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Inspiring and Advancing the Many-Disciplined Study of Institutional Trust

Lisa M. PytlikZillig

University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, lpytlikz@nebraska.edu

Brian H. Bornstein

University of Nebraska at Lincoln, bbornstein2@unl.edu

Ellie Shockley

University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, ellie.shockley@gmail.com

Tess M.S. Neal

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**Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Trust:
Towards Theoretical and Methodological Integration**

Ellie Shockley, Tess M.S. Neal, Lisa M. PytlikZillig, Brian H. Bornstein

Foreword by Guido Möllering

Chapter 1: Inspiring and Advancing the Many-Disciplined Study of Institutional Trust

Tess M. S. Neal, Lisa M. PytlikZillig, Ellie Shockley, Brian H. Bornstein

The purpose of this volume is to consider how trust research, particularly trust in institutions, might benefit from increased inter- or transdisciplinarity. In this introductory chapter, we first give some background on prior disciplinary, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary work relating to trust. Next, we describe how this many-disciplined volume on institutional trust emerged from the joint activities of the Nebraska Symposium on Motivation and a National Science Foundation-funded Workshop on institutional trust. This chapter describes some of the themes that emerged, while also providing an overview of the rest of the volume, which includes chapters that discuss conceptualizations, definitions, and measurement of trust; institutional trust across domains and contexts; and theoretical advances regarding the “dark” and “light” sides of institutional trust. Finally, we conclude with some thoughts about the future of and potential promises and pitfalls of trust as a focus of interdisciplinary study.

Chapter 2: Consensus on Conceptualizations and Definitions of Trust: Are We There Yet?

Lisa M. PytlikZillig, Christopher D. Kimbrough

This chapter presents a “review of reviews” of issues surrounding the conceptualization and definition of trust and identifies a number of common essences of trust conceptualizations, as well as common disagreements about the definitional boundaries of trust. Common essences of trust include that trust involves a trustor (subject) and trustee (object) that are somehow interdependent; involves a situation containing risks for the trustor (which also implies the trustor has goals); is experienced by the trustor as voluntary (implying autonomy, agency, and intrinsic motivation); and includes (or excludes) different types, forms, or sources of trust concepts, some of which may form the bases of others, and many of which involve or relate to positive evaluations or expectations. Meanwhile, researchers continue to disagree on numerous considerations, including the types of relationships that must be in place for psychological or behavioral states to be truly considered trust; whether and the extent to which all trust conceptualizations necessitate risk, conscious consideration of risk, volition, and/or active choice by the trustor and trustee; the separability of risk and trust; the psychological versus behavioral nature of trust; the cognitive versus affective nature of trust; and the requirements for trust to stem from some bases but not others. In considering the reasons for such agreements and disagreements, we conclude that the varied interests of different researchers might be furthered by greater future attention to refining a set of definitions for trusting and trust-relevant constructs that are part of “trust-as-process.”

Chapter 3: Carving Up Concepts? Differentiating Between Trust and Legitimacy in Public Attitudes Towards Legal Authority

Jonathan Jackson, Jacinta M. Gau

In recent years, scholars of criminal justice and criminology have brought legitimacy to the forefront of academic and policy discussion. In the most influential definition, institutional trust is assumed to be an integral element of legitimacy: for an individual to find the police to be legitimate, for instance, she must feel that it is her positive duty to obey the instructions of police officers (she grants the police the rightful authority to dictate appropriate behavior), but she must also believe that police officers exercise their power appropriately. In this chapter we argue that the nature, measurement and motivating force of trust and legitimacy is in need of further explication. Considering these two concepts in a context of a type of authority that is both coercive and consent-based in nature, we make three claims: first, that legitimacy is (a) the belief that an institution exhibits properties that justify its power and (b) a duty to obey that emerges out of this sense of appropriateness; second, that trust is about positive expectations about valued behavior from institutional officials; and third, that legitimacy and institutional trust overlap if one assumes that people judge the appropriateness of the police as an institution on the basis of the appropriateness of officers' use of power. Our discussion will, we hope, be of broad theoretical and policy interest.

Chapter 4: Who Do You Trust?

Eric M. Uslaner

In this chapter, I discuss core theoretical disputes, including: What is trust? Traditionally it is thought of in terms of interpersonal relations, but can it expand beyond that? Does it always reflect strategy, or what Hardin calls a three part relationship X trusts Y to do Z? Or is there another form of trust, what I call "moralistic" trust, where the logic is simply "X trusts"? What are differences among the various types of trust: strategic and moralistic, generalized and particularized, interpersonal and institutional? How do we measure trust? How is an individual's trust shaped? Who, then, do they trust? Is trust something that can be molded over time, or does it remain relatively stable? And lastly, are institutional trust and generalized trust a part of the same syndrome; what determines institutional trust?

Chapter 5: Working with Covariance: Using Higher-Order Factors in Structural Equation Modeling with Trust Constructs

Joseph A. Hamm, Lesa Hoffman

Clarifying the "conceptual morass" of the social science of trust is a critical endeavor and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is an important tool for researchers seeking to investigate the relationships among and relative influence of the many trust constructs in this expanding literature. Problematically however, the often conceptually overlapping nature of the constructs themselves can create covariance problems that are only exacerbated by SEM's ability to partition shared and unshared variance among indicators. These challenges can, in some situations, entirely preclude researchers from using SEM to test theoretically important hypotheses. There are a number of potential strategies available to researchers to address these problems, notably including both item- and factor-level aggregation techniques. Importantly however, these aggregation strategies often compromise many of the benefits that make SEM so attractive in the first place. We therefore recommend that researchers with strongly correlated latent constructs test a specific alternative model in which higher-order factors are used to predict the covariance among the latent factors. These models address the problems that arise from working with excessive covariance while preserving the conceptual and statistical distinctiveness of the lower-order factors and permitting researchers to test their independent influence on important outcomes. To aid in illustrating this approach, the chapter includes a real-world data example in which various alternative model specifications are tested, highlighting the utility of higher-order factor models for trust researchers.

Chapter 6: Examining the Relationship Between Interpersonal and Institutional Trust in Political and Health Care Contexts

Celeste Campos-Castillo, Benjamin W. Woodson, Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, Tina Sacks, Michelle M. Fleig-Palmer, Monica E. Peek

While many agree that interpersonal and institutional trust are key ingredients for social order, the differences between the two and how they influence one another remain unclear. We define trust as the willingness to be vulnerable to another party, and focus our discussion on situations where the trustor (trusting party) is an

individual member of the public and the trustee (party being trusted) is an institution or one of its members. We review the literature on trust and related concepts that address the potential relationships between interpersonal trust and institutional trust, focusing on two illustrative contexts: the political arena and health care. For each context, we examine extant research to provide definitions of institutions and note how these definitions have implications for defining institutional trust in each context. Second, we examine how characteristics of the trustor (individual-level characteristics) may affect the relationship between interpersonal and institutional trust. For example, a trustor's gender, race and ethnicity, and familiarity with the institutional trustee may frame their interactions with, and subsequently their trust in, the institution. Being cognizant of these factors will improve understandings of the cases where a relationship between interpersonal and institutional trust exists. We conclude by highlighting how these arguments can inform future research.

Chapter 7: Trust as a Multilevel Phenomenon across Contexts: Implications for Improved Interdisciplinarity in Trust Research

Mitchel N. Herian, Tess M.S. Neal

Examinations of trust have advanced steadily over the past several decades, yielding important insights within criminal justice, economics, environmental studies, management and industrial organization, psychology, political science, and sociology. Cross-disciplinary approaches to the study of trust, however, have been limited by differences in defining and measuring trust and in methodological approaches. In this chapter, we take the position that: 1) cross-disciplinary studies can be improved by recognizing trust as a multilevel phenomenon, and 2) context impacts the nature of trusting relations. We present an organizing framework for conceptualizing trust between trustees and trustors at person, group, and institution levels. The differences between these levels have theoretical implications for the study of trust and that might be used to justify distinctions in definitions and methodological approaches across settings. We highlight where the levels overlap and describe how this overlap has created confusion in the trust literature to date. Part of the overlap – and confusion – is the role of interpersonal trust at each level. We delineate when and how interpersonal trust is theoretically relevant to conceptualizing and measuring trust at each level and suggest that other trust-related constructs, such as perceived legitimacy, competence, and integrity, may be more important than interpersonal trust at some levels and in some contexts. Translating findings from trust research in one discipline to another and collaborating across disciplines may be facilitated if researchers ensure that their levels of conceptualization and measurement are aligned, and that models developed for a particular context are relevant in other, distinct contexts.

Chapter 8: On the Cross-Domain Scholarship of Trust in the Institutional Context

Joseph A. Hamm, Jooho Lee, Rick Trinkner, Twila Wingrove, Steve Leben, Christina Breuer

As argued throughout this volume, trust matters. This importance has spawned a number of major contemporary efforts to increase trust in numerous domains. These efforts typically seek to leverage the best available science for understanding and motivating trust but it is, as yet, not well understood to what degree trust is essentially the same or importantly different across the various domains. Trust building efforts are, therefore, often left with little guidance as to the critical issues to address when applying work from other domains. This chapter takes up this deficiency by reviewing the major mainstream conceptualizations, antecedents, and outcomes of trust in four domains: public administration, policing, state courts, and medicine. The chapter concludes that trust is in fact, notably similar across domains but that there are critical differences to be attended to. Specifically, we argue that trust across contexts can be thought of as a willingness to accept vulnerability in dealings with an other but that the most important drivers of that willingness are likely to vary somewhat as a function of the domain.

Chapter 9: Institutional Trust Across Cultures: Its Definitions, Conceptualizations, and Antecedents Across Eastern and Western European Nations

Lindsey M. Cole, Ellen S. Cohn

Trust has been defined in a variety of ways across disciplines. The issue of defining trust becomes even more convoluted when considering linguistic variations, cultural differences, and colloquial definitions. In addition to interdisciplinary variations in trust definitions, languages vary in the vocabulary, meanings, and origins of their words for “trust.” These variations may contribute to the inconsistent and/or contradictory findings previous researchers have identified in predictors of institutional trust. The purpose of this chapter is fourfold: first we

examine the philosophical issues surrounding cross-cultural conceptualizations of institutional trust by comparing intra/cross-cultural and interdisciplinary divergence in the definitions and conceptualization of institutional trust. Second, we compare cross-national findings from empirical studies to highlight important factors in institutional trust across different cultures. Third, we compare predictors of diffuse support for the highest national court in the country, as a measure of institutional trust, between Western European and Eastern European countries. In the present analysis, we examined the impact of previously identified factors important in predicting institutional trust, such as the importance of procedural and distributive justice, and the perception of corruption as an important problem, from data collected previously in a cross-national study conducted shortly after the end of communism in Eastern Europe. Finally, we close comments on the state of the field and with suggestions for future directions in cross-national research in institutional trust.

Chapter 10: The “Dark Side” of Institutional Trust

Tess M.S. Neal, Ellie Shockley, Oliver Schilke

The majority of trust research has focused on the benefits trust can have for individual actors, institutions, and organizations. This “optimistic bias” is particularly evident in work focused on institutional trust, where concepts such as procedural justice, shared values, and moral responsibility have gained prominence. But trust in institutions may not be exclusively good. We reveal implications for the “dark side” of institutional trust by reviewing relevant theories and empirical research that can contribute to a more holistic understanding. We frame our discussion by suggesting there may be a “Goldilocks principle” of institutional trust, where trust that is too low (typically the focus) or too high (not usually considered by trust researchers) may be problematic. The chapter focuses on the issue of too-high trust and processes through which such too-high trust might emerge. Specifically, excessive trust might result from external, internal, and intersecting external-internal processes. External processes refer to the actions institutions take that affect public trust, while internal processes refer to intrapersonal factors affecting a trustor’s level of trust. We describe how the beneficial psychological and behavioral outcomes of trust can be mitigated or circumvented through these processes and highlight the implications of a “darkest” side of trust when they intersect. We draw upon research on organizations and legal, governmental, and political systems to demonstrate the dark side of trust in different contexts. The conclusion outlines directions for future research and encourages researchers to consider the ethical nuances of studying how to increase institutional trust.

Chapter 11: Compensatory Institutional Trust: A “Dark Side” of Trust

Ellie Shockley, Steven Shepherd

Trust scholars emphasize the importance of trust research given that trust is integral to societal functioning. However, evidence suggests there is a “dark side” to trust. We discuss a specific facet of the dark side of individuals’ trust in institutions, which we call compensatory institutional trust. We review theory and evidence suggesting that individuals’ trust in institutions can be generated in order to satisfy psychological needs. Specifically, when experiencing threats to safety, security, or a sense of meaning and understanding, individuals will sometimes trust institutions more than otherwise. A motivated increase in the perception that institutions are trustworthy may palliate existential and epistemic threats. We detail theoretical perspectives that speak to compensatory institutional trust, namely, terror management theory, theory on system-justifying beliefs, compensatory control theory, and the meaning maintenance model. We emphasize these perspectives’ relations to compensatory institutional by reviewing illustrative empirical examples of compensatory institutional trust-relevant processes. Altogether, we aim to illuminate the utility of the compensatory institutional trust framework in shedding light on psychological processes that may underlie findings in the trust literature. Ultimately, we make a call to trust researchers to not neglect addressing this dark side of institutional trust in their scholarship.

Chapter 12: Trust in the 21st Century

Tom R. Tyler

During the latter half of the 21st century, conceptions of authority have been dominated by instrumentalist based models. However, as society has seen a shift from compliance to cooperation, the instrumentalist model does not seem to explain why people cooperate. This shift has led to a motive based model, which focuses largely on trust.

Trust seems to be a motivating factor in explaining cooperation, particularly in that it motivates people to engage in actions, institutions to have discretion to take actions, and authorities to motivate actions. However, while there are clear implications for cooperation from a lack of trust, there may in fact be a dark side of trust in that it serves in the system justification process. There is of increasing importance to understand trust and the approaches in doing so have been vast – theory based, empirical and behavior prediction. This timely volume makes an important contribution to the growing literature of trust; but many questions are left unanswered, such as what is the difference between institutional and personal trust, and, do institutions have motives? These questions, as well as the many others posed within this volume will govern future social science discourse because of trust's clear role in the effectiveness of legal and political systems.