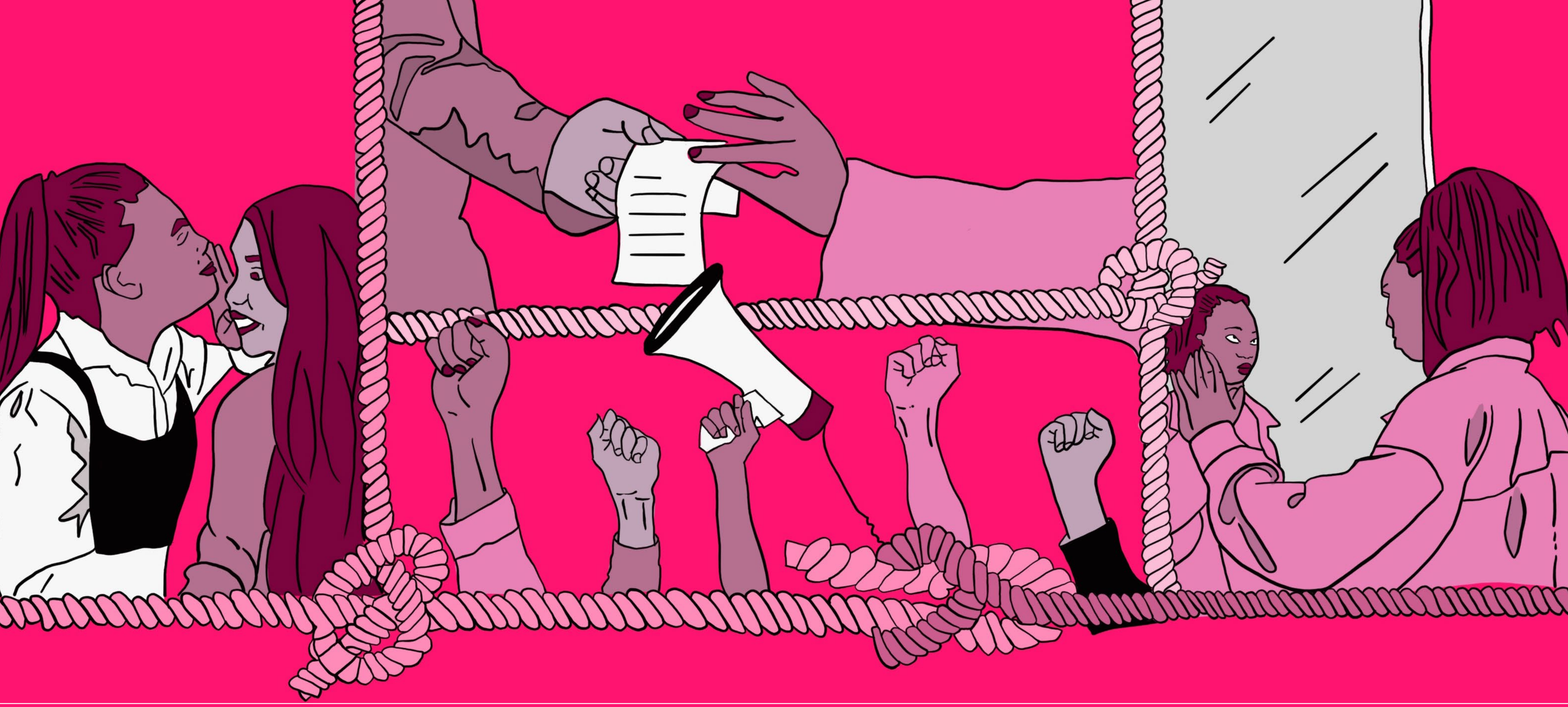

TRUSTISSUES

AN ANTHOLOGY

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DATA& SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION: TRUST ISSUES

By Sareeta Amrute

> **"The future irrupts at all times, wanting to actualize itself in every decision we make; it tries, as hard as it can, to become the past."**
>
> – **Hernan Diaz**, Trust

Whether a particular sociotechnical system can be trusted reveals itself as a matter of death and of life. The 2025 Los Angeles fires ignited a spate of AI-generated images and social media messages that misled local residents about the extent and geography of the blaze. As social media companies like Meta rolled back content moderation and ended their external fact-checking policies, the question of information infrastructures' trustworthiness took on new urgency. More recently, a slate of Executive Orders from the new US administration has stopped funding healthcare, education, and other institutions in the name of technologically-produced fiscal efficiency.[1] Borrowed from a Silicon Valley playbook, these actions ride a wave of distrust in governmental institutions while at the same time destabilizing these very same structures of governance. These developments sharpen the need to analyze the relationship between trust and technology.

At their most elemental, technologies enter into already unfolding political and social scenes, both intensifying and distorting their trajectories. The history of AI, for example, is peppered with both moments when corporate, governmental, and academic power consolidated, and moments in which the reality and capacities of AI systems and the institutions that produced them were questioned. As Finn Brunton reports, the power of autonomous-seeming technologies has been interrogated since at least 1914, when an article in the journal *Scientific American* doubted the ability of a chess-playing automaton to "think."[2] This issue resurfaced again in the mid-twentieth century. In the 1960s, for instance, Joseph Weizenbaum realized that his ELIZA program — an automated therapy chatbot in contemporary terms — seemed trustworthy to users because it intensified an already-existing trend of prioritizing rational and numerical thinking over discernment.[3] Currently, generative technologies have once again renewed debates over what information can be trusted, given their ability to "trick" human perception.

Public discussions of trust often frame it as a good that can exist, deplete, or increase. Yet trust, it turns out, is a more complicated concept. As several scholars have pointed out, trust is deeply

1 Federal Register, "Executive Orders," Accessed March 27, 2025, https://www.federalregister.gov/presidential-documents/executive-orders/donald-trump/2025.

2 Finn Brunton, "AI: Machines or Magic?" Public Books, June 19, 2019, https://www.publicbooks.org/ai-machines-or-magic/.

3 Joseph Weizenbaum, "ELIZA — a Computer Program for the Study of Natural Language Communication between Man and Machine," *Communications of the ACM* 9, no. 1 (January 1966): 36–45. https://doi.org/10.1145/365153.365168.

relational.[4] Instead of waxing or waning, trust is recontextualized, contested, and transferred to different objects and ideas. Understanding trust as a relation and a process, our anthology draws on several strands of thinking about technology and social and political life.

This anthology explores the meaning of trust, as discussed during the "Trust Issues Workshop" in March 2024. During the workshop, four themes — information, institutions, embodiment, and relationality — were discussed in groups of 4–6 participants and were later developed into short collaborative papers. These papers form the basis for this anthology on trust and technology. We present case studies as "conceptual knots" for the reader to use when thinking about issues of technology and trust from particular, grounded perspectives. We also include key terms and definitions that emerged from each theme's discussion.

> **Instead of waxing or waning, trust is recontextualized, contested, and transferred to different objects and ideas.**

The first essay, "Trust and Information," employs information studies and science and technology studies frameworks to describe trust as developed through networks and by acts of contextualization and recontextualization.[5] Trust in particular devices that produce information (like AI, or measuring equipment) develops through political struggles over expertise and through formalization practices that set standards for acceptable results.[6] Yet, expert discourse is only one arena where trust in information is built and contested. This essay follows three cases — the Internet of Things (IoT), deepfakes, and the US Census — and unpacks the complex contexts in which information is produced, taken out of one context, and put into another, warping preexisting relations of trust and potentially creating new ones. This conceptual approach to trust and information moves to one side of conventional approaches to this topic. Rather than trust preceding the circulation of information, the creation of circulating networks of information produces kinds of trust. As data-centric technologies like AI intensify these circulations and create new categories by which information can be understood, they enter into existing regimes of knowledge and expertise, potentially reconfiguring not only these regimes but the very ways subjects orient themselves to these technologies and the issue of trust itself. That is, information is neither intrinsically trustworthy nor untrustworthy. Instead, the circulation of information in novel ways produces new possibilities for relations of trust and mistrust among person, technologies, and epistemes. In light of this finding, this essay suggests thinking through *good enough information* and *imperfect data* as a starting point for highlighting the context of informational trust. This essay examines how trust in information is contextualized and recontextualized through the kinds of social and political

4 Naomi Scheman, "Trust and Trustworthiness," in *The Routledge Handbook of Trust and Philosophy*, ed. Judith Simon (Routledge, 2020); Baier, Annette, "Trust and Antitrust," *Ethics* 96, no. 2 (1986): 231–60.

5 Manuel Castells, The Rise of the Network Society (John Wiley & Sons, 2011), Knudsen, Erik, et. al., "How the Public Understands News Media Trust: An Open-Ended Approach" *Journalism* 23, no. 11 (2021); 2347–2363; Richard Bauman, and Charles L. Briggs, "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990): 59–88.

6 Theodore M. Porter, Trust in Number: *The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life* (Princeton University Press, 1995); Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (Zone Books, 2007); Martha Lampland, "False Numbers as Formalizing Practices," *Social Studies of Science* 40, no. 3 (April 2010):377–404, https://doi.org/10.1177/03063127093599.

relations particular technological devices, providing analytical purchase on the political and moral stakes in contemporary debates around the trustworthiness of data, subjects, and processes.

In the second essay, "Trust and Institutions," the authors draw on approaches from economics and organizational studies to examine institutions as structures that are designed as a stabilizing force meant to "create order and reduce uncertainty"[7] and on similarly-oriented theories of trust that describe it as a condition that emerges out of "dependency."[8] At the same time, historians and critical organizational studies scholars drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, Charles Mills, and others recognize that institutions are also vehicles for creating certain kinds of subjects, that trust is also a demand placed on subjects to behave in a particular way.[9] Those who fall outside these networks of institutionalized trust can often be distrusted by and distrustful of those institutions. "The moral stakes" of distrusting those who are "othered" in these institutions are, as Jason D'Cruz writes, "considerable."[10] The authors argue that while distrust of institutions seems like a new phenomenon, it is rooted both in a history of ideas that pits faith against rationality, and in a series of political-economic events (like the 2008 subprime housing crisis) that are viewed as protecting elite goods at the expense of the livelihoods of everyday people, however those categories are defined. This longer genealogy of institutional trust suggests that trust in institutions has not disappeared, but has instead relocated to decentralized spaces and to other sources of authority. As the authors argue, communities often replace once-trusted institutions, for better and for worse. These developments have led to a set of concerns over the technological intermediaries that intercede between individuals and the state, and to those about how individuals and communities determine what and who to trust.

The third essay conceptualizes trust through embodiment. As such, the essay moves from the inside out: "trust," the authors of "Trust and Embodiment" write, "begins within." Mobilizing philosophy, gender studies, and studies grounded in the materiality of technologies, this approach highlights the ways technologies both extend and extend into bodies, transforming the very meaning of what bodies can be. At the center of embodied trust is a recognition of vulnerability.[11] Vulnerability is often seen as a failing, but as this essay recognizes, it is also a site of developing new relationships, possibilities, and a sense of self as a being in constant change. Vulnerabilities can lead to new formations around bodies and different epistemologies of the meaning of technologies themselves. As Chelsea Peterson-Salahuddin notes, the experience of being marginalized leads people to pay attention "not only to the veracity of facts" but also to "how the presentation of these facts acknowledges the struggles and lived experiences of marginalized communities."[12] In other words, while experiences and opinions are not monolithic, acknowledging vulnerability can

7 Douglass C. North, "Institutions," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (1991): 97–112.

8 Mark Alfano and Nicole Huijts, "Trust in Institutions and Governance," in *The Routledge Handbook of Trust and Philosophy*, ed. Judith Simon (Routledge, 2020).

9 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Vintage Books, 1975); Charles W. Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

10 Jason D'Cruz, "Humble Trust," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 176, no. 4 (2019): 933–53.

11 Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (Fordham Press, 2025); Roger C. Mayer, James H. Davis, and F. David Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," *The Academy of Management Review* 20, no. 3 (1995): 709–34, https://doi.org/10.2307/258792.

lead to different tactics that center not only what data a given technology presents, but how it presents that data.

The final essay returns to the question of relationality. For the authors of "Trust and Relationality," relationality is not only a starting point for understanding technology and trust, but also explodes the very possibilities for what trust can be. Drawing on Indigenous and anti- and decolonial studies, the projects presented in the final essay demonstrate that traditional practices of trust-building have existed for a very long time, not only in opposition to colonial order, but independently as a means of ordering multiple kinds of relationships with land, people, ancestors, and other beings. One thing that sets this starting point apart is its ability to radically multiply and deepen the forms and processes of trust under discussion, from repairing broken trust to acknowledging circles of trust. This essay demonstrates how thin hegemonic concepts of technology, trust, and relation have been in the West. In contrast, as Leanne Simpson contends, while Indigenous thinkers are rooted in particular places, Indigenous thinkers have also always "walked the world to understand our place in it, to create face-to-face relationships with other nations and beings."[13] Drawing on this and other scholarship, the authors of this essay branch out to consider care as a fundamental aspect of trust, a nice counterpoint to "Trust and Embodiment"'s focus on vulnerability.

Information, institutions, embodiment, relationality — *network, community, vulnerability, care*; across these essays, we collectively reframe the question of trust and technology away from asking whether a particular technology is trustworthy and toward asking how trust reframes institutions, bodies, and knowledge. We explore how communities challenge and recontextualize trust. In addition, we explore how multiple technologies enact regimes of trust — which may or may not be successfully taken up by people on the ground.

When we first proposed a body of work around technologies and trust, we had only an inkling of the scope of the problems bubbling up around digital technologies. Two years ago, questions of trust congealed around a desire to build trust in media, government, and various technopolitical systems, like artificial intelligence. The terms of debate tacked back and forth between technologies that promised to move beyond the need for human-based trust, like the blockchain, and those that appeared to disrupt the fundamental institutions of modern life, like social media infrastructures. Now, the stakes of the conversation around trust and technology whittle to a sharper point with every passing day.

By taking on trust as a relational process, we unpack multiple perspectives on how technologies disrupt and are interwoven with previously existing ethics of action and political projects. As trust

12 Chelsea Peterson-Salahuddin, "Trust Signals: An Intersectional Approach to Understanding Women of Color's News Trust," *Media and Communication* 11, no. 4 (December 2023): 332–343.

13 Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 57.

and technologies come together, they shift the way information, institutions, bodies, and even relationality itself can be thought. The implications of this fact are compelling. Technological systems like AI often need only to prove themselves useful to the institutions deploying them, not trustworthy to the people enmeshed in their decisions.[14] Yet, opening up technological trust to historical, geographical, and sociopolitical analysis helps describe where trust is located, besides in large institutions and their technologies. Alternate frames of trust produce community-centered politics such as the politics of refusal or data sovereignty, while community-based expertise demonstrates how trust is built, negotiated, and transformed within and to the side of large-scale systems. Each of these potential futures is a possible fact, to paraphrase Hernan Diaz, attempting to establish itself by becoming unquestioned. Trust authorizes technologies and the people and institutions who shape them, but only partially and always temporarily.

14 Julia Angwin, Jeff Larson, Surya Mattu, and Lauren Kirchner, "Machine Bias," *ProPublica*, May 23, 2016, https://www.propublica.org/article/machine-bias-risk-assessments-in-criminal-sentencing; Kirsten Ostherr, Svetlana Borodina, Rachel Conrad Bracken, Charles Lotterman, Eliot Storer, and Brandon Williams, "Trust and Privacy in the Context of User-Generated Health Data," *Big Data & Society* 4, no. 1 (June 2017): 2053951717704673, https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951717704673; Onora O'Neil, "Linking Trust to Trusworthiness," *Journal of Philosophical Studies* 26, no. 2 (April 2018):293-300, https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559.2018.1454637.

TRUST IN INFORMATION

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ANUBHA SINGH

TRUST IN INFORMATION

By Sareeta Amrute, danah boyd, Alicia Demanuele, Pawan Minhas, and Anubha Singh

Information is the product of specific contexts and it is forever entering new ones. While information often denotes unvarnished data, facts, evidence, and records, it emerges from specific contexts and regularly travels far beyond these origins. As information is read and presented in particular ways, it takes on meanings through different narrative frames, a process that is often described as the formation of knowledge.[15] Because information is not in itself knowledge, it can be misunderstood as neutral and isolated from the social and political relations that produced it.[16] Starting with the contextual nature of information reveals an important facet about trust: to trust in information means to trust in particular human actions, including specific methodologies used to construct, capture, and share it.

Here, we present trust in information as located in networks, produced relationally, and as making and marking subjects. Within this framework, technologies are things that force rearrangements of existing networks, redefining what "counts" as information and who "counts" as an informational expert.[17] In current AI developments, to take one example, missing corpora of African languages both intensify gaps in knowledge about Africa and create an opportunity to create African expertise in AI.[18] In the process, information is moved around and leveraged to build, destroy, or repair infrastructures and to make arguments persuasive. As technologies rearrange existing networks and information is shaped in the process, that information is almost certainly taken out of its context. This liveliness of information riddles it with vulnerabilities that can be exploited, complicating the very thing we call trust.

Trust can also be used as a device to regulate attitudes, subjects, and institutions. This is a disciplinary use of trust that persuades people to be examined, evaluated, and potentially, distrusted.[19] When, for example, gender non-conforming bodies are stopped at border crossings because their identity fails to match what a scanner shows, or when predictions are made about prisoners' behavior based on the tone and timbre of their voices, they are subject to a rule of governance that simultaneously trusts information produced by technologies and mistrusts that produced by people.[20] As a result, some epistemes, experiences, and expectations are normalized and others ignored or even actively suppressed.

episteme (n): *a way of knowing.*

epistemology (n): *the study of the different ways of knowing and the limits to what can be known.*

good enough information (n): *information that meets a threshold needed to make a decision or understand a phenomenon, but is understood as revisable.*

imperfect data (n.): *a collection of facts that have been made less specific to protect the people from whom its been collected, can also be used to mean the principle of recognizing all data is imperfect.*

15 Ian Hacking, "Historical Meta-Epistemology," in *Wahrheit und Geschichte*, ed. Samuel Vollenweider and Eva Ebel, (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 53–77.

16 Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990): 59–88; Ellen Gruber Garvey, "'Facts and FACTS': Abolitionists' Database Innovations," in *"Raw Data" is an Oxymoron*, ed. Lisa Gitelman (MIT Press, 2013).

17 Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

18 Jerry Kponyo, et. al, "We need Afrocentric Datasets for Inclusive AI Growth," *Nature Human Behavior* (March 2025): 1–4.

19 Jason D'Cruz,"Humble Trust," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 176, no. 4 (2019): 933–53; Michel Foucault, "Governmentality" in *The Foucault Effect* (1991).

20 Sasha Costanza-Chock, *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need,* Mit Press (2020); Jackie Wang, "Captured Voices: Surveillance, Voiceprinting and the Politics of Repression," unpublished ms.

At the same time, technologists sometimes oversimplify or downplay systemic trust issues. Rather than recognizing the rearrangement of informational networks and epistemic procedures that technologies produce, technologists often proffer simple "solutions" to the problems of informational trust. Such solutions sidestep the fact that trust in information is being continually decontextualized and recontextualized; revisited and renegotiated.[21] Technologies can both challenge and reinforce established ways of understanding informational trust. Social media, for instance, has unsettled the informational trust put into traditional journalism, while the concentration of computational power in a few large companies has reinforced the authority of tech-CEOs and venture capitalists as informational experts about AI systems. In both cases, the issue is often framed in terms of whether a certain technological object, like a Large Language Model, can be trusted to reliably produce trustworthy facts, ignoring the important issue of how such technologies re-arrange pre-existing social and political relations. When solutions are proffered at the level of the technological object, they often try to fix the object, for instance by collecting more data for the model, rather than by engaging with the thorny problem of how trust in information is established and to what ends.

Given the moving and warping networks that give rise to informational trust, we ask, what other norms might we seek around information that recognizes its revisability? Trust is often established through experts speaking in the language of formal declarations, unchangeable facts, and universal truths. Yet, this path has proven inadequate to settling questions of trust, because it can be easily questioned, upended and challenged in today's information environment that moves at speed and with intensity. What are the other norms around information and technology that might ground relationships between information, data-centric technologies, and trust? Shifting the focus of analysis, we investigate what happens when different epistemic orientations towards information collide in order to recognize the multiple ways of developing trust in information.

- How do we resist trust being situated within objects rather than in sociotechnical arrangements?
- How can we question the role of trust in everyday life? What alternative forms of expertise exist?
- What happens when different epistemic orientations collide? How does trust move across and become an edge-case for or a boundary object between epistemes?
- How do we include the affective resonances of trust (desires, temptations) and the information supply chains that create information infrastructures in our analyses?

information (n): *a contextual concept, facts that exist in particular classifications and forms of organization that are networked and changing, it can be used to make persuasive arguments or unsettle previously settled forms of thought, ways of knowing, subjects, and institutions.*

trust (n): *a relational concept that both creates kinds of objects, institutions, and people. Trust as a form of relationality sits alongside mistrust and distrust. It can be part of an apparatus of normalization and discipline, and it can be subject to revision and rearrangement.*

21 Ruha Benjamin, "Catching Our Breath: Critical Race STS and the Carceral Imagination," *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society* 2 (July 2016): 145–56, https://doi.org/10.17351/ests2016.70; Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Discriminating Data*, (MIT Press, 2024) https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262548526/discriminating-data/.

Drawing on approaches derived from science and technology studies, our projects emphasize the importance of thinking with models of relationality that move through trust, rather than conceptualizing trust as inheriting in objects. The objects and devices that temporarily authorize forms of trust, from numbers to wry grins, can create multiple kinds of relations, from the social relations of scientific experts to the acrimony of grassroots activists opposing particular technological projects.[22] Through this relational approach to trust, we can ask: who is allowed to be an expert and to experience and make knowledgeable decisions about uncertainty within any set of social relations? One way to think relationally about trust and information is to think of both as networks, and technologies as things that force rearrangements of networks.

> **Trust is often established through experts speaking in the language of formal declarations, unchangeable facts, and universal truths. Yet, this path has proven inadequate to settling questions of trust, because it can be easily questioned, upended and challenged in today's information environment that moves at speed and with intensity.**

Deriving from this relational approach to trust is another key point: in the relationship between trust and mistrust, mistrust has been largely undertheorized. Often, mistrust is normatively described as something to be avoided, but it has its own logics and sets of legitimacies.[23] Theorizing mistrust alongside trust can help us understand proximity to technologies. In general, the closer a subject is to the machine, the closer they are to uncertainty. That is, those who build systems are often comfortable with margins of error, and as a result, they have a certain mistrust of results. The same applies to those who are on the receiving end of the "mistakes" made by those technological systems. Yet, when that uncertainty enters larger networks of information, its contexts are stripped away, and the relational nature of trust and information is muted. In discussions on COVID-19 vaccination rates, for instance, the initial effectiveness rates of 95 percent for blocking transmission have had to be walked back, increasing vaccine skepticism. The issue here is not that numbers needed to be revised, but that the initial results were presented with complete certainty. Shifts in the nature of trust in information are accompanied by a welter of desires around trust when it comes to a belief in the validity of information shared through technological systems. Finally, as much as mistrusting information all the time can be exhausting, being compelled to trust also taxes us, and some of us more than others. There is a need to move beyond a focus on trust as a normative demand and toward asking about the conditions and relations that produce *good enough information*. Good enough information is information that meets a threshold needed to make a decision or understand a phenomenon, but is understood as revisable.

22 Martha Lampland, "False Numbers as Formalizing Practices," *Social Studies of Science* 40, no.3 (2010): 377–404, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0306312709359963; Klein, Lauren F., "Data by Design," https://dataxdesign.io/.

23 Matthew Carey, *Mistrust: An Ethnographic Theory* (Hau Books, 2017).

One participant of this workshop, Anubha Singh, provided the following case, which raises important questions about the kinds of experts that information makes and where trust in information resides in shifting and relational processes. Anubha is studying the technification of farming in Western India. She describes her fieldwork with Rajat, who is installing Internet of Things (IoT) devices for remote monitoring of traditional onion storage facilities, to detect early spoilage of onions:

Rajat and I were inside an old onion storage structure on a remote farm in Nashik, fixing one of his test IoT devices. The air was heavy with the pungent odor of decaying onions, causing an irritating itch at the back of my throat. Rajat's startup, Onion Storage Solutions, offered an IoT-based solution to reduce post-harvest losses of onions by identifying early wastage in the storage structures. Chawls, or traditional onion storage structures in western India, are sometimes made of concrete, bamboo, or locally available materials. They are naturally ventilated, with no external regulation of temperature or humidity. Since onions are stored for 3–7 months and exposed to the elements in chawls, post-harvest losses as high as 60–70 percent during storage are common. However, the startup's IoT-based solution claimed to identify the early stages of rotting in chawls through real-time monitoring of the microclimate (temperature and humidity) and gases like ammonia, sulfur dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, and carbon dioxide, which are commonly released during the decomposition of onions.

Early in my fieldwork, Rajat had introduced the IoT device to me as "a replacement for the human nose." He claimed that the human nose was a subjective and inefficient way of detecting spoilage because, by the time farmers could detect it, more than 15 percent of the onions had already gone bad. The IoT solution, on the other hand, could detect less than 1 percent spoilage in onion storage structures and send out timely alerts to farmers to avoid further wastage. Despite these bold claims, Rajat's startup had sold no more than 10 devices in the last four years. He couldn't understand why farmers wouldn't just trust the data and save money by avoiding spoilage. There was only one explanation for this — small farmers were unprogressive and reluctant to change their traditional practices. The issue wasn't with farmers' mistrust of the device; the issue, according to Rajat, was the farmers themselves!

Rajat's accusations, like his device, were data-driven, but the reality was far more complex. In my conversations with farmers, they told me they were well aware that the onions were rotting in the storage structures. In fact, the onions had been actively rotting ever since they were harvested, and they didn't need a device to tell them that. "We have been doing this [storing onions] since we were children, madam," a farmer smirked at me. "We know our onions; we know our structures!" For farmers, onions stored in storage structures were liquid money — a security that could be cashed in during hard times. To make an informed decision about when to move onions out of storage, farmers wanted the device to provide an estimate of the percentage of spoilage, which could be correlated with other factors, such as labor availability for sorting and grading onions and market prices for the available quality of onions. The decision to move onions out of the chawl was, therefore, a complex matter of judgment. But even Rajat knew that such a task was unfeasible for the machines. Until then, the nose would do!

This story of the IoT, the onions, and the farmers illustrates the relational nature of information: one person's spoilage is another's profit margin. On the one hand, farmers make overlapping calculations about when to bring crops to market, taking into account rotting onions as one factor among many. On the other, the agri-tech entrepreneurs treat spoilage as a zero sum game to be avoided at all costs. In this case, farmers trust their noses much more than they do their devices.

Another participant, Alicia Demanuele, described her case of deepfakes. She outlines benign and malicious use of this synthetic content. Some promising uses include the ability to redefine storytelling in entertainment or amplify social good by, for instance, using synthetic voices for those who cannot speak. However, there are also pressing issues regarding technologically-facilitated sexual violence, national security, and the preservation of democracy:

> Deepfakes exacerbate an already polluted information ecosystem by blurring the line between real and fake, raising serious concerns about information integrity. One prominent example occurred in January 2024 when a robocall impersonating former President Joe Biden circulated urging New Hampshire residents not to cast their ballots in the state's presidential primary. Deepfakes can spread false, misleading, and potentially harmful information about electoral candidates and election systems to sway action and incite doubt in the public, highlighting profound impacts on democracy and importantly, trust. Another example can be seen in organizational security, when a finance worker in Hong Kong mistakenly paid out HK$200 million to fraudsters after they used deepfake technology in a video conference call to pose as the company's "chief financial officer" in February 2024. With their growing sophistication and increasing accessibility at low cost, deepfakes can be used to spread disinformation leading to financial loss, reputational damage, or on a larger scale, the destabilization of societal structures. This is particularly concerning in the context of the liar's dividend — the phenomenon where increasing awareness of deepfakes casts a shadow of doubt over all media, making it easier for people to falsely claim that real content is AI-generated. Deepfakes raise key questions regarding trust in information, authenticity, reliability, and confidence, as well as the related integrity and legitimacy of institutions.

While deepfakes are often considered a simple assault on trust in information, this discussion reveals the warping properties of technological innovations. As deepfakes enter an informational scene, they distort previously established relations of trust, leading, for instance, to the liar's dividend. In thinking about these cases, analysts often miss the larger historical context in which trust in expert knowledge was created and the corresponding mistrust that accrues to such experts as holders of power. Taking into account this larger content, AI-generated content might emerge less as a question of a technology degrading trust, and more as one that brings into relief how trust and mistrust are established in a particular context. AI technologies raise questions not only about the nature of knowledge but also the world-view, or cosmology, from which they emerge.[24]

24 This notion of cosmology is found in the work of Chakaneta Mavhunga. See: Chandra Bhimull, Gabrielle Hecht , Edward Jones-Imhotep , Chakanetsa Mavhunga, Lisa Nakamura, and Asif Siddiqi, "Systemic and Epistemic Racism in the History of Technology," *Technology and Culture*, vol. 63, no. 4 (2022):935–952.

A final case comes from danah boyd, who studies trust and information in the US Census. In this work, US Census officials try to build trust into information systems:

> The US Census Bureau makes its data available as statistics, but it does not want to inadvertently harm individuals whose confidentiality they are sworn to protect. They use technical mechanisms known as "disclosure avoidance" that introduces noise into the data to ensure statistical products cannot be used to reidentify people. Yet, this makes the data imperfect. This makes data users furious; they in turn loudly challenge the trustworthiness of the data. The problem with this arrangement is that the legitimacy of the US Census — and the democracy that depends on it — depends on public trust. Only when the public trusts the US Census will they contribute their data. And if populations are not counted, their communities are harmed through lower representation and federal funding. As such, this case raises the question of what happens when the epistemic foundations of what it means to count the public and publish legitimate data are eroded?

In studying the US Census, we can see how trust is entangled with the creation of democracy's data. The government depends on the trust of the public in critical ways — and the public must trust that the US Census Bureau is acting responsibly. In practice, taking a census involves more than the simple fact of trust in government actions. For the sake of preserving privacy, users are presented with noisy data, which generates distrust. Once that gap is recognized, can we think about it without immediately filling it with freewheeling technosolutionism? *Imperfect data* might be acknowledged as a way to think through the equally imperfect methodologies used to construct, capture, and share information.

In each of these three cases, we see how trust in information is produced not strictly by the qualities of an object — of a technology — but rather by the web of relations which surround it. The *accuracy* of the onion monitor is beside the point if that information is not folded into a web of considerations. The *veracity* of any given media online has less to do with how its pixels were created, and more to do with institutions that enable and monitor its spread. For the US Census, it's not a question of whether the information precisely corresponds to the populations measured, but whether it can be trusted by all involved — trusted by data users to be effective, trusted by citizens to protect their privacy. An informational approach to trust, then, asks not simply if a piece of information is "trustworthy" in itself, but whether one can trust the process by which one has become informed.

TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

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TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

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Trust in institutions is at an all-time low. In the United States, surveys have shown a steady decline in trust across a broad range of traditional public institutions including government, medicine, banks, and media.[28] Globally, trust is also declining — a recent survey of 30 countries showed about 30 percent of the public trusted their national government, on average.[29] Without trust, institutions lose legitimacy, leading to decreased compliance with their rules and decisions, ultimately undermining their ability to provide essential services to those they serve. But trust has not just disappeared — rather, it has been relocated, to alternative sources of authority, decentralized networks, and other sources of personal-and-community-based trust.

However, despite the reality of these long-term trends, the question remains: Absent trusted institutions, where does (or should?) expertise, authority, and legitimacy lie when it comes to essential functions, like the production of knowledge, public policy decision-making, economic stability, and dispute resolution? This group sought to approach this question with thoughtful consideration, understanding the role that communities play and will continue to play, in delivering these functions. When examining trust in institutions through the lens of community, we risk idealizing communities as fault-less arbiters of trust. Communities can be the source of harm and also serve as a site of enforcement for institutional norms. We argue that, for better or for worse, communities have come to replace the foundational pillars that were once served by trusted institutions. This has led to its own set of concerns: with declines in trust in media in particular, individuals are seeking information and assurances from each other, instead of intermediaries, leading to concerns about the rise of misinformation through the use of networked communications. It has also led to concerns about how technologies used to mediate between individuals and the state in the delivery of public services, such as healthcare, banking, and policing, are perpetuating and deepening these fissures of trust between institutions and communities.

Our group explored how understanding how communities replace key institutional elements with close ties, traditions, norms, rumors, and shared understanding is essential to pushing back against the negative aspects of these trends, such as the fragmentation of authority, national or international cohesion, and the production of shared knowledge (or "facts"). We imagined viewing

community (as) institution (n): *community is a structure, it's a place, it's a defined space, but community can also transcend space.*[25]

dependency (n): *to trust someone is to rely on them to treat your dependency on them as a compelling if not universally-overriding reason to act as expected.*[26]

trust (n): *some scholars who study trust and institutions define trust as a condition that emerges out of one's acknowledgement of another's dependency on them and a belief that someone or some thing will act as expected as a result.*[27]

25 Marie Weil, Michael S. Reisch, Mary L. Ohmer, Marie Weil, Michael S. Reisch, and Mary L. Ohmer, *The Handbook of Community Practice*, 2nd ed. (SAGE Publications, Inc, 2012), https://www.perlego.com/book/1005780/the-handbook-of-community-practice-pdf.

26 Alfano and Huijts, "Trust in Institutions and Governance."

27 Alfano and Huijts, "Trust in Institutions and Governance."

28 Madeleine Aggeler, "Trust in US Institutions Has 'Never Been Lower' – Here's Why That Matters," *The Guardian*, June 11, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2024/jun/11/trust-us-institutions.

29 *Open Society Barometer: Can Democracy Deliver?* (Open Society Foundations, September 2023), https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/e6cd5a09-cd19-4587-aa06-368d3fc78917/open-society-barometer-can-democracy-deliver-20230911.pdf.

and studying communities as institutions. This allows us to conceptualize "expertise" more fluidly, providing an empowering vision of why this particular contestation — between trust in institutions and trust in personal connections — is necessary to examine at the current moment.

- How does our trust in institutions change in response to social, cultural, economic, and technological change?
- How might institutions be disrupted or redistributed in ways that can build community and social trust?
- Can a community be an institution? How does viewing community as an institution transform our understanding of trust, authority, and expertise? How might that community deepen harm or buttress against it?

Institutions carry multiple meanings, shifting depending on who created them, the context in which they were created, and the differential experiences of those who must navigate through, between, and amongst them. Douglass North argues that "institutions are the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction."[30] In this case, institutions are, by design, a stabilizing force meant "to create order and reduce uncertainty." Whether the institution is trustworthy is ultimately in the eye of the beholder. While some institutions may make some rights clearer and stronger, others might consolidate top-down control — providing order at the cost of certain freedoms and liberties. At their most extreme, some traditional institutions like government, religion, or education may take on authoritarian attributes, using violence and oppression to constrain certain people and exercise their power.[31] Trust, therefore, is highly contextual.

In contrast, some institutions are socially constructed, and trust in them is fluid. To this end, Roger Friedland and Robert Alford define an institution as "simultaneously material and ideal."[32] Institutions are somehow the "supraorganizational patterns of activity through which humans conduct their material life in time and space" and, "symbolic systems through which they categorize that activity and infuse it with meaning." Social institutions such as marriage, gender, and race reflect this dichotomy between materiality and idealism, and their meanings are socially, economically, and politically reinforced and malleable throughout time.[33]

Technology complicates this definition — it hardens visions of what institutions can be and how they operate. This is especially true when considering community trust and power. For example, technology used for surveillance infrastructure within a community can expand formal policing institutions while also sharpening the socially-constructed image of who belongs within the

30 Douglass North, "Institutions," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (1991): 97–112.

31 Joshua Davis, "Enforcing Christian Nationalism: Examining the Link Between Group Identity and Punitive Attitudes in the United States," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 57, no. 2 (2018): 300–31, https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12510.

32 Roger Friedland and Robert Alford, "Bringing Society Back In: Symbols, Practices, and Institutional Contradictions," in *The New Institutionalism and Organizational Analysis*, ed. Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio (University of Chicago Press, 1991).

33 Patricia Yancey Martin "Gender as Social Institution," *Social Forces* 82, no. 4 (June 2004): 1249–1273; Duran Bell, "Defining Marriage and Legitimacy," *Current Anthropology* 38, no. 2 (April 1997): 237–53. https://doi.org/10.1086/204606.

community.[34] These technologies reconstruct both a digital and material representation of borders between people and places, creating sticky social and physical institutions for those more disempowered to traverse. Trust, then, is fluid — based on whether a person has agency, and trust in the technological system, or the community, or the institution it represents.

Technological systems can also become an institution in themselves, such as digital tools that mediate the work of healthcare practitioners or educators.[35] Perhaps a person turns to a digital tool due to mistrust in a physical institution that has treated them poorly, or maybe that person is responding to generations of institutional harm. In either case, the physical institution retains its power, and trust is placed elsewhere, in its technological proxy. And yet, as in our discussion, technology can also enable traditional physical institutions to crack open, granting power to communities and individuals whose rights have been systemically threatened. Doing so often relies on close ties and deep trust.

Around the world, declines in trust in institutions reflect long-term trends, driven by a combination of historical events, structural changes, and shifts in media and political culture. The US, in particular, has a long history of anti-institutionalism and anti-intellectualism; the US was founded on a distrust of centralized power, represented by British rule, and early American Puritanism prioritized faith over rationality.[36] After WWII, trust in institutions was at an all-time high, perhaps because that was when we began measuring it, in 1958. Researchers who study trust in institutions have argued that the US government's handling of the Vietnam War, and its subsequent treatment of citizens fighting for civil rights, played a role in its erosion.[37] In the 1970s, the Watergate scandal, exposed by the journalists Woodward and Bernstein with the help of a government informant named Deep Throat, revealed corruption in government at the very highest levels. Trust continued to decline in the 1970s and 1980s with wage stagnation, high unemployment rates, and inflation, and was continually undermined in the 1990s and 2000s, as elected officials betrayed the interests of citizens for the benefit of monopolies and corporate actors, culminating in the bailout of banks during the 2008 financial crash.[38] Social media, though considered one of the *causes* of declines in trust, emerged out of these historical trajectories, providing mechanisms for individuals to bypass the same institutions that were already regarded with suspicion.[39]

“ **Trust, then, is fluid — based on whether a person has agency, and trust in the technological system, or the community, or the institution it represents.**

34 Rahim Kurwa, “Building the Digitally Gated Community: The Case of Nextdoor,” *Surveillance & Society 17*, no. 1/2 (March 2019): 111–17. https://doi.org/10.24908/ss.v17i1/2.12927.

35 Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (MIT Press, 2008).

36 Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1963).

37 Michael McGrath, “Beyond Distrust: When the Public Loses Faith in American Institutions,” *National Civic Review* 106, no. 2 (2017): 46–51; Andrew Kohut, “How the Watergate Crisis Eroded Public Support for Richard Nixon,” Pew Research Center, September 25, 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/09/25/how-the-watergate-crisis-eroded-public-support-for-richard-nixon/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

38 “How the Financial Crisis Eroded Public Trust,” Axios, December 17, 2018, https://www.axios.com/2018/12/17/2008-financial-crisis-erosion-public-trust-populism.

39 Gabriel R. Sanchez and Keesha Middlemass, “Misinformation Is Eroding the Public’s Confidence in Democracy,” Brookings, Accessed March 24, 2025, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/misinformation-is-eroding-the-publics-confidence-in-democracy/; Kirsten Eddy, “Republicans, Young Adults Now Nearly as Likely to Trust Info from Social Media as from National News Outlets,” Pew Research Center, October 16, 2024, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/10/16/republicans-young-adults-now-nearly-as-likely-to-trust-info-from-social-media-as-from-national-news-outlets/.

Altogether, we take trust in institutions to be increasingly negotiable. Increasingly, traditional institutional power is contested, moving between individuals, communities, and informal institutions and sites of power. Over time, many informal institutions have built powerful collective actions, dismantled oppressive institutions around the world, and spurred the expansion of newer, grassroots collectives and ideas. Trustworthy community institutions like mutual aid groups, unions, and co-ops have often stepped in as a collective response to failing institutions. In societies experiencing war, economic collapse, or other sweeping crises, people fleeing and enduring violence depend on and create systems of collective care that are just as impactful.[40] Recognizing the long legacy and endurance of community institutions allows us to reframe the impacts of technological systems on trust and/in institutions. Rather than locating power and authority in traditional top-down institutions, redefining institutions to include community-based approaches shifts the site of intervention and sites of power, to where they may be needed most.

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Reflecting on the complicated relationship between institutional intention and impact, Amrita Sengupta, Chiara Furtado, and Garima Agrawal of the Center for Internet and Society discuss how the digital lending industry uses creative tactics to build trust with customers that may belie deeper exploitation:

40 Dean Spade, “Solidarity Not Charity: Mutual Aid for Mobilization and Survival,” *Social Text* 38, no. 1 (March 2020): 131–51, https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-7971139.

Digital lending is one of the fastest-growing fintech segments in India, having grown exponentially from nine billion U.S. dollars in 2012 to nearly 150 billion dollars in 2020.[41] At the same time, citizens accessing digital credit through digital lending applications[42] is associated with a high risk to financial and psychological health due to a host of practices that lead to overindebtedness.[43] These include post-contract exploitation through hidden transaction fees, abusive debt collection practices, privacy violations, and fluctuations in interest rates. Both illegal/fraudulent and licensed lending service providers have employed aggressive marketing and debt collection tactics that exacerbate these harms.[44]

To better understand customer acquisition strategies and how trust is built amongst consumers, we need to further study marketing efforts across social media and messaging platforms.

Companies use narrative content such as short form videos and memes to target/engage consumers on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and other social media platforms based on their online activity and social media profiles. Finance scholars have found that advertorial content that relies on relatable storytelling can build identification and trust with consumers through overlaps with their interests and experience.[45] Companies leverage narrative transportation effects and disinformation to persuade consumers to sign up for services, while creating information interference around risks.[46]

While trust is on the decline globally, India demonstrates a high degree of trust in institutions. Nonetheless, trust inequality remains between top and bottom income quintiles, the latter being far less trusting of institutions and businesses.[47] The digital credit and overindebtedness case study raises questions such as: Do people access digital credit (both legal and illegal apps) due to their inherent trust in systems and institutions? Or is it more due to a lack of other avenues to access credit and lack of outright distrust, or in Baier's framework "the absence of good grounds for expecting their ill will or indifference?" What narratives are prevalent in sponsored content for digital lending platforms? What dimensions of trust do they privilege, and how do they communicate trustworthiness or reliability? What are the affective structures in place that lead us to trust what we trust? Can trust be built into systems that users have determined to be untrustworthy?

Eduardo Leite Vasconcelos examines a related phenomenon on platforms, raising key questions about how technological systems blur the traditional boundaries of expertise, shifting the edges of an institution's power:

41 Sandhya Keelery, "India: Fintech Companies Funding Share by Segment 2023," Statista, Accessed March 24, 2025, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1241994/india-fintech-companies-share-by-segment/.

42 Digital Lending is defined as a remote and automated lending process, using digital technologies for customer acquisition, credit assessment, loan approval, disbursement, recovery, and associated customer service.

43 Dan Cassara, Arianna Zapanta, Seth Garz, *Mobile Instant Credit: Impacts, Challenges, and Lessons for Consumer Protection* (Center for Effective Global Action, 2023), https://cega.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/FSP_Digital_Credit_Research_test.pdf.

44 Jinit Parmar, "Ruthless Recovery Agents, Aggressive Loan Outreach Put Spotlight on Bajaj Finance," *Money Control*, April 18, 2023, https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/ruthless-recovery-agents-aggressive-loan-outreach-put-spotlight-on-bajaj-finance-10423961.html.

45 Ji Li, Shaoming Zou, and Hui Yang, "How Does 'Storytelling' Influence Consumer Trust in We Media Advertorials? An Investigation in China," *Journal of Global Marketing* 32, no. 5 (October 2019): 319–34, https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2018.1562592.

46 Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock, "The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79, no. 5 (2000): 701–21, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.5.701.

47 *2025 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report: Trust and the Crisis of Grievance*, (Edelman Trust Institute, 2025) https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2025-01/2025%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report_01.23.25.pdf.

One of the big questions asked by institutional scholars looking at trust is how the boundaries between experts and amateurs shift and change over time. Platformization has been raising new questions about how to deal with institutions, as governments, banks, churches, media, journalism, and others are brought into the platform logic.[48] This is best illustrated by a case study on amateur vs. professional media.

Having lost control of the direct distribution of news, media outlets are increasingly reliant on platform algorithms to make sure news gets to their audience. Opting out of these systems is not a choice, as most audiences consume news incidentally.[49] This shifts the power over information spread, as platforms and their algorithms can control what audiences can access. For example, Meta blocked all news links and outlets on its social media platforms in Canada to avoid paying fees to media companies, resulting in audiences relying on memes to keep up with the news.[50] This is not an isolated case, as people increasingly rely on news shared by friends and contacts on instant messaging apps and social media platforms.[51] In a digital environment filled with misinformation, trust in journalism or media institutions has been replaced with relational trust, as people's personal relationships now act as gatekeepers.

This has a deeper impact on photojournalism. While audiences may not be able to write news stories or long-form pieces, they sure can photograph newsworthy events. With virtually every person now equipped with a smartphone capable of capturing and sharing images online, it is more probable that an amateur will document a significant event simply by being in the right place at the right time, rather than relying on a professional team of journalists.[52] During extreme events such as wars or natural disasters, amateurs often become the primary sources of imagery due to their direct involvement and proximity to the unfolding situations, thereby lending greater credibility to these images. In such instances, amateurs also serve as a form of countersurveillance, capturing images that would otherwise remain unseen within traditional media channels. The impact of this democratization of image production is exemplified in cases like the murder of George Floyd and the recent attacks in Palestine, where these issues might not have entered public discourse if a classic institutional control over image circulation still prevailed.

As photojournalism is not just photography, but also — of course — journalism, it has been dealing with the same consequences that platformization has brought to media in general.[53] Misleading images circulating on social media have increased distrust in images produced by traditional journalism, now broadly seen as biased, a direct consequence of journalism's tradition of hiding photographers' agency over their work.[54] The challenge, then, is how media outlets can gain audiences' trust back considering the contemporary informational ecosystem, as journalism is a fundamental actor in democracy, which is also suffering from a crisis of trust.

In both cases, we see shifts from traditional centralized institutions towards institutions that are more like communities — Indian borrowers move away from existing banks toward micro-loans, news consumers move away from traditional media outlets to their peers. But we also see how these moves are first enabled by and subsequently captured by a new form of technology with its own norms and structures. The dual forces of community documentarians and Meta's content moderation exist side-by-side, and can also give Meta its own institutional life. The question of trust in emerging institutions, therefore, can never fully escape the force of technologies as their own mediums.

48 José Van Dijck, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal, *The Platform Society* (Oxford Press University, 2018).

49 Pablo J Boczkowski, Eugenia Mitchelstein, and Mora Matassi, "News comes across when I'm in a moment of leisure': Understanding the practices of incidental news consumption on social media," *New Media & Society* 20, no. 10 (January 2018): 3523–3539, https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817750396.

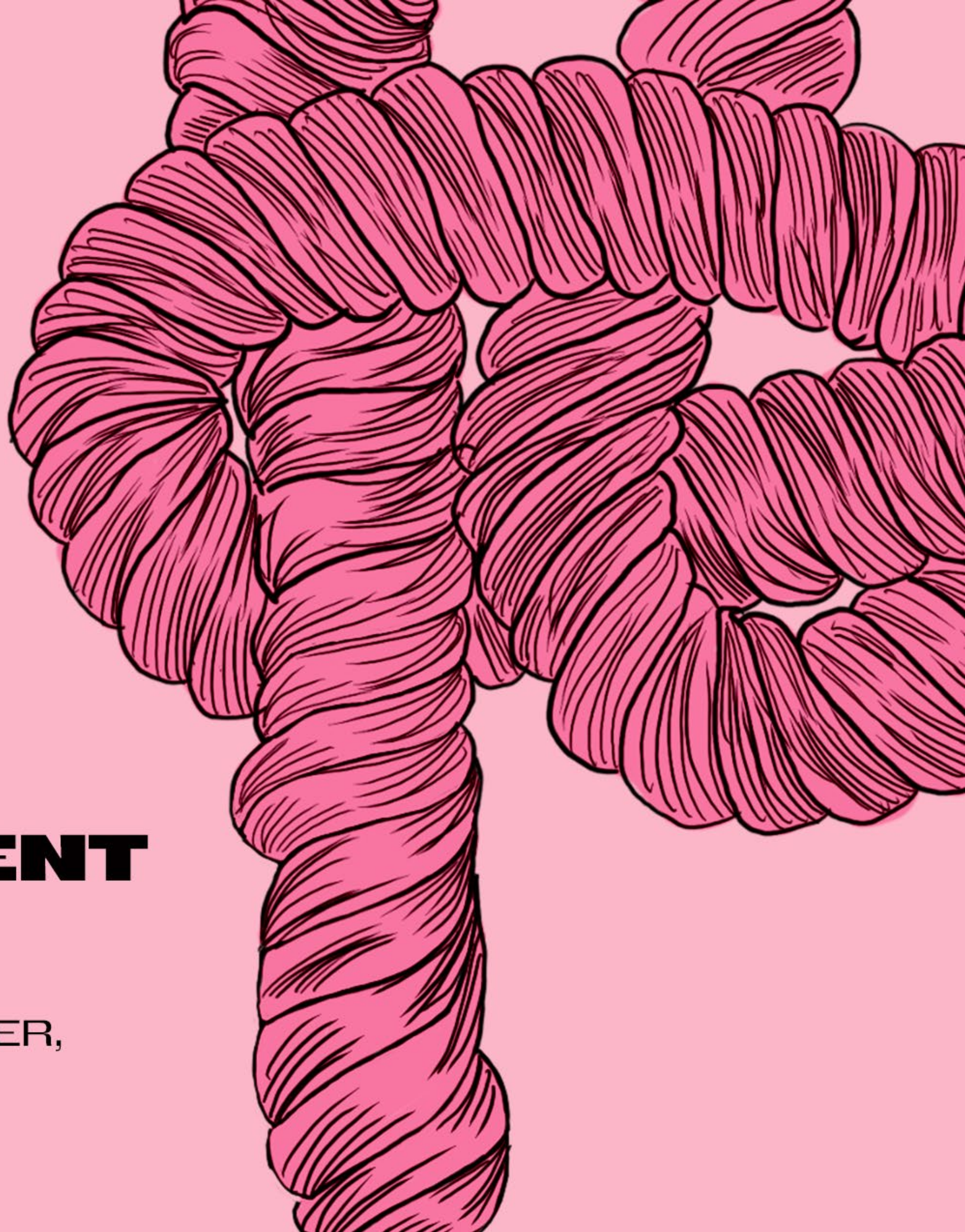
50 Thomson Reuters, "Meta's News Ban Changed How People Share Political Info — for the Worse, Studies Show," *CBC News*, April 15, 2024. https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/meta-block-news-1.7174031.

51 Nic Newman, Richard Fletcher, Craig T. Robertson, Amy Ross Arguedas, and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2024* (Reuters Institute, 2024) https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-06/RISJ_DNR_2024_Digital_v10%20lr.pdf.

52 Joan Fontcuberta, *La Furia de las Imágenes* (Gustavo Gili, 2016).

53 Eduardo Leite Vasconcelos and Suzana Oliveira Barbosa, "Journalistic Images: Contemporary Challenges for Visual Research in Digital Journalism," *Social Sciences* 13, no. 9 (2024): 459, https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13090459.

54 Greice Schneider, "Por uma abordagem narrativa do fotojornalismo contemporâneo," in *Jornalismo e Tecnologias Digitais*, ed. Carlos Eduardo Franciscato, Josenildo Luiz Guerra, and Lilian Cristina Monteiro França (Aracaju: Editora UFS, 2015), 49–66.



TRUST IN EMBODIMENT

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TRUST IN EMBODIMENT

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embodied (adj): *full-bodied-feeling, a body that is sensory.*

(em)bodily trust (v): *to embody / to inhabit / to be in trust with and from the space of the body; (n): sensation of trust emerging with and from the space of the body.*

Trust begins within. Philosophers, psychologists, and scholars alike have identified the body as a site where trust can engender a sense of self, knowledge, and autonomy.[55] Indeed, to be embodied, that is to access a feeling of fullness within the body, requires trust. At the same time, technology carries its own forms of embodiment and sense-making.[56] Mechanized prosthetics extend and augment the physical body; activity monitors track movement and heart rates to develop "readiness scores;" health apps document physical changes like menstruation, ovulation, and water intake; and artificial intelligence conjures images of humans, both "real" and "imagined."[57] Each of these technological extensions, readings, analyses, and creations of our bodies capture and communicate a digitized sense of what the body is and can be.

As technologies seek more and more access to our thoughts, bodies, and our whole selves, we argue that developing both an internal and collective sense of what it means to locate trust within the body is vital. We present trust in embodiment as a key framework for accessing and asserting bodily agency amidst technological expansion. We center marginalized bodies in our discussion about the fraught, vulnerable, fluctuating, and sensory qualities of trust and technology.

- How and when does technology portray itself as giving us objective information about our bodies (even if it may not be accurate)?
- What does it mean to trust digital representations of the body?
- Who "owns" the digital/technological body?

To unpack issues of trust and technology through the lens of embodiment, we must first discuss vulnerability. Whenever there is a body at stake, there is an inherent vulnerability required to fully reckon with matters of trust. From a relational and sociological standpoint, trust can only exist where risk and uncertainty are involved.[58] Technology engenders vulnerability through its exertion of ownership over digitized bodies. For example, terms and service agreements in menstruation trackers can signify ownership over user data that allows companies to use this information at their discretion.[59] For people who face oppression based on their bodies (Black, Indigenous, AAPI, Latinx, women, queer, transgender, and disabled people) or how they choose to use them (sex workers, drug users, activists) vulnerability can structure daily life, placing them

55 Margaret Macintyre Latta and Gayle Buck, "Enfleshing Embodiment: 'Falling into Trust' with the Body's Role in Teaching and Learning," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 40, no. 2 (January 2013):315–29, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2007.00333.x; Btihaj Ajana, "Digital Health and the Biopolitics of the Quantified Self," *DIGITAL HEALTH* (February 2017), https://doi.org/10.1177/2055207616689509; Carolyn McLeod, *Self-Trust and Reproductive Autonomy* (MIT Press, 2002).

56 Júlia Keserű, *From Skin to Screen: Bodily Integrity in the Digital Age* (Mozilla Foundation, 2024), https://assets.mofoprod.net/network/documents/V4_Design_copy_Skin_to_Screen.pdf.

57 Katja Franko Aas, "'The Body Does Not Lie': Identity, Risk and Trust in Technoculture," *Crime, Media, Culture* 2, no. 2 (August 2006): 143–58, https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659006065401.

58 Coye Cheshire, "Online Trust, Trustworthiness, or Assurance?" *Daedalus* 140, no. 4 (October 2011) :49–58, https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00114.

59 Bridget G. Kelly and Maniza Habib, "Missed Period? The Significance of Period-Tracking Applications in a Post-Roe America," *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters* 31, no.4 (September 2023):2238940, 10.1080/26410397.2023.2238940.

at higher risk of harm at the hands of technology. Moving through a world in which their bodily autonomy is threatened, marginalized people are rendered vulnerable when technologies encode and entrench bodily harms and seek ownership of digital representations of the body.

Although it is often seen as negative, vulnerability is also necessary for developing relationships, being creative, and opening up new possibilities.[60] In this sense, vulnerability can also present an opportunity for a "radical openness" that rejects society's aim to restrict vulnerable groups like women and non-binary people and aims instead for loud, unapologetic wholeness.[61] Sex workers, for example, deftly navigate and shape digital environments to meet their labor standards and assert their right to a safe work environment.[62] In this sense, technologies that render us vulnerable to harm by exerting ownership over or forcibly redefining how our bodies can be subverted through creativity.

In addition to finding power in vulnerability, developing trust in embodiment requires us to turn inwards in search of grounding truths. In the same way that trust is an ongoing process, so is the body: as Athena Colman writes, "the body is always arriving."[63] In this state of constant change, rooting our notions of trust in our bodies can feel challenging. Yet because the body is always in flux, our relationship to it can illuminate unchanging constants. Scholars have explored methods of rooting trust in the body as a way to understand, define, discover, and conceptualize objective knowledge in relation to technology.[64] They demonstrate that it is only through sourcing trust and knowledge in Black bodies, women's bodies, disabled bodies, and other marginalized bodies that other ways of being are illuminated and white heteropatriarchal technologies are destabilized. In this sense, the body itself is a technology that conveys sacred information through somatic sensations.[65]

"**Moving through a world in which their bodily autonomy is threatened, marginalized people are rendered vulnerable when technologies encode and entrench bodily harms and seek ownership of digital representations of the body.**

Understanding that sensation, emotion, and liberation are intertwined, Audre Lorde proclaims "I feel therefore I can be free."[66] Reflecting on this feeling of liberation, we developed the term *(em)bodily trust* to describe both the sensation of trust emerging from within the body and the actions that allow us to wrestle back ownership and representation of our bodies from oppressive technologies. When we encounter digital representations of bodies (i.e., fitness metrics,

60 Kristina Popova, Rachael Garrett, Claudia Núñez-Pacheco, Airi Lampinen, and Kristina Höök, "Vulnerability as an Ethical Stance in Soma Design Processes," in *Proceedings of the 2022 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems,* CHI '22 (April 2022): 1–13, https://dl.acm.org/doi/fullHtml/10.1145/3491102.3501994.

61 Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Sarah Friedland, "Habits of Leaking: Of Sluts and Network Cards," *Differences* 26 no. 2 (September 2015):1–28, https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-3145937.

62 Helen M. Rand, and Hanne M. Stegeman,"Navigating and Resisting Platform Affordances: Online Sex Work as Digital Labor," *Gender, Work & Organization* 30, no. 6 (August 2023):2102–18, https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13047.

63 Athen Colman,"Crossing Spaces, Traversing Styles: A Transfeminist Mobilization of Merleau-Ponty," *Comment S'en Sortir?* no. 2 (2015):108–123; Oliver, Akilah, *then she said dialogues: flesh memory* (mightboat books, 2015).

64 Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3(1988):575–99. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066; Sandra Harding, "'Strong Objectivity': A Response to the New Objectivity Question," *Synthese* 104, no. 3 (September 1995):331–49, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01064504.

65 adrienne maree brown, *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* (AK Press, 2019); Neema Githere, *Data Healing Workbook* (Issuu, 2024), https://issuu.com/neemasiphone/docs/copy_of_data_healing_workbook_2024_vbeta_edition_.

66 Audre Lorde,"Poetry Is Not a Luxury," in *Sister Outsider : Essays and Speeches, Crossing Press Feminist Series* (Crossing Press, 1977).

AI-generated images, and virtual avatars), *(em)bodily trust* can provide a source of grounded knowledge about whether or not to trust them. It allows us to remain grounded in a full-bodied feeling of trust that we can turn (in)to when technology attempts to define us.

In this case study, Zelly Martin examines the relationship between generative AI's problematic representations of women and trust, which are both shaped by gender, race, and class.

Where feminist scholars once saw the digital world as offering the potential for unlinking the mind from the body (which some considered to be the root of patriarchal oppression aimed at women and non-binary people),[67] the rise of open social media which required "authentic" identity disclosure for participation has troubled the extent to which the digital world provides opportunities for "flexible" identities.[68] Technological "tools" are indeed imbued from conception with social values, including patriarchy, ableism, and racism.[69] Revenge porn orchestrated with generative AI is an emblematic case study. While deepfakes of Taylor Swift made headlines across the globe, much more concerning is the rise of teenagers using generative AI to create revenge porn targeting their classmates in the U.S. and around the world.[70]

Chun and Friedland highlight that societal discourse surrounding the leaking of sexual images of women and children reconfigures patriarchal understandings of female sexuality as a binary between open and closed, slut and virgin, sin and virtue.[71] Women and girls who are highly online and who "allow" such images to exist in cyberspace are permanently "ruined," as the images are out there forever, and thus their subjectivity — "inseparable from her online subjectivity" — can never be repaired through being "closed."[72] They note that these "victims'"are told that the only way to be safe is to be offline — as such, women and girls are forced back into the closed, private sphere, kept pure through restricting their participation. Strategies of participation through semi-closed digital spaces like creating "refracted publics" [73] and mobilizing end-to-end encryption[74] suggest that women, girls, and non-binary individuals continue to struggle with full participation in public online spaces, characterized not only by extreme leakiness[75], but also by patriarchal violence.

So, what do we make of these "victims" when the images are entirely automated? How do we speak of those who did nothing "wrong,'" who perhaps have yet to engage in sexual activity in the physical world — some victims were as young as 11 — but whose physical likenesses are used to create sexually promiscuous digital subjects? Where previous digital technologies allowed for the rapid and public dissemination of images and videos depicting private sexual acts, generative AI now facilitates the rapid and public dissemination of images and videos depicting acts that never occurred. But in speaking of these individuals as "victims" — "fully clothed" [76] — and the need for "state laws and policies to protect their girls,"[77] we (perhaps inadvertently) reproduce the idea that sexuality "ruins" girls, most especially white, heterosexual girls, who are held up as the ultimate and most sympathetic victims.[78]

While the girls victimized by generative AI porn in Spain and Alabama should of course be supported wholeheartedly, we must shift the discourse casting generative AI revenge porn as wholly new and exceptional. Those who are "less sympathetic" in that they have actually engaged in the sexual acts that are leaked and disseminated have, critically, been stripped of agency over their sexuality and bodies in the same way as the girls who never engaged in the acts in the first place. This is where we must call upon the framework of trust.

From time immemorial, trust has been gendered, racialized, and classed. White male property owners were historically trusted as "reliable witnesses."[79] White women's sexuality has been both policed by white men and weaponized against men of color through trusting white women over men of color — at times resulting in their death — for centuries in America).[80]

67 Sadie Plant, "On the Matrix: Cyberfeminist Simulations," in *Cultures of Internet: Virtual Spaces, Real Histories, Living Bodies*, ed. Rob Shields (Sage, 1996).
68 Plant, "On the Matrix."
69 Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor* (St. Martin's Publishing Group, 2018).
70 Derek Robertson, "In Schools, Deepfake Nudes Have No Easy Answers," *Politico*, May 29, 2024, https://www.politico.com/newsletters/digital-future-daily/2024/05/29/for-deepfake-nude-victims-the-future-is-already-here-00160483; Maroosha Muzaffar, "Spain Court Sentences 15 Schoolchildren over AI-Generated Naked Images of Classmates," T*he Independent*, July 10, 2024, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/spain-almendralejo-teens-ai-naked-deepfake-b2577067.html.
71 Chun and Friedland, "Habits of Leaking."
72 Chun and Friedland, "Habits of Leaking," 15.
73 Crystal Abidin, "From 'Networked Publics' to 'Refracted Publics': A Companion Framework for Researching 'Below the Radar' Studies," *Social Media + Society* 7, no. 1 (2021), https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120984458.
74 Sarah Myers West, "Survival of the Cryptic: Tracing Technological Imaginaries across Ideologies, Infrastructures, and Community Practices," *New Media & Society* 24, no. 8 (January 2021):1891–191,. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820983.
75 Chun and Friedland, "Habits of Leaking."
76 Guy Hedgecoe, "AI-Generated Naked Child Images Shock Spanish Town of Almendralejo," *BBC*, September 23, 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-66877718.
77 Gillian Brooks, "Demopolis Middle School Students Use AI to Create Pornographic Images of Female Classmates," *WRBC News*, December 15, 2023, https://www.wbrc.com/2023/12/15/demopolis-middle-school-students-use-ai-create-pornographic-images-female-classmates/.
78 Chun and Friedland, "Habits of Leaking."
79 Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*, (Princeton University Press, 1985).
80 Tracey Owens Patton and Julie Snyder-Yuly, "Any Four Black Men Will Do: Rape, Race, and the Ultimate Scapegoat," *Journal of Black Studies* 37, no. 6 (July 2007): 859–95, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934706296025.

Women of color, on the other hand, are often not trusted when they report sexual assault,[81] and are burdened with the layered oppression of racialized capitalism's hypersexualization of Black femme bodies[82], white supremacy that devalues their embodied experiences, and, as Jennifer Gómez writes, "the burden on Black women and girls to protect their community at the expense of themselves."[83]

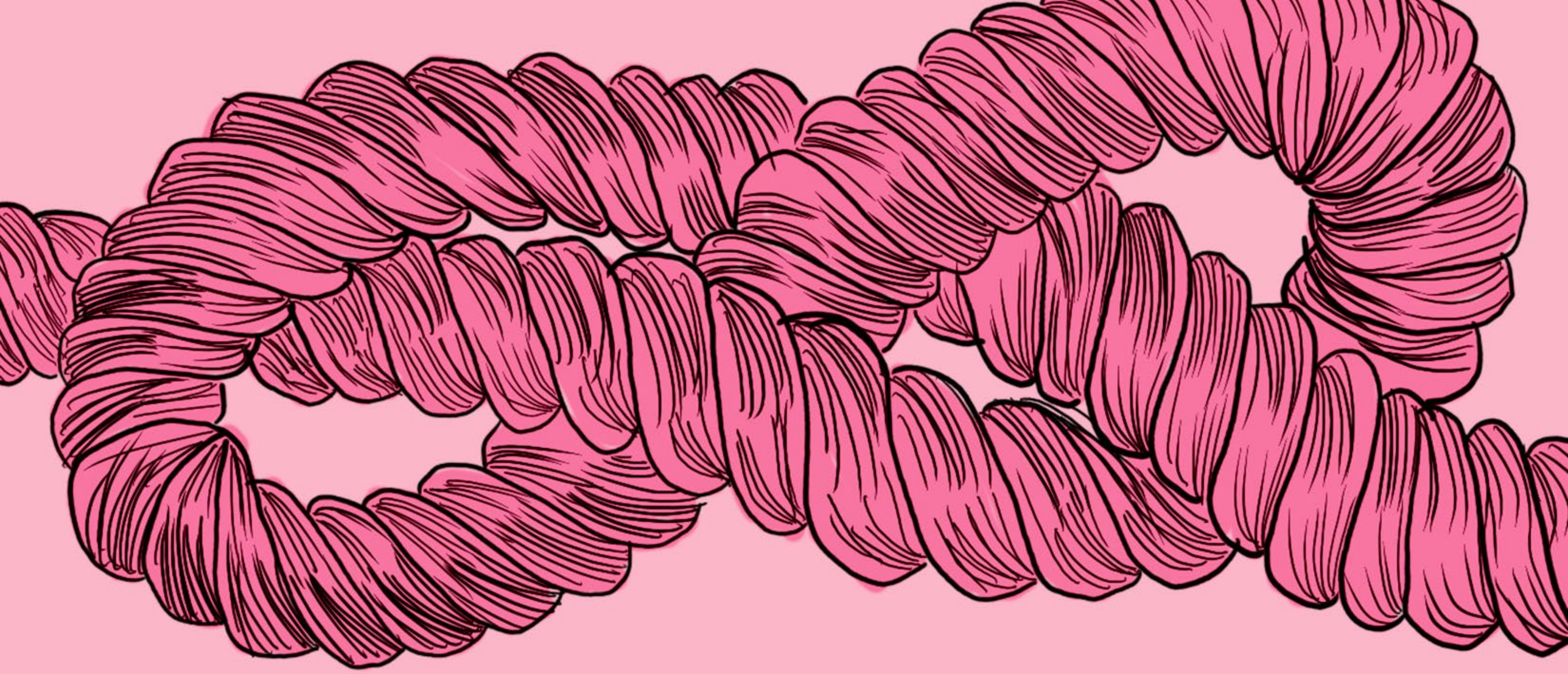
Who we — as a society — trust is inherently tied to the body of the trusted or untrusted, especially their gender and race. In the age of generative AI, all of these tensions will be reinvigorated. Which "victims" will be trusted when they say sexual imagery was AI-generated? Which will not? Who will be accused of "asking for it"? Who will be held up as the perfect victim? Rather than reproducing the binary of victim/predator and virgin/whore, our discourse surrounding generative AI revenge porn must take into account 1) our historical tendencies toward trusting only those who fit a certain (racist, patriarchal, classist, ableist) mold, 2) our desire to box in women's and girls' sexuality, 3) the inherent links between the digital and physical bodies, and 4) our misunderstanding of technology and technologically-produced content as somehow "objective," when indeed they are value-laden — and embodied — from the start.

This case study demonstrates how digital technologies and trust — both imbued with gendered, racialized, and classed values — aid in harmful digital representations of women, girls, and non-binary people. Generative AI disseminates automated images and visuals of femme bodies depicting acts that never occurred or sexual acts that leaked without their permission. When technology attempts to define marginalized bodies, *(em)bodily trust* asks us to return to the body for knowledge and agency. When we pay attention to internal cues, seek information from within, and locate trust in/as Black bodies, women's bodies, disabled bodies, and other marginalized bodily ways of knowing, we are able to question the objectivity and validity of digital technologies, and reimagine its possibilities and constraints.

81 Karen McQueen, Jodie Murphy-Oikonen, Ainsley Miller, and Lori Chambers, "Sexual assault: Women's voices on the health impacts of not being believed by police," *BMC Women's Health* 21, no. 1 (May 2021): 217, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-021-01358-6.

82 bell hooks, *Black looks: Race and representation* (Routledge, 1992); Wright, Maxine K., "Blackfishing," In *Consuming Bodies: Body Commodification and Embodiment in Late Capitalist Societies*, ed. Jackie Hogan and Sarah Whetstone (Routledge, 2024), 66-86, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003325970.

83 Jennifer Gómez, "Rape, Black men, and the degraded Black woman: Feminist psychologists' role in addressing within-group sexual violence," *The Feminist Psychologist: Newsletter for the Society of the Psychology of Women* (*American Psychological Association Division* 35) 42, no.2 (2015): 12–13; Jennifer M. Gómez and Robyn L. Gobin, "Black Women and Girls & #MeToo: Rape, Cultural Betrayal, & Healing," *Sex Roles* 82 (January 2020):1–12, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01040-0; Gail Elizabeth Wyatt, "The aftermath of child sexual abuse of African American and White American women: The victim's experience," *Journal of Family Violence* 5, no.1(1990): 61–81, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00979139.



TRUST IN RELATIONALITY

BY LIVIA GAROFALO,
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TRUST IN RELATIONALITY

By Livia Garofalo, Eirlani Abdul Rahman, Hanna Barakat, Siera Dissmore, Ana Ramirez, and Daniela Rosner

Trust is eminently relational. It is embedded in social connections, intimate bonds, and institutional agreements. It has also been wielded in ways that have been exclusionary and extractive. Western conceptualizations of trust have often focused on rationality, calculation, and individualism in assessing what is considered "trustworthy." Oftentimes, encouragement "to trust" has been a shorthand for convincing others to abide or not question, a form of persuasion that is far from a bond of reciprocity. This hegemonic language of trust has also been used to describe financial and economic arrangements (e.g., trustees, private trusts, and state bonds).

In this essay, we reflect on the etymologies, epistemologies, and practices of trust as rooted in hegemonic understandings and ask how contesting such understandings might illuminate both traditional and novel ways of relating with technology and one another. By thinking beyond dominant Western perspectives, we present a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of this crucial social phenomenon. Drawing from Indigenous, feminist, community-based conceptualizations of trust, we work towards a non-hegemonic definition of *relational trust* that offers valuable insights into the diverse ways that trust is experienced and understood across different cultures, contexts, and technologies.

- How can we reframe technology as an ecosystem of relationality? What are some alternative ways this has already been or can be further achieved beyond the hegemonic canon?
- How can we promote more just and equitable relationships based on reciprocal and mutually beneficial forms of trust?
- How can we use refusal to establish ideas, practices, and common guidelines of collective care?

Hegemonic understandings of trust often center several key ideas: rationality and calculation, verification and evidence, individualism, and Western-centrism. In the Global North, trust is often viewed as a calculated risk and evaluated based on rational assessments of reliability, competence, and predictability. This perspective emphasizes measurable factors and minimizes the role of emotions or subjective experiences. Relatedly, hegemonic assessments of trustworthiness often place strong emphasis on verifiable evidence and empirical data leading to an over-reliance

circle of trust (n): *a safe space that allows one to bring one's full self into the circle. Circles can be powerful but also disjointed, they can be exclusionary or elitist (like a closed circle of the powerful). Based on the Native American practice that has also been used in Quaker circles.*

networks of care (n): *collectives or groups of people who build systems of safety among each other (whether it be networked information, goods, etc.) Not only are these networks examples of sharing safety-related information but are also a continuation of ways of being. A digital "network of care" can be viewed as a continuation of collective sensemaking that decenters the individual and prioritizes the collective interest of the community.*

relational trust (n): *trust that is rooted in reciprocity, centered in collectivity and community, open to emotion, and linked to spirituality; opting into "trust" is grounded in community.*

on quantifiable measures and a devaluing of more nuanced or subjective forms of trust. Western approaches also frequently frame trust as an individualistic phenomenon, focusing on the trustor's assessment of the trustee's characterand trustworthiness.

Each of these dominant understandings of trust are rooted in Western philosophical and social traditions which often do not adequately capture the diverse ways trust is understood and experienced across the globe. This limited definition of trust carries significant epistemic consequences including the marginalization of forms of trust that are based on intuition, emotion, shared values, or collective experiences; reinforcing existing power imbalances by privileging the perspectives and experiences of dominant groups; and limiting our ability to understand and navigate trust in complex and diverse social and cultural contexts.

Relying upon dominant Western, individualistic, and rationalistic perspectives of trust obscures traditional, alternative, and enduring forms of trust. To uplift ways of knowing and being that have existed long before Western epistemologies and continue to, we highlight the importance of refusal as a practice of collective care. Refusal, in this context, can be a powerful tool for challenging harmful systems, prioritizing collective well-being, and driving social and political change.[84] This practice is informed by traditional and evolving approaches to trust-building including: Indigenous knowledge systems that uplift reciprocal relationships with the land, ancestors, and other beings; a feminist ethics of care that emphasizes the importance of empathy, compassion, and interdependence, particularly for those who are vulnerable or marginalized; and community-based initiatives that prioritize collective well-being and social justice.

De-centering hegemonic understandings of trust by re-centering traditional approaches ushers in a new notion of trust that is *relational and contextual* (shaped by cultural norms, social hierarchies, and power dynamics); *collective and communal* (rooted in shared values, histories, and experiences within communities and prioritizing the well-being of the group over individual interests); *emotional and affective* (including intuitive and embodied forms of knowing such as empathy, compassion, and shared feelings of belonging); *spiritual and moral* (linked to spiritual beliefs, moral values, faith, intuition, and ethical commitments); and *reciprocal and responsible* (maintained through acts of care, ongoing engagement, mutual support, and shared responsibility).

When we unravel trust through a lens of relationality, we radically expand and reframe trust to reflect an ongoing process of interaction and negotiation within social relationships. Neither fixed nor universal, relational trust is embedded within complex social and cultural contexts.[85] Similarly, technology is embedded within these same complexities and can be viewed as an intricate network

84 Tina Campt, *Listening to Images* (Duke University Press, 2017), 1–152; Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

85 Jack Barbalet, "Trust and the Social: A Relational Approach," *Sociologica* 12, no.1 (2018): 1–18.

of interconnected systems and components. To foster trust in relation to and with technology, we must prioritize transparency and accountability, cultivate user trust, and foster interoperability and collaboration. Practices like the open disclosure of data collection and usage practices and clear explanations of algorithmic decision-making can help ensure mechanisms for accountability and redress. Design systems that prioritize user privacy, security, and control can also build trust through clear and concise communication, easy-to-understand interfaces, and responsive customer support. Finally, we encourage open standards and data sharing to enable seamless and trustworthy interactions between different technologies and platforms.

In the first case, Hanna Barakat examines how Palestinians face layers of restrictive physical landscape (e.g., which roads they can drive on and which areas they can access) and digital landscapes (including internet shutdowns, limited access to 4G, and de-platforming and removal from Apple and Google Maps).

Faced with layers of immobility, Palestinians leverage the affordances of the Facebook platform to provide a sense of trust on a platform that systematically seeks to undermine their existence. Two key aspects emerge:

1. Trust lies in social relationships. The social affordances of Facebook's platform, such as the ability to see others' profiles, full names, villages, and friends are a method of vetting that contributes to trustworthiness. Mutual connections also function as subnetworks for specific navigation routes, and posts provide windows into social networks based on governorates, driving patterns, friendships, and familial relations.
2. A reliance on visual epistemologies. Social media groups on Facebook almost entirely consist of visual content. Palestinians routinely share images of roads without written geographic information, relying on a shared visual culture and intimate perceptual knowledge of the physical landscape (such as the architecture of a checkpoint, the style of construction on a road, or the color of license plates). Even in the digital realm, trust is tied to deep collective knowledge of the land.

Taken together, Palestinians sharing information in group chats become a digital "network of care" (as first used by Amahl Bishara, 2010).[86] Sharing information through these networks is not just a safety tactic developed in response to settler-colonial control but serves as a continuation of culture, community, and safety practices (such as using hand signals and radio broadcasts to report on road closures or settler violence) that prioritizes the collective interest of the community.

86 Amahl Bishara, "New Media and Political Changes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Assembling Media Worlds and Cultivating Networks of Care," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 3, no. 1 (2010):63–31.

In a second case, Ana Ramirez looks at how Indigenous entrepreneurs, particularly of Maya descent, utilize digital platforms to facilitate the exchange of information and goods, as it relates to traditional Maya clothing. In her own words, she describes how networks of care are essential to building and cultivating these connections across time.

> I look at how Indigenous entrepreneurs, particularly of Maya descent, utilize digital platforms to facilitate the exchange of information and goods related to traditional Maya clothing. Due to documentation limitations hindering travel, these entrepreneurs rely heavily on information and communication technologies. They leverage platforms like Facebook, using features like images and live streams, to establish trust with Indigenous craftspeople in Guatemala and transport Indigenous clothing to the United States. Similarly, they utilize Facebook to connect with Indigenous diasporic communities across the US, employing images and live streams to foster trust and facilitate sales. In doing so, they actively promote the continuation of Indigenous cultural practices. Despite ongoing settler-colonial pressures, Indigenous individuals employ social media platforms such as Facebook, Messenger, and WhatsApp to forge transborder networks, preserving traditions and supporting Indigenous livelihoods.

In both cases, a relational approach to trust helps us see how trust itself is always in the process of becoming. It is not a measurable, definable, or calculable property of systems, but instead a reciprocal bond made and remade to subvert, survive, and resist. Even as the technologies of settler colonialism spread to the digital realm, demanding tradeoffs and submission to surveillance in exchange for their use, communities show up to bend and tweak and extend and tangle these technologies into cultural practices they can trust. The result is something best called “care” which continues to knit together communities regardless of place or time.

CONCLUSION

By Maia Woluchem and Joan Mukogosi

> **"It matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories."**
>
> — **Donna Haraway**, *Staying with the Trouble*

At the time of this publication, we are amidst a calamity of trust. As institutions constructed to protect public health, education, and dignity rupture around the globe, the networks and social relationships we have built are also beginning to fray. The locus of control between body, community, and nation-state is shifting, and we anticipate a cleavage on the horizon: trust is and will continue to be one of the preeminent issues of our time. Carrying the interwoven explorations of trust and its many meanings in this anthology, we invite readers to resist the pull towards devolving social ties and instead animate these ideas about what and how trust can be redefined through action. With the understanding that trust is an eminently relational concept, borne of its beholder, the contexts in which it is used, and the direction it is facing, we invite you into this opportunity for reemerging praxis.

As we discussed in this volume, technology amplifies and complicates trust and its many contestations. Trust is a structural force in our society that clarifies, helps us navigate, and also multiplies the ambient chaos facing us now. With the emergence of AI-mediated services, materials, and experiences; a media environment that must make meaning of these fallible artifacts; and a public wearied by this exercise; we are reaching a point of tension that will force us all — as individuals, and as a larger collective body — to meet this moment with something new: trust redefined. It is up to us to help shape these changes by better understanding the impacts of these evolving technologies and considering the multitude of ways we can intervene.[87]

This volume provided four interconnected definitions of trust, tools for meeting this moment, and ways of finding agency and meaning within it.

If we imagine trust to be a knot, looped and threaded by social and relational ties, information is the fiber that provides the terms for debate and persuasion. As the authors of this first essay contend, *trust in information* is "located in networks, produced relationally, and as making and

87 Octavia E. Butler, "A Few Rules for Predicting the Future," *Essence Magazine*, May 2000.

marking subjects." It is yet to be seen how these epistemological building blocks will continue to transform the ideas, tools, and techniques that we understand as essential to our shared infrastructure. For example, as the amount of AI-generated information continues to proliferate, sometimes without clear notice of its origins, how much clash should we expect between knowledge generated by people, states, technology, and corporations? Will collective archives mediate these sociotechnical arrangements? By questioning how we come to trust information and exploring the conditions and relations that produce *good enough information*, the authors of this essay underscore the strength of collective and community-based contextualization, a critical tool for assessing information in an era of rampant mis- and dis-information.

> **If we imagine trust to be a knot, looped and threaded by social and relational ties, information is the fiber that provides the terms for debate and persuasion.**

Carrying this thread of networked context, *trust in institutions* recenters a vision of community as a critical intervening structure, borne of a deeply rooted expertise and imbued with all the necessary power, networks, and knowledge to rebuild what has been broken. While technology and media can cleave the way trust is mediated through these networks, sharpening long-standing suspicion into distrust and distributing longstanding institutional harms more efficiently, liberatory visions of community institutions provide important counterbalance to the fray. Relocating institutional power and authority to include community-based approaches, the authors of this essay add an additional site for organizing in the face of uncertain information and fractured infrastructures.

To engage community *as* institution, *(em)bodily trust* asks of us all something essential: When technology complicates our sense of networked information, destabilizes treasured institutions, and attempts to define our bodies, how will we make ourselves whole again? This concept encourages us to center the idea that we all defy description, we are always arriving, and we are always a truth yet uncovering itself. It requires an engagement with the very matter of trust, where it emerges from, and how it can be shaped. If we are to remake trust as a knot, and one that is carefully constructed, trust in embodiment provides a framework for radical vulnerability that is strengthened through relational ties.

Tying together each of these binds, threads, and loops of a trust-knot, *trust in relationality* offers a return and recentering of epistemologies that far precede us. The authors argue that traditional systems of knowledge and ways of relating provide blueprints for strengthening collective and

communal, spiritual and moral, and contextual and reciprocal trust in the face of multi-sided threats fueled by technologies of power. Calling to these deep networks of care enable us to surpass state violence, transcend a forced way of being, and build ever more embodied, whole, and necessary futures in return.

With these four complimentary threads, we offer a re-configuration of trust that cannot be unilaterally defined nor issued as a top-down mandate. Trust, as we (re)define it, is an informative, community-based, sensorial, and relational collective power. In the midst of systemic power imbalances, faulty techno-futurisms, and attacks on bodily autonomy we invite readers to create trustworthy social entanglements by animating trust in institutions, information, embodiment, and relationality through crowdsourced contextualization, community organizing, radical vulnerability, and strengthened networks of care. Redefining trust through a multifaceted, collective, and non-hegemonic lens, we offer these interwoven threads as tools to withstand concurrent crises by developing a sense of trust that is rooted in internal, relational, and collective sensations.

Just as trust can be tied, unwound, reconfigured, and put to use in numerous ways, we hope to release this anthology as a living document, shaped by each reader. In stable and tumultuous times alike, *trust issues* are eminently salient, existing among us, between us, within us. By reconsidering these trust issues from different perspectives, we aim to not just give them shape but to offer tools with which to make these issues actionable, whether through a certain skepticism, stronger practice, or rightful transformation. We encourage the continued contestation, molding, and shaping of trust in practice. Our call to the readers is to make meaning of these tools within your own work, your relationships, your communities, and your networks.

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Joan is a Research Analyst in the Trustworthy Infrastructures program at Data & Society Research Institute where she studies issues at the intersection of trust, health, and data with a focus on Black activism and expertise. As a social scientist, Joan's work interrogates how Black lives are represented in health data; how health experts contemplate digital documentations of race; and the relationship between anti-Black racism and electronic health records. Her latest research explores how Black-centered birth workers are navigating increasingly data-driven maternal health care in the United States.

Ana Ramirez

Ana Ramirez is an Indigenous (Maya Akateka) bilingual mixed-methods researcher with 10+ years of experience in areas such as education, gender, youth engagement, nonprofits, and healthcare. Based in North Carolina, she is currently a PhD candidate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where her research on Indigenous communities has been funded by the Ford Foundation. Her dissertation seeks to understand how Indigenous migrants in the United States have used technology over time and across borders in their everyday life and how individuals create and sustain networks of communication for their personal, communal, and/or political ends.

Daniela Rosner

Daniela Rosner is a Professor in the Department of Human Centered Design and Engineering (HCDE) at the University of Washington, co-director of the Tactile and Tactical Design Lab, and co-director of the HCDE Masters Program. She holds adjunct appointments in the Department of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies (GWSS), the Department of Digital Arts and Experimental Media (DXArts), and the Allen School for Computer Science and Engineering (CSE). She also

serves as an associate member of the Einstein Center for Digital Futures in Berlin, Germany. She also holds a BFA in Graphic Design from the Rhode Island School of Design and an MS in Computer Science from the University of Chicago.

Tiara Roxanne

Tiara Roxanne is a Purhépecha Mestisaje scholar and artist whose work is dedicated to rethinking the ethics of AI through an anti-colonial cyberfeminist lens. They are currently writing their forthcoming book on digital attunement and the technological haunt with University of California Press. In 2024, Tiara completed their Postdoctoral Fellowship at Data & Society in Trustworthy Infrastructures where they explored Indigenous and Pre-colonial methodologies and practices on and offline. They were also a Salzburg Global fellow in the “Creating Futures: Art and AI for Tomorrow’s Narratives” cohort. As a performance artist and practitioner, they work between the digital and the material using textile, from the space of the body as a site of refusal, dehiscence, decolonization and ceremony. They have presented at ARS Electronica, University of Michigan, Images Festival, Leuphana University, European Media Art Festival, University of Applied Arts Vienna, SOAS London, Duke University, and University College London among others.

Amrita Sengupta

Amrita is a Research and Programme Lead at the Centre for Internet and Society, India. A trained sociologist, Amrita’s research interests and work lie in the areas of artificial intelligence, trust and online harms, platform accountability, information disorders, gender and technology, and sustainability and tech. She holds an undergraduate degree in sociology from Delhi University and a postgraduate degree in internet studies from the Oxford Internet Institute. In the past, Amrita has worked in managing and implementing large scale people practices, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, as well as in conducting and leading long-form research on impacts of tech on businesses and society, with both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Amrita, currently based in Bangalore, India, is on the Board of The Green Web Foundation. This year, Amrita is also a CyberBrics fellow, looking at questions of AI governance and sovereignty at the Centre for Technology and Society-FGV, Rio de Janeiro.

Anubha Singh

My qualitative and interpretive research focused on India, brings transnational attention to how Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning enables new forms of technological governance as it turns to newer sites such as smallholder agriculture. My dissertation-book project is based on an 18-month ethnography of the onion supply chain in India, where I examine the daily practices of AI-enabled AgTech and how it is reshaping farming while redefining the future of smallholder agriculture. My works is informed by and contributes to critical data studies, global media studies, Science and Technology Studies, and Human Computer Interaction.

Eduardo Leite Vasconcelos

Eduardo Leite Vasconcelos holds a PhD in Contemporary Communication and Culture from the Federal University of Bahia (Poscom/UFBA), with a one-year sandwich period at NOVA University Lisbon. He conducts research in digital journalism, photography, photojournalism, image technologies, and visual methodologies. He has a Bachelor's degree in Journalism from the Federal University of Alagoas (UFAL-2013), a specialization in Photography from the University of Araraquara (UNIARA-2016), and a Master's degree in Contemporary Communication and Culture from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA-2018). He has been a member of the Online Journalism Research Group (GJOL/UFBA) since 2016.

Anne L. Washington

Dr. Anne L. Washington is director of the Digital Interests Lab and an Associate Professor of Data Policy at New York University. She currently is on research leave at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS) at Stanford University. Her most recent book, Ethical Data Science: Prediction in the Public Interest was published December 2023 by Oxford University Press.

Maia Woluchem

Maia Woluchem is the director of Data & Society's Trustworthy Infrastructures program. She is an urban planner, educator, and technologist who has worked across government, philanthropy, civil society, and in academia to preserve human rights in the digital realm. Maia is especially focused on building collective understanding around racial capitalism, democracy, and surveillance

in sociotechnical systems, in both domestic and global contexts. Prior to joining Data & Society, Maia created programs, research, and funding strategy as a tech fellow at the Ford Foundation, built research at the Surveillance Resistance Lab, and did transnational advocacy work with the Coalition for Independent Tech Research. She is also an adjunct faculty member at New York University's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, where she teaches about segregation's legacy on public policy. She earned a master's degree from MIT and a bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh.

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GLOSSARY

building trust (v): requires consistent and reliable behavior, open communication, transparency, and a commitment to fulfilling promises. It involves cultivating mutual respect and understanding.

community (as) institution (n): community is a structure, it's a place, it's a defined space, but community can also transcend space.

circle of trust (n): a safe space that allows one to bring one's full self into the circle. Circles can be powerful but also disjointed, they can be exclusionary or elitist (like a closed circle of the powerful). Based on the Native American practice that has also been used in Quaker circles.

dependency (n): to trust someone is to rely on them to treat your dependency on them as a compelling if not universally-overriding reason to act as expected.

embodied (adj): full-bodied-feeling, a body that is sensory.

(em)bodily trust (v): to embody / to inhabit / to be in trust with and from the space of the body; (n): sensation of trust emerging with and from the space of the body.

episteme (n): a way of knowing.

epistemology (n): the study of the different ways of knowing and the limits to what can be known.

information (n): a contextual concept, facts that exist in particular classifications and forms of organization that are networked and changing, it can be used to make persuasive arguments or unsettle previously settled forms of thought, ways of knowing, subjects, and institutions.

maintaining trust (v): demands ongoing effort and a proactive approach to addressing potential breaches. It necessitates regular evaluation of relationships and a willingness to adapt and adjust as needed.

networks of care (n): collectives or groups of people who build *systems of safety* among each other (whether it be networked information, goods, etc.) Not only are these networks examples of sharing safety-related information but are also a *continuation of ways of being*. A digital "network of care" can be viewed as a continuation of *collective sensemaking* that decenters the individual and prioritizes the collective interest of the community.

objective trust (n): this is grounded in verifiable evidence, such as reputation, track record, and adherence to established rules and procedures. It often relies on measurable outcomes and quantifiable data.

relational trust (n): trust that is rooted in reciprocity, centered in collectivity and community, open to emotion, and linked to spirituality; opting into "trust" is grounded in community.

repairing broken trust (v): requires acknowledging wrongdoing, taking responsibility, and demonstrating a genuine commitment to change. It involves actively rebuilding trust through consistent and reliable actions.

social trust (n): this emerges from shared values, norms, and social institutions within a community. It's built on collective experiences and a shared understanding of what constitutes trustworthy behavior.

subjective trust (n): this arises from personal experience and intuition. It's based on past interactions, gut feelings, and individual assessments of character and reliability.

trust (n): a relational concept that both creates kinds of objects, institutions, and people. Trust as a form of relationality sits alongside mistrust and distrust. It can be part of an apparatus of normalization and discipline, and it can be subject to revision and rearrangement.

trust (n): scholars who study trust and institutions also tend to define trust as a condition that emerges out of "dependency" and as a belief that someone or some *thing* will act as expected.

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