

The Profits of Distrust: Citizen-Consumers, Drinking Water, and the Crisis of Confidence in American Government.

By Manuel P. Teodoro, Samantha Zuhlke, and David Switzer. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

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Universal access to safe and affordable drinking water is a pivotal challenge in the United States, receiving renewed attention from the Biden administration's Environmental Protection Agency and mobilizing an emerging coalition of "Water Warriors" dedicated to securing policy change and investment at all levels of government. Drinking-water system failures in Flint, Michigan, and Jackson, Mississippi, have painfully highlighted America's legacy of uneven access and investment in communities of color, in particular. Although the consequences of these failures for communities' health and economic future have often been highlighted in scholarship and in the media, the broader implications for democracy and citizenship have received less attention.

In *The Profits of Distrust: Citizen-Consumers, Drinking Water, and the Crisis of Confidence in American Governments*, authors Manuel Teodoro, Samantha Zuhlke, and David Switzer bring new and creative data to bear on the relationship between drinking water service failures (and, indeed, public service failures more broadly), the faith we have in the state, and our willingness to engage with and support the state's goals of service provision. In this way, the authors position drinking services as a critical window into the relationship between the state and its citizens.

They argue convincingly that the drivers of and solutions to our drinking-water service challenges are bound up with the foundations of US government and our trust in these institutions. When drinking-water systems fail to deliver—because of long-term neglect, underinvestment, or natural disaster—our trust in the providers of these services falters. This is particularly true for marginalized groups who have a more tenuous relationship with the state to begin with and who may identify more strongly with the communities affected. Distrust in government pushes people to spend more of their already limited income on expensive bottled water, which is actively marketed as a safer alternative to tap water. Importantly, the authors also show that distrust in government driven by drinking water service failures also leads people to disengage from the political process and to become increasingly invisible to the decision makers responsible for drinking water provision. In other words, people's "decisions as citizens are bound up in their decisions as consumers" (p. 1).

The authors also take steps to demonstrate that the relationship can work in reverse as well: reliable drinking-water services can build trust, engagement, and support,

creating a "virtuous" rather than "vicious" cycle. Going a step further, they argue that "basic services can (re)build trust in the institutions of government in a skeptical and politically polarized age" (p. 3), possibly introducing new motivations for and suggesting implications of strong management and investment in drinking water systems.

The possibilities for shifting from a vicious to virtuous cycle in the services–citizenship dynamic raise important questions. The authors tend to imply the need to revert to a glorious American past, when state-building and infrastructure investment were pervasive and universal and "improvements in health and prosperity that followed public investments and state regulation established American governments as competent and benevolent" (pp. 191–92). This perspective on the past glosses over the persistent racial and economic inequities in public investments and state regulation, inequities that the authors recognize elsewhere in the book (p. 54). They argue that the needed shift from the status quo to a new era of government trust and legitimacy requires "leadership within government: Visionary politicians or enterprising administrators must make first moves in demonstrating to a wary public that the government is worthy of their trust" (p. 197). They see the emergence of such leadership within government as more likely and more ethically appropriate than change wrought by collective political action. Whether and why this is ultimately the case given historical precedent is an area of research ripe for further examination.

The book begins by laying out Teodoro, Zuhlke, and Switzer's central argument: "that the choices Americans make about the most basic of basic services they receive—the water they drink—reveal deeper lessons about civic life" (p. 2). They review data showing the persistent decline in Americans' trust in government and the equally persistent increase in bottled water sales in the United States over the last 20 years. Given the high cost of bottled water, especially relative to the cost of tap water, this growth raises important questions about why bottled water is a preferred alternative, given the relative safety of tap water in the United States. Rather than a luxury good or status symbol, the authors show that bottled-water consumption is highest among low-income Americans, prompting a closer look at the drivers and consequences of these decisions. The authors introduce the idea of a "distrust premium," or "the marginal cost of defensive spending that citizen-consumers pay due to their distrust of government (p. 62)" as a valuable heuristic for understanding where the private sector fits into this story.

In chapter 2 the authors lay out their theory more broadly, in a way that applies to public services in general and not just drinking water. They provide the mechanisms and hypotheses that link basic service failures, trust in government, choices about political participation and private alternatives, and the incentives and resources for enhancing basic services.

Chapters 3–7 lay out the empirical evidence for the theory proposed. Chapter 3 uses survey data to show that Americans who “have experienced problems with their drinking water trust government less, and that failures in tap water provision predict local commercial water demand” (p. 32). Chapter 4 builds on this analysis, looking specifically at the location and use of drinking-water kiosks. The results show that “the effects of tap water failure on public trust transcend political and service area boundaries. In other words, tap water problems in one place affect citizen-consumer perceptions of tap water in other places” (pp. 32–33). Chapter 5 shows that when people distrust government, they are more likely to “exit” from tap water services to the commercial drinking water market, and that this choice is even more likely for low-income and nonwhite people. Further, the authors show that as bottled water sales rise, voter turnout declines. Chapter 6 shows that the groups most likely to be politically marginalized and alienated, and thus more likely to purchase bottled water, vary throughout the United States and have particular socioeconomic geographies. Chapter 7 shows that the cycle can be reversed and that “political support for public investment in water infrastructure is greater among people who drink tap water and lower among commercial water drinkers” (p. 33).

In chapter 8, the authors synthesize their findings and explore strategies for activating this virtuous cycle. They identify three key priorities for governments and utilities interested in restoring legitimacy and trust: excellence, openness, and equity.

This book and the arguments it puts forward are compelling and original. The authors draw on a wide range of data sources, creatively integrating these to ask novel and important questions about the status of public services and democracy in the United States. It provides a new and needed perspective on the importance of drinking water and the long-lasting and deep-reaching consequences of our failure to maintain these systems, particularly for low-income and racial minority communities. The book should be of interest to students and scholars of environmental justice, public policy, public administration, and urban politics; drinking water equity advocates; and practitioners in drinking water management.

Service above Self: Women Veterans in American Politics. By Erika Cornelius Smith. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2022. 248p. \$32.95 cloth.
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America’s women veterans have emerged as a political force in the past decade—challenging popular conceptions of what women do in the military and, just maybe,

changing the political landscapes for their parties. Less than 2% of American women are military veterans, yet more than 4% of women in Congress have served in the military. Why is this? Who are these women who are excelling in America’s most traditionally masculine halls of power? Where do they come from? And how does their military service shape their candidacies and policies? These are the questions Erika Cornelius Smith’s new book, *Service above Self: Women Veterans in American Politics*, explores.

The emergence of these new candidates comes on the heels of a period of declining representation of military veterans in Congress, and concurrent with an expansion of women’s legally recognized roles in the U.S. military. Anecdotally, these women may be more electable than other candidates when nominated in purple districts. In 2018, Democrat Mikie Sherrill, a former Navy pilot, flipped New Jersey’s eleventh district, after more than three decades of it being in Republican hands. Or they may simply be more willing to run for Congress than other women, thus overcoming a problem Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox highlighted in their 2005 book *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don’t Run for Office*. To date, there are no published quantitative analyses testing these theories about veteran women as candidates. While that isn’t Smith’s purpose, she maintains that the factors political scientists have identified as preventing women from running for political office may not apply to women who volunteered for service in the male dominated U.S. military.

Smith provides a careful historical overview of women veterans in Congress to provide context for their military and congressional service and trace the impact of their military experience on their political campaigns and priorities. Her analysis is centered on two Republicans, Senator Joni Ernst and former Senator Martha McSally, and two Democrats, Senator Tammy Duckworth and former Representative Tulsi Gabbard, and draws on a variety of primary and secondary sources. Using a more personal approach, Smith traces each woman’s route first to military service and later to Congress, and the forces in her own life that influenced this trajectory and her eventual legislative agenda and approach. The thread that runs throughout the book, unifying the chapters, is the debt that the current generation of veteran women lawmakers owes to those who came before them (p. 163), and how they have paved the way for more American women to succeed in military and political service.

Smith’s chapter on Joni Ernst is representative of the approach she takes to contextualizing the congresswomen’s legislative agendas. Ernst’s support for expanding access to mental healthcare, might at first seem to stem from her military service and its association with PTSD, but Smith traces this instead to Ernst’s childhood in Iowa’s farm country and the high rates of suicide among farmers