

Toward a Captivating Conversation of Trust Research

In our last editorial, we chronicled the origins and development of *JTR* as an interdisciplinary forum for groundbreaking research on the nature and dynamics of trust as it spans disciplinary orientations, practical contexts, and levels of analysis. We described the ways in which our journal captures the conversation of trust research and recognized the vibrant community of editors, authors, reviewers, and readers that make it possible. Here, we take a step back to elaborate on the philosophy that guides our efforts to maneuver *JTR* into position as a clear choice for scholars seeking to cultivate and nurture their own contributions to trust research.

To our minds, the key to success is ensuring impact. Impact factors (IF) are a common, albeit limited (Roldan-Valadez et al., 2019) approach to understanding impact, but their consideration allows for insight into the very heart of the issue. As a collaborative pursuit, any given unit of science—whether an individual study, publication, or collection of them—has impact when others build on it to reach new intellectual heights. As a journal focused specifically on trust research, we recognize our responsibility for delivering a body of scholarship that inspires new thought. As we peruse the over 150 articles published since our first issue, we are proud to find most of the major thoughts and thinkers in the field represented and are excited to continue to welcome new voices and insights.

Innovation is therefore a necessary but insufficient condition for scholarly impact: Positioning our articles to springboard future work also requires that they *captivate*. Recent commentaries exploring the conditions that foster scientific advancement echo a long-standing emphasis on cycles of building and testing theory (e.g., Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007) and hypotheses (e.g., Hartwick & Barki, 1994). This scholarship argues, in part, that advancing the science needed to answer the vexing questions facing society requires cycling among a particular set of phases of inquiry (e.g., Angler et al., 2020; see also Szent-Györgyi, 1972). Building on this work, Sundstrom and colleagues (2023) elucidate what they call *focused phases* that apply a relatively narrow set of perspectives and approaches to answer clearly defined questions, and wider *transcendent phases* that welcome a variety of perspectives with the goal of generating truly new thought. Much of the scientific enterprise traditionally centers the first phase, elevating more-or-less disciplinary inquiries that are defined by their clear rooting within a particular set of epistemological and methodological expectations. This phase is critically important to science, and journals that prioritize it often ensure quality by prescribing relatively rigid and formulaic expectations that proscribe perspectives and approaches that fall beyond their central scope (Barney, 2018; Starbuck, 2003). Consequently, they consistently produce sound raw material but leveraging those building blocks to generate new thought begs for a second, more inclusive phase. The transcendent phase, therefore, leaves behind a “goal-oriented, logical and structured questioning process... to fill existing knowledge gaps” to instead prioritize “intuition and creativity to open new, unexpected alleys for discoveries” (Angler et al., 2020, p 98; see also Tsou, 2003).

Like most areas of scientific inquiry, trust research has tended to favor focused efforts that follow a given disciplinary tradition to answer a clearly delineated question that flows logically from what is already known. This linear process is well-suited for paradigmatic development (Pfeffer, 1993) but necessarily limits the contribution of work that builds on it (Cannella & Paetzold, 1994). Centering paradigmatic consensus entrenches scholarly thought and, as a logical consequence,

allows only incremental advancement as authors work within an established way of knowing to shed light on what we know we don't know. As research areas approach this point of diminishing returns, the need for reaching beyond our silos to understand what we don't yet know that we don't know becomes paramount. A recent special topic forum at the *Academy of Management Review* echoes this need to generate "fresh perspectives on trust" (see also Lumineau et al., 2023; Schafheitle et al., 2023). Similarly, Dirks and de Jong (2024) center this argument within their review of trust in the workplace. Although they position the field as nearing the end of a second wave built on "questioning assumptions and examining alternatives" (p. 259), they point to a third wave of "asking new questions, revising existing frameworks, and utilizing new methods" that will "require scholars to venture into other literatures and seek out cross-disciplinary collaboration" (p. 268).

Thus, while *JTR* continues to welcome work that builds on either phase, we see a particular benefit in expanding beyond the strictures of focused inquiry to offer the flexibility and inclusiveness needed to support transcendent work. It is for this reason that we reaffirm *JTR* as an interdisciplinary journal that is open to an array of research traditions and approaches. In this way, we offer authors an intellectually inclusive home for their scholarship. We recognize that the gatekeeping processes at play in journals that highlight focused phases of science are critical to ensuring adherence to the central tenets of their chosen approach. Nonetheless, these processes have the potential downside of needlessly maintaining the status quo through deference to established paradigms and, in so doing, may unnecessarily delay or entirely exclude novel contribution (Siler et al., 2015). As a forum dedicated to fostering new approaches to trust, we strive to foster a space for well-reasoned debate and good-faith dialog through a constructive peer review process that expands, rather than entrenches, our collective scientific endeavors.

We work collectively to stimulate conversations that span the range of conceptual, empirical, and practical orientations of trust research by prioritizing our authors' creative license to frame their contributions. To this end, we recognize that stimulating additions to this ongoing conversation can vary in length, from parsimonious and pithy to expository and exhaustive. Thus, rather than arbitrarily elaborating or truncating aspects of an argument to fit a predetermined template, we are pleased to be able to welcome manuscripts that range in length between 2,000 and 10,000 words. We also encourage authors to consider how efforts to replicate and extend established findings in the trust field might help us to better understand the consistency and boundary conditions of these findings across cultures and contexts. As a more theoretical example, we are keen to encourage authors to consider submitting conceptual work that extends or challenges previous assumptions in our literature. Relatedly, we are excited by the possibility of considering commentary pieces inspired by trust scholarship published in *JTR* or elsewhere (e.g., Lalot & Greifeneder, 2024). By letting go of strictures—many of which were initially imposed by older models of academic publishing—we avoid an unnecessary risk of short-circuiting an author's contribution and interfering with the audience's ability to fully digest, integrate, and respond in their own work.

The Current Issue

This second issue of our fourteenth volume collects five articles that demonstrate our commitment to inclusivity as a means for generating new thought. In the first, Verhoest and colleagues (2024) take up the long-debated question of the relationship between trust and distrust. In data collected from participants connected to three regulatory contexts (finance, food safety, and data protection)

in nine countries, the authors test three competing possibilities: that high trust in a given relationship necessarily implies low distrust; that there is a neutral area between trust and distrust such that while high levels are mutually exclusive, relationships can be low in both; or that the concepts are distinct such that high or low trust can coexist with high or low distrust. Their findings suggest that the third perspective is relatively common across countries and sectors such that many participants simultaneously endorsed high levels of trust and high levels of watchfulness toward the same referent.

The article by Fairbrother, Penker and Hadler (2024) takes a step back to consider the vexing question of the nature of trust in major political institutions. In particular, they ask whether this political trust reflects a general orientation towards the political system or a more specific evaluation of government performance. Using data from the World Values Survey across 37 countries, the authors examine attitudes towards two social movements—the environmental and women’s movements—and find a consistent positive relationship with trust in core political institutions. They take this as evidence that political trust comprises a more general judgment about the functioning of the political system (which includes both major political actors and the movements that challenge the status quo) rather than a narrower judgment about incumbent government performance that would then be inversely related to judgments about the movements that challenge them.

Saaranen (2024) also leverages covariance in a large dataset as a lens for understanding the nature of trust. Specifically, they raise the question of whether social trust exhibits an essential stability over time (settled dispositions) or is continuously revised in light of new experiences (active updating). Using data that tracked Swiss individuals over time, Saaranen provides evidence that trust has a strongly settled character. Thus, although trust in others fell markedly at the outset of the coronavirus pandemic, it usually rebounded to its previous level and these dynamics were largely consistent across the population. The author interprets the findings as suggestive of an integrative perspective in which social trust is subject to updating but tends to settle at a consistent set point.

Sondern and Hertel (2024) focus on the subset of social exchanges in which parties have conflicting interests, where they explore the potential interactive role of classic trustworthiness constructs. They take up Mayer and colleagues’ (1995) often ignored postulation that ability, benevolence, and integrity may not only influence trust, but may also moderate each other’s impact. Bolstered by Expectancy Theory and the Stereotype Content Model, the authors offer an intriguing argument that benevolence—as an assessment of whether a trustee is motivated to advance the trustor’s interests—plays the key role in trust. Specifically, they suggest that this impact is moderated by the extent to which the trustor can (ability) and will (integrity) follow through. Their findings offer a complicated lens into the accuracy of their claim but provide a sound foundation for future work to further explore this interactive possibility.

In the final piece, Hamm and colleagues (2024) conceptually explore the intersection of trust and vulnerability. Building on the interdisciplinary body of work exploring this nexus, the authors delineate focal vulnerability as the specific portion of an individual’s total potential for harm that they are willing to accept when they trust. They then argue that this construct can be distinguished because it is relational, perceived, and contemporaneous with the trust assessment, and speculate

as to ideal measures and likely sources of variation. They conclude by presenting several untested but foundational assumptions of their work as hypotheses for future research.

Together, these articles continue to showcase *JTR*'s commitment to fostering an intellectually inclusive conversation of trust research. Methodologically, the collection includes both empirical efforts centered on the analysis of a variety of quantitative data, and a conceptual effort that integrates previous empirical and conceptual work to introduce a new concept to trust research. More interestingly, however, all five pieces challenge accepted paradigms. In some cases, these challenges pit two paradigms against each other to offer evidence that one may be more instructive than the other (Fairbrother et al., 2024; Saaranen, 2024; Verhoest, et al., 2024). By contrast, Sondern and Hertel (2024) focus on a long-standing but typically ignored facet of a dominant paradigm and, therefore, offer a potential course correction to the more limited status quo. Finally, although Hamm and colleagues' (2024) primary focus is integration, in so doing, they lay the groundwork for future efforts to assess whether all of what we traditionally think of as trust really invokes the construct. By inviting this diversity of approaches, we add to a nuanced portrait of a construct that reflects its complexity and, with any luck, captivates.

Captivating vs Captive-making

We therefore reaffirm our commitment to being an inclusive outlet for trust research that does not insist on adherence to a particular paradigm. This, however, should not be taken to suggest a decreased interest in focused scientific inquiry, nor should it be taken to signal any kind of movement away from our longstanding practice of publishing rigorous research. *JTR* is, first and foremost, a scientific journal. We, therefore, (re)iterate our belief that both phases demand scientific rigor. Thus, we will continue to require that all submissions adhere to the standards and norms of "good science"; be clearly positioned against extant trust research; and make clear contributions via theoretical development, empirical insights, or practical implications (Hamm et al., 2024). We believe that capturing a captivating conversation requires that we balance appropriate standards and expectations with intentional effort to ensure that they do not inhibit or suppress new thought as we creatively explore trust research's incipient third wave (Dirks & de Jong, 2024). Thus, we offer authors a potential home for their ideas that is open and receptive to a wide array of voices: We commit to fostering a discourse that is captivating, rather than one that risks taking authors captive.

Edward C. Tomlinson
Area Editor
School of Information Systems and Management
Muma College of Business
University of South Florida
Tampa, FL, USA

Joseph A. Hamm
Editor in Chief
School of Criminal Justice, Environmental Science and Policy Program, & Department of
Political Science
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI, USA

jhamm@msu.edu
<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9250-3681>

Lisa van der Werff
Deputy Editor in Chief
Business School
Dublin City University
Dublin, Ireland

Ben Syed
Area Editor
School of Politics and International Relations
University of Kent
Canterbury, UK

Kirsimarja Blomqvist
Area Editor
School of Business and Management
LUT University
Lahti, Finland

Amanda Isabel Osuna
Area Editorial Fellow
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of Tampa
Tampa, FL, USA
<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4753-0143>

Nicole Gillespie
Area Editor
School of Business
University of Queensland
Brisbane, Australia
<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6101-2123>

References

- Angeler, D.G., Allen, C.R., & Carnaval, A. (2020). Convergence science in the Anthropocene: Navigating the known and unknown. *People and Nature*, 2(1), 96–102. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10069>
- Barney, J. (2018). Editor's Comments: Positioning a Theory Paper for Publication. *Academy of Management Review*, 43(3), 345–348. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2018.0112>
- Cannella, A.A. & Paetzold, R.L. (1994). Pfeffer's barriers to the advance of organizational science: A rejoinder. *Academy of Management Review*, 19(2), 331-342. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258708>
- Colquitt, J.A. & Zapata-Phelan, C. P. (2007). Trends in theory building and theory testing: A five-decade study of the Academy of Management Journal. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(6), 1281–1303. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2007.28165855>
- Dirks, K.T. & de Jong, B. (2024). Trust within the workplace: A review of two waves of research and a glimpse of the third. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 9, 247-276. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012420-083025>
- Fairbrother, M., Penker, M., & Hadler, M. (2024). Trust, social movements, and the state. *Journal of Trust Research*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2024.2391385>
- Hamm, J.A., van der Werff, L., Osuna, A.I., Blomqvist, K., Blount-Hill, K., Gillespie, N., Seyd, B., & Tomlinson, E.C. (2024). Capturing the conversation of trust research. *Journal of Trust Research*, 14(1), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2024.2331285>
- Hamm, J.A., Möllering, G., & Darcy, K. (2024). Integrating focal vulnerability into trust research. *Journal of Trust Research*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2024.2375802>
- Hartwick, J. & Barki, H. (1994). Hypothesis testing and hypothesis generating research: An example from the user participation literature. *Information Systems Research*, 5(4), 446–449. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1287/isre.5.4.446>
- Lalot, F. & Greifeneder, R. (2024). On the intricate relationship between data and theory, and the potential gain afforded by capturing very low levels of media trust: Commentary on Mangold (2024). *Journal of Trust Research*, 14(1), 39-45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2024.2330889>
- Lumineau, F., Long, C., Sitkin, S.B., Argyres, N., & Markman, G. (2023). Rethinking control and trust dynamics in and between organizations. *Journal of Management Studies*, 60(8), 1937-1961. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12999>

- Pfeffer, J. (1993). Barriers to the advance of organizational science: Paradigm development as a dependent variable. *Academy of Management Review*, 18(4), 599-620.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1993.9402210152>
- Roldan-Valadez, E., Salazar-Ruiz, S.Y., Ibarra-Contreras, R., & Rios, C. (2019). Current concepts on bibliometrics: a brief review about impact factor, Eigenfactor score, CiteScore, SCImago Journal Rank, Source-Normalised Impact per Paper, H-index, and alternative metrics. *Irish Journal of Medical Science*, 188, 939-951.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11845-018-1936-5>
- Saaranen, A. (2024). Social trust during the pandemic: Longitudinal evidence from three waves of the Swiss Household Panel Study. *Journal of Trust Research*, 14(2).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2024.2385534>
- Schafheitle, S., Weibel, A., & Möllering, G. (2023). Inviting submissions to the special issue on trust and vulnerability. *Journal of Trust Research*, 13(2), 252-254.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2023.2246837>
- Siler, K., Lee, K., & Bero, L. (2015). Measuring the effectiveness of scientific gatekeeping. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 112(2), 360–365.
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1418218112>
- Sondern, D. & Hertel, G. (2024). Revisiting the classic ABI-Model of Trustworthiness: Interactive effects of trustworthiness components on trust in mixed-motive social exchanges. *Journal of Trust Research*, 14(2).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2024.2388659>
- Starbuck, W. H. (2003). Turning lemons into lemonade: Where is the value in peer reviews? *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 12(4), 344–351.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492603258972>
- Sundstrom S. M., Angeler, D. G., Ernakovich, J. G., Garcia, J. H., Hamm J. A., Huntington, O., & Allen, C. R. (2023). The emergence of convergence. *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*, 11(1), 00128. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.2022.00128>
- Szent-Györgyi, A. (1972). Dionysians and Apollonians. *Science*, 176, 966.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.176.4038.966.a>
- Tsou, J. Y. (2003). Reconsidering Feyerabend's "Anarchism". *Perspectives on Science*, 11(2), 208-235. <https://doi.org/10.1162/106361403322495894>
- Verhoest, K., Latusek, D., Six, F., Maman, L., Papadopoulos, Y., Schomaker, R., & Trondal, J. (2024). Trust and distrust in public governance settings: Conceptualizing and testing the link in regulatory relations. *Journal of Trust Research*, 14(2).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2024.2383918>