Introduction
Authority and Trust in the United States

Günter Leypoldt

> "A 'crisis of authority' has overtaken America and the West generally"
> *New York Times, July 1st, 1979*
>
> "Trust Is Collapsing in America"
> *The Atlantic, January 21, 2018.*

In the past few years, the US public has been polarized by declining trust in political institutions, credentialed experts, and social elites. Many commentators speak of a deep crisis of authority in the United States (Knag 1997; Hetherington 2005; Hayes 2012; Taranto 2013; Fraser 2017). Analysts point to a cluster of structural causes, including rising inequality levels, increasing socio-cultural and spatio-economic segregation, and diminishing civic and state infrastructures, all of which might be seen as effects of an institutional "unwinding" of America (Packer, 2013) in the wake of neoliberal governance, postindustrial globalization, and the financialization of party politics (see also Bartels 2008; Stiglitz 2012; Noah 2012; Reeves 2017; Fraser 2017). The domestic crisis also seems to affect the nation's authority in the world, as the international community becomes increasingly skeptical about the United States' capability to fulfill its traditional global leadership role (Krastev 2019; Butler 2020; Betts 2012; Haass 2013; Ikenberry 2011, 2018). Of course, diagnosing "crises" is a genre in its own right, prone to what Raymond Williams (1973, 9–10) called the "escalator" effect, when each generation glimpses the golden age just disappearing "over the last hill" of their own remembered past. What seems an overall decline of trust and authority might be better described in terms of shifting centers of power or sources of legitimacy. This collection of

essays looks at how the present "crisis" indicates significant transformations of authority in the US.

Let us begin with a working definition: To wield authority is to dominate a social relationship in a manner that those who are dominated consider legitimate. Whereas crude "power," according to Max Weber, can make us follow someone else's "will" against our own "resistance," authority is a power to which we submit willingly because we feel it embodies a higher good (1972, 122; 1947, 324).[1] Unlike tyranny (Snyder 2017), legitimate domination elicits "deference" (Shils 1982; Friedman 1990; Soper 2002), and therefore requires neither authoritarian coercion nor argumentative persuasion (Hannah Arendt quipped that parents can "lose" their "authority" either by beating their kids, i.e., behaving like "tyrant[s]," or by starting to argue with them, i.e. treating them as "equal[s]" [1972, 144]).[2] Deference is a complex structure of feeling (Flatley 2008, 26–7), a sense of the upward pull of legitimacy that centrally involves the experience of trust. The defining premise of this collection is that we can better understand authority as a social phenomenon if we study it in relation to the lived experience of social trust relations.

Trusting authority requires not only specific truth-claims or beliefs (Weber's "Legitimitätsglaube" [1972, 122; 1947, 325]) but also a practical sense of "vertical resonance" (Rosa 2019, 284), the feeling that specific truth-claims or beliefs connect to a higher order (moral, civil-sacred, cultural, religious, etc.). Thus whereas the study of *power differentials* can rely on empirical data about objective statistical dominance (so many tanks, so much economic weight, so many political "assets"), tracing authority requires the hermeneutic and

1 See Szelenyi (2016) on Weber's terms "Herrschaft" and "Autorität" and their various translations as "authority," "domination" or "rule."

2 As Arendt explains in "What is Authority?" in 1956: "Since authority always demands obedience, it is commonly mistaken for some form of power or violence. Yet authority precludes the use of external means of coercion; where force is used, authority itself has failed. Authority, on the other hand, is incompatible with persuasion, which presupposes equality and works through a process of argumentation. Where arguments are used, authority is left in abeyance. Against the egalitarian order of persuasion stands the authoritarian order, which is always hierarchical. If authority is to be defined at all, then, it must be in contradistinction to both coercion by force and persuasion through arguments. (The authoritarian relation between the one who commands and the one who obeys rests neither on common reason nor on the power of the one who commands; what they have in common is the hierarchy itself, whose rightness and legitimacy both recognize and where both have their predetermined stable place)" (1961, 92-3).

ethnographic work of reconstructing site-specific and culturally embedded *atmospheres* of trust. The interplay of authority and trust does not only concern questions of political governance, but also extends to various kinds of symbolic action. *Cultural* authority shapes the spatial hierarchies in urban environments, affects the curation of authorized heritage systems (ranging from consecrated sites of memory to literary-artistic canons), and the public relevance of moral value systems that connect religious or civil-sacred hierarchies with the field of cultural production. The study of these phenomena requires an interdisciplinary and historicizing approach. This collection gathers writing on authority and trust in the US from a range of disciplines across the humanities and social sciences, from the nineteenth century to the present. The assembled essays explore the recent turn to political populism (Manfred Berg), the shifting legitimacy of expert systems since World War II (Martin Thunert), the impact of domestic politics on the US' international relations (Florian Böller/Sebastian Harnisch), the urban-geographic dimensions of city planning and governance (Ulrike Gerhard/Judith Keller/Cosima Werner), the urban imaginary of the nineteenth-century city novel (Margit Peterfy), charismatic authority claims in antebellum religion and transcendentalism (Claudia Jetter/Jan Stievermann), nineteenth-century representations of Anglo-American power relations (Tim Sommer), conceptualizations of trust by American Renaissance writers (Dietmar Schloss), and the relevance of authority and trust for the hermeneutics of reading (Günter Leypoldt).

Legitimacy and the Civil Sacred

US cultural history has been shaped by a deep-rooted skepticism toward authorities of all kinds. Distrusting state power and embracing anti-elitist and libertarian individualism has been part of an "American Creed" that defines itself against the vaunted scenes of state-interventionist Europe (Lipset 1996; Wills 1999). But the problem of legitimate dominance did not simply disappear with King George III. As John Stuart Mill put it in 1840 (paraphrasing Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*), "authority" as a basis of political or social agency "may be rejected in theory, but it always exists in fact" (1840, 25).

Mill and Tocqueville grappled with the question of how authority fits into modern democracy, an issue that has remained important to twentieth- and twenty-first-century debates about legitimate governance. Weber's in-

fluential distinction between "traditional," "rational-legal," and "charismatic" types of authority can be viewed as an elaboration on Tocqueville's analysis of democratic change (Furedi 2013). In Weber's view, modernity's relentless process of "rationalization" undermines traditional sources of legitimacy (the felt "sanctity [Heiligkeit] of immemorial traditions"). This poses the question of whether abstract rational-legal systems can make up for the delegitimized tradition and provide similarly solid trust foundations. In his famous thoughts on "charismatic authority,"[3] Weber reflects upon the relevance of the sacred in modern secular societies, where traditional religion (as Weber thought) was going to become residual. How do societies shaped by purpose-rational "objectification [Versachlichung]" grapple with the moral economies of inalienable ideals? (See Jetter/Stievermann in this volume on how charismatic notions of poetic and religious experience negotiate the religious crisis of authority in the antebellum period).

While Weber seems to have regarded charismatic rule as a throwback to the premodern that would ultimately disappear with bureaucratic reason (Alexander 2011, 2), the American Weberian Edward Shils suggested that all modern societies require a "charismatic center" (1982) that stabilizes their core values (see Schlette 2013). And where Weber framed charisma as an exceptional force that rarely survives "routinization [Veralltäglichung]" or "institutionalization" (1972, 142; 1947, 363), Shils theorized the charismatic as a more lasting, often low-grade intensity at the level of "the routine functioning of society" that "not only disrupts social order" but "also maintains or conserves it" (1982, 120). In contrast to Weber's focus on charisma as personal authority, moreover (which inspired today's vernacular meaning of charisma as powerful individual magnetism), Shils emphasized the structure of social relations: charismatic legitimacy happens to individuals or things, spaces, and institutions that performatively embody a society's charismatic center.

Shils' interpretation remained a minority view as long as the humanities and social sciences tended towards various "subtraction stories" (Taylor 2007, 22) that defined modernization and democratization in terms of an erosion of authority—a decline of the sacred, devaluation of moral norms, loosening

3 Defined by people's extraordinary "devotion [außeralltäglichen Hingabe]" to the "specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character [Heiligkeit, Heldenkraft, Vorbildlichkeit]" of "an individual person" and the "normative patterns" created or "revealed" by this person (Weber 1972, 124; 1947, 328).

of social status hierarchies and pluralization of lifestyles. The subtraction narrative often posits a zero-sum conflict between hierarchical power on the one hand and individual self-fulfillment on the other—John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859) invokes a historical "struggle between Liberty and Authority" (1997, 41) and hopes for a future liberated from centrally authorized hierarchies. The "countercultural" climate of the 1960s often drew its sense of weakening hierarchies from interpreting the increasing individualization of lifestyles as a radical pluralization of values. "[T]he notion of moral authority is no longer a viable notion," Alasdair MacIntyre wrote in 1964, for authority only makes sense "in a community and in areas of life in which there is an agreed way of doing things according to accepted rules" (1967, 53). The impression that moral authority was a thing of the past inspired a wealth of countercultural liberation narratives (Binkley 2007, Frank 1997), but it also cohered well with the ideal of a liberal "procedural republic" (Sandel 1998) in which all values are to be treated as equally valid (Rawls 1971, 1993). Proceduralist thinking suggests that radical pluralism can be managed with content-blind mechanisms of elimination that exclude from the "public square" all that is merely private (religion) or lacks reasonable common sense. The assumption is that open societies can practice radical tolerance, yet defend themselves against illiberal threats by rejecting "populists" or "racists" on the grounds of their flawed or irrational "logic."[4]

As more recent social and cultural theory has pointed out, however, the most liberal democratic value systems are shaped by moral economies that command considerable public authority. According to Hans Joas, even such apparently self-evident moral-ethical values as human rights owe their legitimacy to processes of consecration similar to Weber's charismatic authority: Certain values strike us with a sense of "subjective self-evidence and affective intensity" (Joas 2013, 5) that immunizes us against the skeptical questions of rational or scientific argument. Jeffrey Alexander makes a similar point when he argues that modern democracies are shaped by a "civil sacred" whose institutional basis rests in the civil sphere (at the interstices of political, economic, religious, and literary-artistic fields). The civil sacred produces moral binaries

4 See, for example, Jan-Werner Müller's claim that populism has an "inner logic" based on a deceptive "illusion" (2016, 10–11), in contrast to Mudde/Kaltwasser (2017), who argue that a populist logic can have good or bad political effects, and Mouffe (2018), who in the spirit of Laclau (2005) interprets populism as a specific form of democratic dissent and calls for a new left-wing populism.

by which the public distinguishes "civil" from "uncivil" ways of life along the lines of higher or lower human decency, moral integrity, social justice, solidarity, and so on (2006, 57–9). While the civil sacred revolves around an ideal of democratic equality, in social performance it withholds equal recognition from those who are considered to "profane" or to "pollute" society's moral core. Alexander's account shows the eminently public nature of moral authority: Disagreements about what counts as human decency or social justice tend to spill over onto the public square, especially when they happen to resonate with the sort of "hot-button issues" that drive the US culture wars (Hartman 2015).

The pitched battles between today's culture-warriors over public moral authority can seem to inhabit an alternative universe to the proverbially relaxed sensibilities of the countercultural 1960s (Binkley 2007). Subtraction models like to explain this by invoking the "return of authority" as a large-scale conservative reaction. In Fredric Jameson's account, for example, the 1960s were a "moment of universal liberation" followed, in the 1970s, by "powerful restorations of the social order and the renewal of the repressive power of the various state apparatuses" (1988, 207–8). Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart's "cultural-backlash" theory provides a more complex picture. They suggest that a "silent revolution" in the prosperous 1950s and 1960s brought on an "intergenerational value shift among the Western publics" that prioritized "post-materialist" values revolving around "individual free choice and self-expression" (2019, 32–3). The gradual mainstreaming of these values (which in the 1970s and 1980s had been called "countercultural" but in the 1990s became common enough in high-income societies to make this term somewhat outmoded) provoked a defiant counter-reaction by older cohorts of social conservatives that dominated the "heartland" or "Middle America" (Taggart 2000, 93). These became "resentful at finding themselves becoming minorities, stranded on the losing side of history" (Norris/Inglehart 2019, 47–8)—"strangers in their own land" (Hochschild 2016). While this resentment was palpable in many Western publics, the cultural backlash in the US required a distinct political figuration. In the Republic of Ireland, for instance, misgivings about post-materialist change among older age cohorts were comparable to those among social conservatives in the US, but as we can gather from the Irish campaigns for the legalization of gay marriage (2015) and abortion (2018), the conservative position did not create powerful political alignments outside the Catholic Church, with the result that the public referenda about these issues showed little signs of divisive culture war (see Murphy 2016; Earner-Byrne/Urquhart

2019). In the US, by contrast, a series of political cleavages and voter realignments since 1968 helped to empower the conservative position with new political coalitions.[5] As Manfred Berg points out in his essay below, by 2016 this political coalition had grown into the formidable platform of authoritarian populism.

If political platforms make up one foundation of authority claims, another has to do with civil society's shifting sense of what counts as its moral core. It is helpful to recall that the silent revolution's pluralization of value (Inglehart 1977) mostly (and most lastingly) transformed the domain of lifestyle and consumption practices (Frank 1997), a domain that tends to be shaped by what Charles Taylor describes as "weak evaluation" (Taylor 1985, 16, see Leypoldt below). Weak evaluation typically concerns everyday choices that people may be passionate about without considering them as central to their moral core, which makes it relatively easy to practice a near relativist tolerance of difference. In the domains of "strong evaluation," which concern identity-defining "hypergoods" (in Taylor's parlance), it becomes a lot harder to tolerate difference. Subtraction narratives tend to mistake the pluralization of weak values for a large-scale indifference to authority that can be framed either as a heroic breakthrough (Woodstock's defeat of the "authoritarian personality") or a deplorable declension (the "closing of the American mind" at the hands of a relativistic left [Bloom 1987]). What encourages such category mistakes is that the borders between weaker and stronger value domains are constantly shifting.

The transformation of religious authority that has been associated with the decline of church memberships and the rise of individualized religiosities or spiritualities since the 1960s offers pertinent examples of this. Consider the hyper-individualist religious ethos Robert Bellah called "Sheilaism,"

5 The most decisive political realignment concerned the breakup of the New Deal coalition that shifted large parts of the working class vote to the Republican Party, which in the late 1960s came to unite the interests of those who wanted to see greater states' rights, more authoritarian policing, a more thorough move towards laissez faire economics, and a more central place for Christianity on the public square. This shift first emerged in the campaign of George Wallace that, in Joseph Lowndes' formulation, invoked, as the most representative figure of the "signifier America," the "white middle-class male from every region who is pushed around by an invasive federal government, threatened by crime and social disorder, discriminated against by affirmative action and surrounded by increasing moral degradation" (2005, 148).

after an interviewee ("Sheila Larson") who said she was religious but only according to a "faith" based on "[j]ust my own little voice." Bellah was troubled by Sheilaism because he thought it suggested "the logical possibility of over 220 million American religions, one for each of us" (2007, 221). He pointed out that a religious framework based on the beliefs of a single person can no longer supply identity-defining moral authority. Indeed, the presence of 220 million religions in the US would surely downgrade their differences to the level of weak-value consumption choices. At first glance, the rise of Sheilaism therefore seemed to support the "de-intensificiation" theory of secularization (Partridge 2006, 8), the claim that commerce and individualism replaced religious authority with "low-intensity" spiritualities and consumerist "life style" religions (Turner 2011, 279; see Wilson 1979). On a closer look, however, Larson's seeker-spirituality (Wuthnow 1998) combines an individualist theology with widely shared non-theistic forms of moral virtue: Her sense of "something beyond" her mundane self (Ammerman 2013, 269) might have little to do with traditional clerical-religious authorities, but remains nonetheless beholden to the civil sacred in Alexander's sense ("I think [God] would want us to take care of each other," Larson says, invoking strong-valued notions of democratic solidarity [Bellah et al. 2007, 221]).

Seeker spiritualities have more dispersed sources of moral authority (Woodhead/Heelas 2000, 354), but they do not necessarily retreat to a realm of private indifference. This is perhaps most obvious in the recent debates about "#MeToo," "#OccupyWallStreet," "#BlackLivesMatter," "#RhodesMustFall," or the "Confederate Monument" affair, when younger and more liberal age cohorts (which tend to have a lower voter turnout) felt compelled to take a public stand against what they experienced as "uncivil" or "toxic." Toxicity might be viewed as the negative slope of moral authority: People or things become toxic when they enjoy a high degree of cultural presence (i.e., as cultural icons) while facing increasing doubts about their moral legitimacy. While the delegitimization of unconsecrated people and things tends merely to inspire contempt (we only notice them long enough to dismiss them as not worth our attention), toxic cultural icons produce a stigmatized presence that inspires disgust. As a strong affect, disgust upsets the public sphere, triggering a sense that one's self needs to be purged of an identity-polluting influence, one that seems wrongfully consecrated by "the authorities" and cannot just be ignored. Disgust with a toxic cultural icon is thus an eminently public, community-building emotion that encourages the agonistic conviviality of "cancel culture" (Asmelash 2019, see Leypoldt below).

The production of authority relies on a layered "public sphere" that sits at the periphery of political and economic power and connects the "problem brokers" of the civil sphere (Knaggård 2015) with a variety of media systems (Chadwick 2017), differing in their degrees of functional autonomy, participatory openness, and cultural relevance. At the one end of the spectrum, there is a large-scale cultural marketplace whose commercially regulated media ecologies show high levels of democratic inclusiveness. At the other end we find a hierarchically organized "restricted" cultural market (Bourdieu 1995) that thrives on *symbolic* economies because it is shaped by authorized expert systems, including curation cultures, taste-making networks, and peer-oriented consecrating institutions (English 2005; McGurl 2009; Balzer 2014; Leypoldt 2015; Bhaskar 2016). While the large-scale cultural marketplace does most of the economic heavy lifting—as a space of blockbuster entertainment, multi-million dollar book deals, a culture of infotainment and commercial ratings systems—the restricted market has an inordinate impact on the public sense of what can count as "legitimate" cultural production and identity-defining ("canonical") cultural heritage (see Tim Sommer's essay below on the nineteenth-century legitimation of Anglo-American heritage). Indeed the challenge in understanding how today's media systems differ in their impact on the production of authority, is to recognize the complex relation between numbers (i.e., sales figures, Nielsen ratings, and the like) and public prestige (i.e., the ability to shape the aesthetic and moral hierarchies of public space). This is all the more important when dealing with the cultural authority of "literary culture," a term that is generally used to include both the "laureate position" in the literary field—the peer-oriented system of literary prizes in which authorized networks consecrate works of high intellectual ambition—and a market-regulated space of popular entertainment that is often less relevant to the production of cultural authority (think of the gulf between Toni Morrison's difficult but Nobel-consecrated and hence highly iconic works and the more accessible but virtually invisible writings of Danielle Steel, who sold more than 600 million copies of her 61 novels between 1973 and 2004 [Maryles 2004]). If the literary prize system resembles a kind of "media bubble"—catering as it does to a small and predominantly affluent and well-educated audience (Griswold 2008, 65)—unlike more recent "social media echo chambers" (Nguyen 2020), it remains shaped by the more traditional expert systems linked to the liberal professions (Leypoldt 2020). Yet all media professionalisms—in literature or journalism—can clash with the democratic ethos of the civil sphere if gatekeeping practices come across as repressive acts of

exclusion. The professionalization of knowledge production is not a recent development (Shapin 1994; Kitcher 2011; Millgram 2015), and, as Martin Thunert points out in his essay below, people habitually defer to credentialed experts in matters of "hard" science. Once knowledge production touches upon moral values, cultural tastes, or the ethics of a good life, however, professional expertise can be perceived as cultural imperialism or elite snobbism. The ominous charge of "fake news" that populists have levelled at traditional news outlets reflects an increasing mistrust in credentialed curation cultures. The sociocultural causes of such mistrust have not yet been adequately understood.

Authority and Trust

People's sense of legitimate power hinges on the experience of trust. Over the past thirty years, the concept of trust has become a more prominent topic in the humanities and social sciences. Here, the sociological insight that modern societies require a high degree of social and political trust (Giddens 1990; Luhmann 2009; see Dietmar Schloss' essay below) has encouraged inquiries into whether we are presently witnessing an impending erosion of trust that might undermine "social cooperation, solidarity and consensus" (Misztal 1996). One salient source of low-trust atmospheres in the US is of course the rise of "hyperpartisan publics" (Waisbord et al. 2018, 32). The increasing value gap between Democratic and Republican voting cultures since the 1970s seems to have led to an "affective polarization" (Iyengar et al. 2019) that shapes people's trust in experts and defines their sense of what counts as "fake news" (Rini 2017)—a recent study of the COVID pandemic showed that compliance with social distancing regulations aligned mostly with partisan lines, even in communities with high infection rates (Clinton et al. 2020). Whereas modernity, according to Anthony Giddens, produces "disembedding mechanisms" that "lift out" social trust relationships from "localised contexts" and attach them to more abstract expert systems (1990, 53), political polarization might be said to produce "reembedded contexts of action" (1990, 80) that tie the perception of trust to partisan networks (Svolik 2020, McCoy/Somer 2019). These re-embedding effects are most obvious in the polarized climate of "culture war," when having a moral stance on abortion, wearing a Corona face mask in a supermarket, or debating the legitimacy of specific monuments, are overdetermined by a political cleavage that resonates with specific sociocultural positions (i.e., affiliation to specific life worlds, regions, class locations, or racial

or ethnic identity). This tribalization of trust has significant effects on the public perception of authority. To be considered a legitimate form of power, authority requires people's trust that the ruling government represents something they recognize as a higher good. If affective polarization undermines such trust, it can lead to a vicious circle of popular distrust and coercive governance. The recent conflicts over police violence against African Americans exemplify this dynamic all too well: A police force that loses the citizenry's trust will face angry and uncompliant protesters; angry and uncompliant protesters provoke coercive backlash, in turn increasing the citizenry's distrust, and so on (see Manfred Berg below). The hyperpartisan cleavage in the US tends to escalate this downward spiral such that the polarized camps mistrust each other's truth-claims: one party's "excessive police brutality" then becomes another's "law and order."[6]

Trust research hopes to understand such crises by inquiring into the civic foundations of trust. Since Tocqueville, trust has been associated with a vivid democratic civil sphere ("Americans of all ages, all conditions, all minds constantly unite" in "thousand" kinds of "associations," he wrote in 1840 [2000, 489]). Neo-Tocquevillians like Robert Putnam (1993; 2000) or Francis Fukuyama (1995) argue that there is a significant link between people's trust in government institutions and their involvement in "civic community," that is, their participation in networks based on spontaneous sociability rather than kinship. In his influential *Making Democracy Work* (1993), Putnam drew this argument from the study of Italian political institutions: Whereas northern Italy was shaped by "vibrant networks and norms of civic engagement" that led to a culture of "trust and cooperation," southern Italy was hampered by "vertically structured politics, a social life of fragmentation and isolation, and a culture of distrust" (1993, 15). The difference between these regions, Putnam argued, was their unequal production of "social capital," that is, the amount of "weak ties" that sustained the moral contract of civic collaboration.[7] Low social capital undermined what Putnam called "generalized reciprocity" (the

6 On the relevance of the "law and order" discourse for Nixon in 1968 and Trump in 2020, see Taylor/Morris 2018 and Shapiro 2020.

7 Putnam distinguishes social capital into "bonding capital" that defines close association between friends, and "bridging capital" that links more distant acquaintances. Following Granovetter's thesis that "weak ties" linking people to less familiar circles can be more important for getting ahead than the strong ties linking people to intimate friends, Putnam ascribes to bridging capital a stronger civic and democratic function (2000, 22-3).

willingness to do something for someone not because they are more powerful or because they will return the favor but because I trust that "someone else will do something for me down the road" [2000, 21]).[8] "Building social capital will not be easy," Putnam concluded, "but it is the key to making democracy work" (1993, 185). In the mid-1990s, he applied his model to the US and found that its civic networks had become thinner since the 1960s—his image of a person "bowling alone" rather than in groups (literally a reference to a 40 percent decline in league bowling concomitantly to a 10 percent rise of individual bowlers from 1980 to 1993 [Putnam 1995]) became an iconic metaphor for how modern individualism undermines the ties that bind democratic communities.

Putnam's work has drawn substantial critiques (Kaufman 2002; Tilly 2007, 85–6), but his thesis that declining trust in authority in the US might be causally linked to the nation's sense of social cohesiveness as a whole is a familiar theme of empirical trust research (see Martin Thunert below). A recent Pew survey (see Rainie et al. 2019) indicates that Americans who express distrust in governmental and institutional authorities are more likely to express lower "interpersonal trust" in the efficiency and fairness of the community. Unsurprisingly, the poll also shows that the major predictors for low interpersonal trust are lower household income, lower levels of education, and nonwhite race or ethnicity.

The relevance of identitarian boundaries is confirmed by research on how trust emerges in residential neighborhoods (see the essay by Ulrike Gerhard/Judith Keller/Cosima Werner below). Black and Hispanic residents in general report lower levels of trust than "native-born whites," and while the latter express higher trust in "in-group" communities, their trust levels are more likely to decrease in proportion to increasing neighborhood diversity, especially related to "blacks and, to a lesser extent, Hispanics—not Asians or others" (Abascal/Baldassarri 2015, 748, 754). Some studies conclude from this that neighborhood diversity is detrimental to social trust in general. Robert Putnam thinks that "people in ethnically diverse settings appear to 'hunker

8 Putnam leans towards rational-choice theoretical concepts that explain trust relationships in terms of interest-based reciprocity (see Hardin 2002). Many other theorists suggest that genuine trust requires a "leap of faith" (Möllering 2006, 7; Frevert 2013, 220) grounded by affective-emotional and moral-cultural investments. Georg Simmel speaks with reference to the banking industry of a "social-psychological" form of "belief" related to "religion" (1900, 151-196; Möllering 2001); Giddens describes trust as "a commitment to something rather than just a cognitive understanding" (1990, 27).

down'—that is, to pull in like a turtle" (2007, 149). Other scholars suggest that the problem with diversity concerns a gap between discourse and practice. In her research on a racially diverse neighborhood of Chicago, Meghan Burke finds that whites will engage in "pro-diversity happy talk" (2012, 98) while their "social action" in the community or the real estate market tends to support a "white center in its sensibilities, safety, and security (economic and otherwise)" (2012, 98, 118; see Bell/Hartmann 2007). Social psychologists get a great deal of media attention (Friedersdorf 2019; Edsall 2018, 2020) by attributing mistrust in diversity to a "heritable" psychological disposition: some people, the argument goes, have an "authoritarian" mindset that comes with a "lack of openness" and other "cognitive limitations" that "reduce" their "willingness and capacity (respectively) to tolerate complexity, diversity, and difference" (Stenner/Haidt 2018, 183). More convincingly, scholarship that pays attention to social interdependencies (Wilson 2007; Wacquant 2007) replaces blanket references to diversity with a more nuanced study of how trust relates to structural inequalities (Uslaner 2002, 2008, 2012; Rothwell 2012). According to Maria Abascal and Delia Baldassarri, "it is not the diversity of a community that undermines trust, but rather the disadvantages that people in diverse communities face" (2016 np).[9]

Trust relations are hard to establish, since empirical surveys can capture only "attitudinal"—self-reported—trust in response to generic survey questions. The world value survey, for example, asks: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?" Scholars have noted that "it is not entirely clear what this question exactly measures," and how the interviewees' answers relate to their lived practice (Sapienza et al. 2013, 1313). Some think that attitudinal

9 Poor neighborhoods tend to have "smaller social networks" than more affluent communities, which makes it harder for them "to mobilize their ties to secure resources." Another predictor is residential stability: "homeownership strongly and positively predicts trust in neighbors and neighborhood cooperation." Finally: "Indicators of economic conditions, especially education and economic satisfaction, positively predict several measures of trust. In addition, household income is strongly, positively associated with neighborhood cooperation, while unemployment is strongly, negatively associated with trust in neighbors. In short, we find that individual and contextual indicators of racial/ethnic differences, residential stability, and economic well-being are the strongest predictors of trust and cooperation, thus swinging the pendulum of the determinants of trust away from ethnic diversity and towards well studied economic and social indicators" (Abascal/Baldassarri 2015, 734, 748–50).

measures are particularly misleading across identitarian boundaries. For example, Abascal and Baldassarri find that blacks constantly report lower attitudinal trust than whites but "in trust games that require individuals to make consequential economic decisions," the gap between blacks and whites disappears (2015, 729). Writing as a historian, Geoffrey Hosking stresses that trust "has to be teased out 'between the lines'" of people's utterances (2014, 24). The social historian Charles Tilly, similarly, argues that while attitudinal markers provide a "first indication" of trust relationships, it is key to look at their participants' moves and practices: "if you trust me," Tilly says, "don't just tell me so; let me take charge of your children's education, lend me your life's savings for investment, take medicines I give you, or help me paint my house on the assumption that I will help you paint yours. If you don't trust me, prove it by doing none of these things, and nothing like them" (2005, 12). This seems good advice not only for the survey culture of the empirical social sciences but also for textualist scholarship in the humanities that would take Hosking's warning about trust having to be teased out from "between the lines" as a call to more intense but nonetheless object-centered "close reading" (see Margit Peterfy's essay on the literary ethnography of trust).

Tilly's work suggests that democracies do not just require disembedded forms of trust (Giddens) or the social capital of weak ties (Putnam), they also need to find ways to incorporate tightly-knit "trust networks" that have existed outside or inside state rule structures for thousands of years—his examples range from kinship ties to religious sects, trade diasporas, migration networks, artisanal groups, patron-client chains, credit networks, societies of mutual aid, and many others (2005, 6). Trust networks, according to Tilly, involve "ramified interpersonal connections" that consist "mainly of strong ties" and place "valued" and "long-term resources and enterprises" at risk to the "malfeasance, mistakes, and failures of individual members" (2007, 81–2). In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, people continue to rely on trust networks "for such practical activities as getting jobs, migrating long distances, making major purchases, borrowing money, engaging in high-risk political activity, and finding marriage partners" etc. (2005, 13–14). Tilly's claim is that democratization requires trust networks to be integrated into public politics, to allow the state to profit from these networks' resources and shift from coercive to commitment-based forms of rule. By the same logic, "extensive withdrawal of trust networks from public politics" can be damaging to democracy (2005, 11). Even in affluent and powerful modern societies, Tilly argues with a view to the United States, "democracy remains vulnerable" if the withdrawal

of trust networks divides privileged groups from the larger social whole: "Privatization of social security or health care, withdrawal of elites or minorities from public schools," retrenchment into "exclusive clubs and religious sects, gated communities, and capture of governmental agencies or offices for private profit," all of these produce de-democratizing effects by allowing economic and political elites "to secure their own advantages without subjecting themselves to the costs and constraints of public politics" (2005, 150, 11).

Tilly's study of trust networks coheres well with recent research on the network-related making and unmaking of group identity. Since democratic politics involves "pressures to associate for collective action," it creates "us-them boundaries" that "threaten naturally accumulated trust" (Tilly 2007, 93). Andreas Wimmer (2013; 2018) has shown that boundaries between groups harden into quasi-ethnic boundaries in proportion to their social closure (when members of one network have fewer ties to members of others), and also in proportion to the power inequalities between the separated groups (when one socially closed network has more politico-economic or status-related assets than others). The takeaway point is that identitarian boundaries do not express intrinsic group differences, but rather emerge when socio-institutional figurations happen to give certain (often arbitrary) group differences identity-defining social and moral resonance. This separation of groups may evolve gradually over time, as in the division between Protestant and Catholic Northern Ireland (where longstanding power inequalities between socially closed networks turned a religious difference that most modern Europeans find uninteresting into a veritable "ethnoreligious divide" that organizes central dimensions of Northern Irish social life). Boundaries can also erupt more suddenly, as when in 1990s Yugoslavia the collapse of Communism's political networks unleashed ethnonational and ethnoreligious loyalties that during the communist regime had little social importance.

Wimmer's work demonstrates the fluidity of the groups that are commonly treated as the hard-wired ethno-racial segments of American "diversity." Network effects can render such seemingly binary differences as the black/white distinction so fuzzy as to confuse insiders to which group they belong. The significant variations of the "color-line" across the world (a one-drop rule in the US and South Africa vs. a somatic continuum in Brazil, Cuba, Puerto Rico or Colombia) correlates, according to Wimmer, with patterns of

economic and political interdependencies.[10] Trusting the cultural "other" is thus not just a question of tolerance or "empathy" (as public debates about "racism" often imply), but depends on structural interdependencies that are shaped by political and economic policy (Wacquant 2007; Wilkerson 2020). Building trust therefore also means to reverse the segregating effects of neoliberal programs.[11] If today's political cleavages can divide groups that would not normally describe their difference in identitarian terms, such as the affectively polarized and mutually mistrusting blocks of Republican and Democrat voters in the US, building networks that transcend identitarian and class boundaries might soften the most rigid socio-cultural divides.

10 Wimmer's comparison with Brazil seems helpful here: "When slavery was abolished and restricted forms of democracy introduced, Brazil's elite relied on an extensive network of clientelist ties stretching far into the intermediate class of mixed racial origin that had emerged in previous centuries. In the United States, however, this intermediate class was composed of Anglo-American peasants and tradesmen […], and no transracial political ties had previously developed. Accordingly, Brazil's new political elites aimed at integrating and mixing peoples of different racial origin, while in the United States the nation was imagined as white and mixing conceived and treated as a horribilum to be avoided at all costs […]. The lack of well-established transracial political networks helps explain why nation building in America was set off against the 'black' population as its inner other rather than against the nation of competing neighboring states as in much of Europe" (2008, 996). A further hardening of boundaries occurred with an increasing "overlap of interests" (2013, 98) between the dominant and dominated groups in the US. Interest overlaps occur to the degree that owning an ethnic ascription yields rewards (for example, group honor and moral dignity, or access to professions, public goods, and political power). On how the black ghetto in the Northern rust belt between 1930 and 1960 produced such overlapping interests, see Wacquant 2011.

11 As Nancy Fraser (2017) points out, since the Clinton administration the neoliberal program has been a bipartisan affair. Alongside the "reactionary neoliberalism" housed in the Republican Party (which combines laisser-faire capitalism with social conservatism), Clinton's "progressive neoliberalism" helped to disarticulate the remnants of the new deal alliance by "forging a new alliance of entrepreneurs, bankers, suburbanites, 'symbolic workers,' new social movements, Latinos, and youth, while retaining the support of African Americans, who felt they had nowhere else to go." The Clintonite wing of the democratic party, according to Frasier, "won the day by talking the talk of diversity, multiculturalism, and women's rights, even while preparing to walk the walk of Goldman Sachs."

The Essays in this Collection

Our contributors look at the nexus of authority and trust in the US from a number of disciplines and thematic angles from the nineteenth century to the immediate present. Manfred Berg's "The Decline of Political Trust and the Rise of Populism in the United States" takes a historian's look at how the dramatic upsurge of right-wing populism has led to a general crisis of liberal representative democracy. Exploring how the declining political trust relates to the recent shift towards the political right, Berg probes the historical and structural roots of American populism. There is a long-standing tradition of distrust in American political culture, he argues, which has driven populist movements throughout American history. Berg's essay shows how Donald Trump's presidential campaign built on this tradition, and profited from a radically altered media environment that undermined not only political trust but trust in authority generally.

Martin Thunert's "Waning Trust in (Scientific) Experts and Expertise?" examines the authority of expert systems from a political science perspective. Looking at a wide range of empirical data on the United States and Great Britain, Thunert complicates the widely noted "crisis of expertise." His essay shows that while trust in medical experts has actually increased in the past few years, other forms of expertise have a more checkered trust record. The greatest factor in the mistrust of expertise, Thunert shows, are partisan divides that lead to the politicization of professional knowledge, especially in such fields as journalism and politics and in the context of partisan-oriented spaces of intellectual inquiry such as corporate-funded think tanks.

Florian Böller and Sebastian Harnisch's "Shifting Meridians of Global Authority" applies the methodology of International Relations to America's recent (and not so recent) foreign and security policies, and how they affected its authority in the world. Proposing a relational and role-theoretical concept of international authority, the authors suggest that in order to understand how global authority relations can shift along with foreign policy choices, we need to have a closer look at how international policy is shaped at the domestic level. Böller and Harnisch's focus lies on the effects of state-society relations (politicization and populism), inter-institutional relations (domestication), and state-corporate relations (economization). On the international level, they argue, states can only claim authority within regimes and institutions if their policies are perceived as legitimate. In turn, how states choose to react to the transformation of authority will have a significant effect on the

persistence of that order and the direction of its transformation. Their essay concludes that current (as well as previous) foreign policy choices have (unintended) consequences that may negatively affect the international perception of U.S. authority and the liberal international order.

Ulrike Gerhard, Judith Keller, and Cosima Werner's "Trust and the City" takes a geographic perspective to consider how transformations of authority and trust manifest themselves in urban space. Using trust as a socio-spatial concept, the authors highlight two central urban-geographic dimensions—the relational and the mobile—that shape the relevance of urban trust relations for urban development and governance. These are exemplified with regard to four related themes: (1) the cultural representations of the city as an imaginative space, (2) the residents' neighborhood-level urban practices that turn the city into a social space, (3) the temporal dimension of urban development as described by urban planning measures, and (4) the meaning of "home" and "housing." These themes, the authors argue, touch upon important challenges that cities have faced over the last decades. A socio-spatial concept of trust can help to a better understanding of these issues within urban geography.

Margit Peterfy's "William Dean Howells's Urban Theory of Trust and Trustworthiness in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*" combines urban with literary studies to discuss how the late-nineteenth-century novel imagines new kinds of trust relationships in the urban environment of metropolitan modernity in the US. These new relationships concern transport, work, economic and labor relations, and changes in the perception of women in the public space. Peterfy looks at how Howells tries to make sense of trust and trustworthiness in a "realist" or "documentary" register. Her thesis is that—as the issue of trust does not lend itself well to representational objectivity claims—Howells chooses highly symbolic modes of description that revolve around the urban scenes of New York.

Claudia Jetter and Jan Stievermann's "Joseph Smith, Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transformation of Religious Authority in the Antebellum Period" combines literary and religious studies to read Smith and Emerson in the context of the profound crisis of religious authority in the nineteenth-century US. Drawing from Weber and current research on trust, they argue that Smith and Emerson attempt to come to grips with a rising distrust in the authority of existing clerical institutions and traditional biblical exegesis. The work of both men can be seen as related attempts at restituting a charismatic authority grounded in immediate experience of presence. Whereas Smith stuck to a

Protestant notion of supernatural revelation (claiming for himself the role of the chosen prophet), Emerson's performance of charismatic authority, Jetter and Stievermann argue, was rooted in a naturalized understanding of revelation and a radically-individualized seeker spirituality.

Dietmar Schloss's "The Trust Debate in the Literature of the American Renaissance" analyzes mid-nineteenth century American literature in relation to contemporary sociological theories of trust. The writers of the American Renaissance, Schloss argues, addressed issues of trust and self-trust out of a deep concern about human agency under modern conditions. Using Anthony Giddens' sociology as a conceptual framework, Schloss compares the different positions of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville and Ralph Waldo Emerson, concluding that all three considered "self-consciousness"—or what Giddens called the "self-reflexivity of modernity"—as a central problem of trust in modernity. While Hawthorne and Melville considered this problem as almost unsurmountable, Schloss argues, Emerson developed a trust theory that anticipated Giddens' modern way of "doing" trust. Thus Emerson's apparently individualistic, anti-social ethos of self-reliance was designed to act as a stabilizing force in the new risk environment of modern democratic society.

Tim Sommer's "Authority, Genealogy, Infrastructure: Nineteenth-Century Discourses of Transatlantic Relationality" examines how important nineteenth-century intellectuals (Thomas Paine, Washington Irving, Thomas Carlyle, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Frederick Douglass, Walt Whitman) negotiate questions of transatlantic authority. Sommer argues that nineteenth-century Anglo-American relations were expressed in two kinds of images, (1) the language of race and ancestry (revolving around notions of a shared "Anglo-Saxon" pedigree and metaphors of family relationships), and (2) debates about transatlantic infrastructure that highlighted technological developments (national railway systems, transatlantic steam travel, networks of communication, and the like). Both discourses, Sommer suggests, provided the conceptual language through which nineteenth-century writers could imagine relations between the US and British culture as marked by shifting authorities that continuously redefined the character of transatlantic contact.

Günter Leypoldt's "Shoppers, Worshippers, Culture Warriors" explores how the hermeneutics of reading is shaped by different kinds of trust relations. Setting out from George Steiner's account of the "hermeneutic motion" (as a four-fold process involving trust, prejudgment, incorporation, and restoration), Leypoldt reworks received notions of the hermeneutic process using Charles Taylor's theory of moral "frameworks." Whereas traditional

hermeneutics focusses on notions of hermeneutic equilibrium and "critical openness," Leypoldt points to three common (if ideal-typical) hermeneutic biases: readers as purpose-oriented consumers, as worshippers trusting a higher good, and as culture warriors revolted by a "toxic" kind of sacred. With a look at the reception history of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Evangeline* (1847), Leypoldt discusses the difficult ontological status of hermeneutic trust—or trust "atmospheres"—and the conflicting moral frames involved in the making of authorized canons.

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