higher education generates new vulnerabilities and systemic distrust, threatening professional relationships between higher education policy actors, administrative leaders, and professionals. Advances in data storage and computing power now make it possible to track and analyze professionals' interactions with one another and students in minute detail. Higher education leaders have embraced data-driven tools in an effort to serve students more effectively, efficiently, and equitably. Yet, both historical evidence and empirical studies suggests that the implementation of new technologies within postsecondary education often generates conflict, threatening the trust necessary for colleges and universities to be effectively governed. In order for all higher education stakeholders to have trust in postsecondary data and to strengthen collaboration through its use, I argue that leaders must accept two truths. First, data use is not only a technical challenge but a deeply social and relational one. Second, as higher education adjusts to the era of big data, it is imperative that those seeking sustainable and ethical change tend to how new digital technologies often generate vulnerability and distrust. After calling for this more nuanced view of data-driven change, I conclude by outlining the new directions for scholarship and practice that emerge by centering trust and vulnerability in postsecondary education's systemic data use efforts.

*Citation*

Olson, T. H. (2023, November). Meeting the challenge of quantification in higher education: Building trust in and through data. Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Conference, Minneapolis, MN.