

2025 TRUSST Lab Report:

Advancing the Social Science of Trust

Activities Report

As the lab turns into its fifth year, we have increasingly seen our activities turn to deliverables.

As of the end of 2025, the lab has placed five PhD students in post-graduation positions at Virginia Commonwealth University, Oakland University, the University of Tampa, Clemson University, and the University of Michigan, Dearborn. All five students continue to apply their lab experiences in work on policing, education, future-of-work, and harassment.

To date, we have secured over \$250,000 in funding which has supported three dissertations, seven peer-reviewed publications, and two book chapters. In terms of its impact, our work has been engaged extensively, garnering 111 citations (per Google Scholar).

Our reports have directly informed the activities of the Michigan State University's Provost's Office, the Michigan Supreme Court's Administrative Office, and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

We have been accepted to present our work to the First International Network of Trust, the American Society of Criminology, the American Public Health Association, the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Law and Society, and the Michigan Judicial Institute's Annual Judicial Conference.

Across our efforts, we have continued to pursue our goals of expanding the theoretical rigor, practical impact, and community engagement of trust research. We have expanded that impact beyond our immediate team by holding four annual workshops attended by PhD students world-wide.

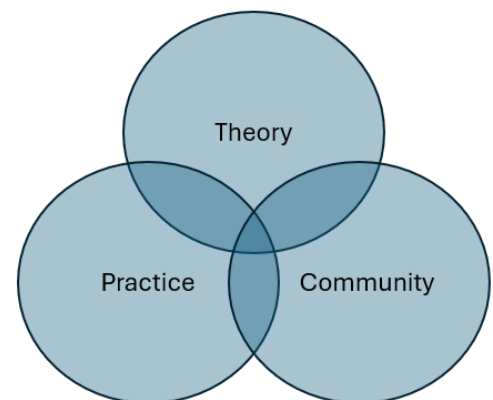
Vision

In many ways, trust has become the centerpiece of most of the major issues in areas as diverse as international relations, politics, health, education, technology, and social order. Navigating pandemics, deploying law enforcement, educating children, leveraging AI, and even democracy itself all imply risk. Although science has much to say about how best to manage modern challenges, it has become increasingly clear that effectively meeting them will require more than expertise in individual disciplinary traditions. Even the most technically sophisticated answers will fall short when they fail to account for subjective feelings of vulnerability and the characteristics of the relationships that make those risks acceptable. We seek to address this by arming the next generation of leaders with a nuanced understanding of trust that draws from our foundational perspectives of theory, practice, and community (see Fig. 1).

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.

Fig. 1- TRUSST Lab Foundational Perspectives



Structure

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 design, take complete ownership of these projects. Funding may be requested for these projects as it is available.

Team

Supervisors

- **Dr. Jennifer Carrera** – MSU Department of Sociology, Environmental Science and Policy Program
- **Dr. Joe Hamm** – MSU School of Criminal Justice, Environmental Science and Policy Program, Department of Political Science

Current Members

- **Makayla Burden** – MSU School of Criminal Justice [PhD student]
- **Antonia Gordon** – MSU Department of Political Science [PhD student]
- **Miyeon Kim** – MSU Department of Communication [PhD student]
- **John Ropp** – MSU School of Criminal Justice [PhD student]
- **Yvens Rumbold** – MSU Department of Communication [PhD Student]
- **Tiffany Williams** – MSU Department of Sociology [PhD student]

Alumni

- **Dr. Katie Darcy** – University of Michigan, Dearborn; Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies
- **Dr. Yang Vincent Liu** – Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice, Oakland University
- **Dr. Travis H. Olson** – Department of Education, Virginia Commonwealth University
- **Dr. Amanda Isabel Osuna** – University of Tampa, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
- **Dr. Jenna Van Fossen** – Clemson University, Department of Psychology

External Advisory Board

- **Dr. Bill McEvily** [Theory Perspective] – University of Toronto Rotman School of Management
- **Michele Chambers** [Practice Perspective] – Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
- **Shani Saxon** [Community Perspective] – Turning Corners Consulting, Inc

Faculty Collaborators

- **Dr. Jamie Bernard** – MSU Department of Pharmacology & Toxicology
- **Dr. Eric Adjei Boakye** – Henry Ford Health System Department of Public Health Science
- **Dr. Jennifer Gomez** – Boston University School of Social Work
- **Dr. Justin Pickett** – University of Albany School of Criminal Justice
- **Dr. Sarah Prior** – MSU Department of Sociology
- **Dr. Samantha Tam** – Henry Ford Health System
- **Dr. Adam Zwickle** – MSU Department of Community Sustainability
- **Dr. Andre Wyzykowski** – MSU Department of Computer Science and Engineering