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ABSTRACT

Social epistemologists often operationalize the task of indirectly assessing experts' trustworthiness to identifying whose beliefs are more reliably true on matters in an area of expertise. Not only does this neglect the philosophically rich space between belief formation and testimonial utterances, it also reduces trustworthiness to reliability. In ethics of trust, by contrast, explicitly relational views of trust include things like good will and responsiveness. One might think that relational aspects can be safely set aside for social epistemology of trust in experts, that such considerations may be relevant for personal relationships but not for expert trustworthiness. Against these claims I argue for the social-epistemic relevance of relational aspects of trust in experts, and to that end I discuss three sorts of considerations – responsively positive, neutral, and negative factors – that can make a difference for expert trustworthiness.

1. Expert Trust and Reliance

Social epistemologists have long been alive to the significant epistemic challenges of identifying trustworthy experts, whether fellow experts or relative novices are doing the identifying or whether we are trying to differentiate genuine experts from merely putative ones or deciding which among two or more conflicting experts to trust, or to trust more. But because of the significant challenges involved, our training and disciplinary assumptions, or otherwise, it is notable that in practice the task of identifying trustworthy experts tends to be operationalized[1] in ways that are interesting and worthwhile but that miss much of what is distinctive about trust, distrust, and trustworthiness. One way in which we do this is to reduce trust and trustworthiness to reliance and reliability, such that to trust an expert just is to rely on them, and a trustworthy expert is simply a reliable one.

But reliable for what? This complicates the picture a bit. What we might have treated as a one-place property, where some expert X is trustworthy (operationalized as X being reliable), may be reformulated as a two-place relation, where expert X is trustworthy *with respect to* some entrusted object Z (operationalized as X being reliable with respect to Z). The attendant practical-epistemic challenges – How can we tell whether X is trustworthy? How can we tell whether X is reliable? – are then also reformulated, and the challenge becomes how we can tell whether X is trustworthy (or simply reliable) with respect to Z.

The entrusted object Z could be any number of things. In social epistemology we often focus narrowly and nearly exclusively on propositions we should believe as what is entrusted to experts. But in fact people find themselves trusting or withholding trust in experts for a variety of entrusted objects: our health, our money, our children and communities' welfare, and other things including

our beliefs. I propose to complicate things further by applying Baier's (1986) three-place relation of trust to expert dependence specifically, such that an expert X is trusted *by* Y *with respect to* Z. Notice that this three-place relationship so formulated allows for self-trust, novice trust and fellow-expert trust, and individual and collective trust. Either trusted party X or trusting party Y can be individuals or groups. Y can be a total novice, a respected expert, or somewhere in between. Sometimes X *is* Y, or in cases of collective trust, X can be part of Y.

Even as we take ourselves to be interested in expert testimony, often the question of trustworthy expert testimony is itself asked in terms of expert belief. Nested together, the epistemic challenge of identifying more or less trustworthy experts is thus operationalized as finding experts with more or less reliably true beliefs. This is especially neat when what it means to be an expert in a domain is itself viewed as having a sufficiently good collection of (and perhaps a propensity for forming) reliably true beliefs in that domain – in which case trustworthy experts just are genuine experts, social indicators of trustworthy expertise just are indicators of genuine expertise, and when expert conflicts arise the more trustworthy expert just is the one who better knows their stuff, which is to say, the one with more expertise (and thus more credibility) than the other.

Even veritists on expertise like John Hardwig, Alvin Goldman, and David Coady would want us to complicate this neat picture, however. Consider Goldman's analysis of the novice/2-expert problem in his influential paper 'Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?' (2001), which identifies five possible indicators of conflicting experts' relative trustworthiness:

- arguments given by contending experts to support their own views and critique others;
- agreement from additional putative experts on one side or other of the subject in question;
- appraisals by meta-experts of the experts' expertise, including credentials awarded;
- evidence of experts' interests and biases with regard to the question at issue;
- evidence of experts' past track records. (Goldman 2001, 93)

For most of these, Goldman's analysis seems to treat expert testimony and expert belief as largely interchangeable. For example, the evidential significance of fellow-expert agreement is explicated in Bayesian terms, in terms of likelihoods of expert beliefs. This works by running together two senses of agreement, one in which experts share the same belief and the other in which the experts give the same testimony. Or consider the indirect evidential significance of experts' track records. The record of an expert's past testimonies matters, on Goldman's analysis, as a window onto their track record of past beliefs on things in their domain of expertise. These things are surely related, but these two kinds of track records track meaningfully different things. And when Goldman says that conflicts of interest can rightly undermine expert trustworthiness, it is sometimes because what they say conflicts with what they sincerely believe: that is to say, they are lying. Yet lying 'is not the only way that interests and biases can reduce an expert's trustworthiness', Goldman observes. 'Interests and biases can exert more subtle distorting influences on experts' opinions, so that their opinions are less likely to be accurate even if sincere' (2001, 104).

For his part, Hardwig (1991) too takes up trust in experts in terms of experts' reliable belief formation, such that nonexperts are rational in our epistemic dependence on experts because their beliefs are more likely to be true than those that we form on our own. Yet Hardwig also recognizes the relevance of experts' moral and epistemic character to epistemic interdependency. As he puts it, for trusting party A and trusted expert B, 'A must *trust* B, or A will not believe that B's testimony gives her good reasons to believe that p' (1991, 700). As Hardwig sees it, an expert B ideally should be *competent* (knowledgeable about the domain of her expertise), *conscientious*, (which means she does her work carefully and thoroughly), and of course *truthful*. Yet important as they each are, truthfulness, competence, and conscientiousness are not enough. The trustworthy expert must also have *adequate epistemic self-assessment*: she must be honest with herself about the extent of her knowledge, its reliability, and its relevance to the issue at hand. All put together, this means

A not only relies on what B says but *trusts in* her. "The reliability of A's belief depends on the reliability of B's character. B's truthfulness is part of her moral character. Competence, conscientious work, and epistemic self-assessment are aspects of B's 'epistemic character'" (1991, 700).

More recently, in her analysis of nonexpert assessment of scientific expert testimony on climate change, Elizabeth Anderson (2011) identifies three key factors for judgments of trustworthiness:

- assessment of *expertise*: 'one must be able to judge whether testifiers are in a position to know the claims in question';
- assessment of *honesty*: 'whether testifiers are disposed to honestly communicate what they believe – not only to say what they believe but to avoid misleading by reporting only selected beliefs, or beliefs liable to be misinterpreted without further explanation'; and
- assessment of *epistemic responsibility*: 'whether testifiers are responsive to evidence, reasoning, and arguments others raise against their beliefs . . . [and] are basing their beliefs on responsible exercise of their skills' (Anderson 2011, 145–146).

One could take issue with the specifics of Goldman's list as Coady (2012) does for his analysis of expert agreement, or with the specifics of Anderson's list as Stephen John (2018) does for expert transparency. But for present purposes what I want to emphasize is how these indicators all speak to expert trustworthiness in non-relational or generically relational terms. 'The mark of epistemic responsibility is responsive accountability to the community of inquirers', Anderson says (2011, 146). I think this is a great improvement on Hardwig and Goldman, and yet the criteria Anderson presents for judging epistemic responsibility, factors indicating evasions of accountability, while worthwhile in their own right still seem to treat our communities of inquirers rather generically. We have evidence of an expert's trustworthiness *for us* only so far as who *we* are – and experts particular relationship to us, for that matter their different relationships to differently positioned *us*-es – is elided, treated as irrelevant to the question at hand.

2. Relationally Responsive Trust

If we turn from the social epistemology of trust in experts to the epistemology of trust generally and ethics of trust, we find that a common feature across otherwise different accounts is their need to explain what divides trust from mere reliance. These include Annette Baier's explicitly affective analysis of trust and trustworthiness and similar (though of course not identical) views from Karen Jones, Paul Faulkner, and Russell Hardin. Each of these authors differentiate trust from reliance in some significant way; furthermore, each of them foregrounds the relationship between trusting and trusted parties as crucial to the difference. For Hardin (2002) what makes me trust someone is not only that I take them to be generally reliable, but more specifically that they have encapsulated my interests: the trusted party pursues or protects particular interests, at least in part, *because* they are the trusted party's interests. 'It is this fact that makes my trust more than merely expectations about your behavior' (2002, 3). For Jones, it is about our expectations of responsiveness: when we trust someone, she says, we have optimism about her competence on things in our domain of interaction with her, 'together with the expectation that the trusted will be directly and favorably moved by the thought that we are counting on her' (1996, 42). Faulkner similarly locates the difference between what he calls *predictive* trust and *affective* trust in an expectation of responsiveness. With predictive trust I expect you to do or to say something, but I don't expect anything *of* you. With affective trust, Faulkner argues, I expect that you recognize my need to know something and I take the fact that you are telling me something as more than just words, but a favorable response to this recognition of my need to know (2007, 888).

My intention is not to argue which of these authors gives the best account, or even to insist that expert trust must be understood affectively in either Baier or Faulkner's terms. What I find valuable about these various accounts is their common emphasis on relationality. For Baier, trust is not just

a feature of someone's moral or intellectual character, but as noted a 3-place relationship where X is trusted by Y with Z, which draws our attention to the trusted agent, with what they are entrusted, and who trusts them. This may seem a simple point, but when extended to the social epistemology of trust in experts, I find that it complicates things in interesting and fruitful ways. If we ask about social indicators of an expert's reliability, or specifically their reliability on some matter, and even when we extend this to indicators of expert sincerity or epistemic responsibility, different novice or expert evaluators may have different access to such indicators and different appreciation for their epistemic significance. But when relational aspects are acknowledged as relevant, expert trustworthiness itself admits of different answers for differently positioned trusting (or distrusting) novice and fellow-expert parties.

Naomi Scheman (2011) attends perceptively to how differently situated people are in different relation to scientists and other experts in ways that affect not only perceptions of trustworthiness but the rationality of trust itself. To be worthy of someone's trust, it is not enough for an expert to have good moral and epistemic character. Hardwig's account, Scheman writes, 'doesn't address my central concern here, namely the systematically trust-eroding effects of various forms of social, political, and economic injustice' (2011, 219). Nor is it enough to be objective – not as objectivity is traditionally understood. 'Objectivity understood as trustworthiness requires of researchers not detachment but, far more rigorously, responsible engagement', Scheman says; 'not the pretense of being a disinterested observer but the commitment to listening to and learning from a diverse group of individuals and communities who have a stake in the research product' (2011, 172). It is this understanding of objectivity and trustworthiness as responsiveness to different individuals and communities that animates my own project here. I am interested in the ways in which otherwise capable experts' trustworthiness for different parties is a matter of their relational responsiveness, by which I mean that their relationships to dependent others make a difference to such experts in how they pursue and present their work. What relational responsiveness requires more precisely may vary across different relational accounts of trust, and yet as I shall argue, each enables us to appreciate the significance of this aspect of expert trustworthiness in one way or another.

In the following section I seek to illustrate the relevance of relational considerations of expert trustworthiness in three respects, along the way adapting Goldman's criteria as indirect indicators of experts' relational trustworthiness. First and perhaps most straightforwardly are those scenarios in which *responsively positive* factors bolster expert trustworthiness for some trusting party on the matter at hand. Second are scenarios in which *responsively neutral* (which is not to say irrelevant) factors undercut expert untrustworthiness and bolster trustworthiness. Finally and most peculiarly are those scenarios in which *responsively negative* factors seem to actually bolster trust.

3. Indicators of Experts' Relational Trustworthiness

3.1. *Good Will and Positive Responsiveness*

Non-experts judging whether or to what degree they can trust experts need indicators of relational trustworthiness as well as general reliability. This is no small epistemological task, but at least some of Goldman's recommendations might be adapted to that end. Consider evidence of experts' interests, which bears consideration not only because such factors might skew the veracity of expert belief formation but also because they speak to good will or its absence for specific trusting parties. Interests can be positive indicators of relationally responsive expertise: to use Hardin's terms, interested research can be trustworthy for those whose interests are encapsulated by a research project, its methods, its guiding questions, and so on. Track records can also serve as indirect indicators of experts' relational responsiveness. In this case, what we attend to is not only how often a particular expert has been right or wrong in their beliefs or testimony on matters in their areas of expertise, but also their track record of care for us and people relevantly like us.

Following Baier, it bears repeating that good will toward a trusting party and their entrusted objects is not a kind of generic positivity, but then neither must it always be good will for specific, already identified individuals. For example, a medical researcher may (or may not) have good will toward members of the target population of their work without knowing who they are, individually speaking. When many Black Americans rationally withhold trust in the US healthcare system, it is not because they believe specific doctors and nurses to have ill will toward them personally, but because of the nation's long history of racist research practices and healthcare inequities (Dula and Goering 1994; McGary 1999; Almassi 2014). To use Hardin's terms, patients and families worry with good reason that while the interests advanced by the US healthcare system might sometimes coincide with theirs, these interests are not system-atically valued *because* they are their interests. At the same time, a patient (or parent, or family member) may decide to trust a particular doctor, nurse, clinic, or hospital owing in part to their positive responsiveness. *This* medical professional, *this* group of medical professionals, deserves my trust not only because they are highly skilled but also because I have good reason to believe that they care about me and people like me. My (or our) health and well-being matter to them. To use Jones's terms, they are moved by recognition of my (or our) vulnerability and dependence on them.

Goldman finds that fellow-expert agreement and meta-expert appraisal can be useful indicators when trying to decide who to trust among conflicting experts: as he frames things, what matters here are meta-expert appraisals *of expertise* and fellow-experts' *beliefs* on the proposition under dispute. But meta-expert appraisal can be usefully extended to experts' relational responsiveness, where non-expert parties consult those we trust to identify trustworthy experts who are both reliable and favorably moved by recognition of our dependence on them. Those we trust might or might not be experts in the area in question, but they are skilled and motivated to find those who are.

In 'Trust, Expertise, and the Philosophy of Science' (2010), Kyle Whyte and Robert Crease discuss cases of expert tainting as well as healthy trust relationships between scientists and non-scientists, including what they call *trusted mediator* cases. Consider for example the relationship between an indigenous group and environmental scientists at the Nunavik Research Center (NRC) in northern Quebec:

> The Inuits, indeed, have myriad reasons to distrust Western institutions, both horizontally and, of course, vertically, considering the history of Canadian colonial oppression of indigenous people. The Inuits' perception of scientific experts was strained by the fact that, normally, the environmental scientists used to arrive, collect data, and leave, without sharing what they had found. In response, the Inuits designed the NRC to change that, using their financial resources to hire laboratory scientists (2010, 423).

As Whyte and Crease describe it, this is a case of managed distrust. To use Hardin's formulation, we might say that the indigenous group's hiring of lab scientists turned the issue of encapsulated interests on its head. Both Inuits and scientists from Western institutions were genuinely interested in better understanding the effects of global climate change on this region. But given their prior experiences with institutionally affiliated scientists, this Inuit community was rational not to trust such scientists to care about these interests *as* Inuit interests until the NRC was built and scientists' research was then directed to those very interests. Meanwhile the NRC serves as trusted mediator. Those community members running the research center employing the scientists were themselves trustworthy to the larger community, whether on good will, encapsulated interest, expectation, or other conceptions of positive relationality.

3.2. Neutrality in Expert Trustworthiness

Here I do not mean that a trusted expert is unaware of another party's trust, nor that a non-expert has no clear sense of expert responsiveness one way or another, nor that a trusting party is deliberately refraining from taking expert responsiveness into account. What I have in mind rather is substantive neutrality, an expert's active disinterestedness. Consider how expert neutrality might be framed on each of our relational account of trust:

- Baier formulation: the expert in question has neither good will nor ill will toward any of the relevant dependent parties with respect to their entrusted objects;
- Jones/Faulkner formulation: the expert may be aware of others' dependence on them but is unmoved one way or another by this dependence, not only for a particular party but for any actually or potentially dependent party;
- Hardin formulation: the expert encapsulates no one's interests – their work may or may not coincide with various parties' interests, but for none of them does the expert care about or pursue these interests *as* or *because* they are these parties' interests.

What interests me is whether social indicators of expert neutrality so understood can ever rationally bolster experts' trustworthiness for one or more particularly situated trusting or distrusting parties. We can see how this might work, relatively speaking, if one such party previously took an expert to be allied against them. In that case, indicators of their committed neutrality might undercut prior reasons to distrust. Consider agonistic or adversarial situations in which one party previously took an expert to have good will toward their opponent, to have encapsulated said opponent's interests, or to be moved favorably by their recognition of an opponent's dependence on them. In such cases, indicators of an expert's committed neutrality might move one to suspend or reduce their distrust.

When should we actively trust an expert, not in spite but because of their neutrality? Beyond evidence *against* their potential untrustworthiness, can indicators of experts' neutrality be evidence *for* their trustworthiness? On first glance Hardin and Jones would seem to preclude this. Faulkner might allow that neutral yet reliable expert testimony can be predictively if not affectively trusted. Baier seems to be more open-ended, arguing as she does that in trusting we take the other party to have good will or at least not ill will toward us and our entrusted object. In making sense of neutral expert trustworthiness, I find it useful to adapt Baier's conception of trust as a 3-place relationship, such that X may be trusted Y for some entrusted objects Z but not others. Indeed, an expert's track record of resolute neutrality with regard to some potential objects of trust is itself an indicator of why she can be entrusted with others.

I might reasonably trust you more to tell me the truth, for example, because I have reason to believe you do not care about hurting my feelings. Perhaps your prior track record indicates as much; perhaps those whom I trust appraise you as such. We might rationally trust and distrust (or refrain from doing either) the same expert concerning different things, and rationally trust them with some things that we care about *because* they have shown themselves to be disinterested and unmoved about others. This has implications for neutral expert trustworthiness on other relational accounts of trust too. The same expert might do a better job encapsulating some of our (and others') interests because she deliberately refrains from doing so for our other interests. Alternatively, the same expert may try to avoid being moved by recognition of some ways we depend on them so as to be appropriately moved by other aspects of our dependence, aspects more relevant to the area of expertise at hand. Indeed, social indicators of experts' neutrality toward certain matters help us to keep this fact in mind and remember that our expectations of responsiveness are appropriate for some matters in part because they would be inappropriate for others.

3.3. *Negative Responsiveness and Owning the Libs*

If experts' negative responsiveness is directed against us or people like us – if an expert has *ill will* toward us, if they are *unfavorably* moved by their recognition of our dependence, if they act *against* particular interests because they are our interests – this would seem to be a clear indication of their untrustworthiness for us. Even then, of course, this does not necessarily tell us whether this expert is wrong about the issue in question or all things considered whether we should rely on them or not. What it does suggest is that we should not trust them.

Now let us consider another scenario of negative relational responsiveness, this time directed not against us nor against people relevantly like us but different parties entirely. We might say that such things are simply irrelevant to experts' trustworthiness for us; yet there seem to be scenarios in which a person's demonstrated negative responsiveness for one party thereby makes others trust them more. Is this sort of response ever rational, and if so, is it ever applicable to our evaluations of expert trustworthiness?

Rational or not, the contemporary phenomenon of 'owning the libs' seems to be an instance in which a speaker or actor's untrustworthiness for one group is a social indicator of their perceived trustworthiness for another. In her piece for *Rolling Stone*, Eve Peyser ([2018](#)) describes owning the libs as 'blatant self-sabotage for dumb political reasons'. Jonah Goldberg ([2019](#)) differentiates between earnest and ironic forms of this behavior. 'For people who use it earnestly, it means to do something usually symbolic and petty that infuriates liberals out of proportion to the deed to make fools of them', he says. 'The ironic form of the phrase is to engage in unwitting self-sabotage while making a political point'. Contemporary examples of owning the libs are many, including wearing a MAGA hat to a feminist book reading; 'eating horrible pizza at my wedding to own the libs'; Sean Hannity fans smashing their coffeemakers to 'boycott' Keurig; and President Trump's threat to send refugees to San Francisco, New Orleans, and other so-called sanctuary cities (see @OwnTheLibsBot Twitter account for these and other examples). By its nature, owning the libs does not accomplish anything for yourself or your side, nor does it harm liberals in any real way. What really matters is the petty ridiculousness of it all. Lib-owning declarations and behaviors are social indicators of your untrustworthiness for liberal opponents, communicating that you do not wish them well. They should not trust you, and you would not want them to.

Can such behaviors also serve as social indicators of trustworthiness *for* other groups? In the United States, it is not hard to find politicians and pundits who engage in lib-owning behavior to signal their trustworthiness to a base of supporters. Those who do this consistently demonstrate their reliability for those who hate liberals – to the extent that owning the libs is itself among their valued political projects. But to the extent that owning the libs is a signaling behavior rather than its own petty end, it is less clear that trusting someone *because of* their lib-owning is particularly rational. It is one thing if lib-owning is among the trusting parties' goals, desired as an end in itself. As *evidence* of trustworthiness, however, it is not particularly indicative of an actor's competence, of their ability to deliver on more substantive conservative political projects. Whatever force it has seems to be relationally responsive – an indication that you can trust this person because they scorn liberals as much as you do. Yet the fact that they have burned bridges with your enemies does not really show that they mean *you* well, that they care about your interests as your interests, that they are positively moved by recognition of your dependence. Signaling that they are on your side of a political divide does not in itself sufficiently indicate that they are positively responsive to you and your dependency. For all their lib-owning, this person could be a con artist or an opportunist who has yet to demonstrate why you should trust them beyond the demonstration of why your common enemies should not.

In contrast to politicians and pundits, it is harder to find experts or other epistemic authorities doing this. When for example US federal agencies delayed COVID-19 funds and supplies for states under Democratic leadership, by all accounts this decision came from the Trump administration rather than public health experts. The decision to withdraw US membership from and funding for the WHO was similarly driven by political rather than epistemic authorities. This is not to erect a strict

dichotomy between political and epistemic authority, but to recognize that the vast executive authority of the US Presidency does not derive from officeholders' real or putative expertise. All in all, I am skeptical of whether owning the libs or other such instances of negative responsiveness can rationally bolster our assessments of experts' relational trustworthiness.

That said, indicators of experts' untrustworthiness for others could at least undercut potential reasons for our distrust. Consider for example a scientist who repudiates her own corporate-funded research project. Such public repudiation might not only move her former corporate backers to lose their trust in her (although her expertise remains unquestioned) but also make a difference for individuals and communities whose interests run contrary to what the research project had become, to what this scientist now disavows. Of course she will need to do more than this to provide good evidence of her positive responsiveness *for* these individuals, these communities, and their relevant interests. But if her disavowal is sincere and lasting, it could at least undercut prior reasons these individuals or communities had to distrust her, to mitigate the significance of her prior corporate funding as an indicator of her untrustworthiness. It gives these other parties further reason to assess her future words and actions with an open mind rather than suspicion.

4. Conclusions and Complications

In concluding, let us take a moment to ask why one might not recognize relationally responsiveness as relevant for trust in experts.

I have tried to show how relational responsiveness can make a difference for rational trust and distrust in experts on multiple accounts of trust, but I have not said which if any of these accounts is best, nor have I proven that a relational account is the best way to make sense of trust generally. Like Thompson (2017) and Hawley (2019), I have suggested that perhaps we should use another way to distinguish trust from (mere) reliance. Perhaps what is most distinctive about trust, distrust, and trustworthiness is actually something else, such as our commitments and intentions to fulfill them. That is possible, and nothing I have said in this paper proves otherwise. What I hope to accomplish here is more limited, more conditional in scope. To the extent that any of these accounts of trust is compelling, I suggest, they give us reason to attend to indicators of relational responsiveness or lack thereof as relevant for novice/expert and fellow-expert dependency.

One may object not only that I have not shown that expert trust *must* be understood relationally but that furthermore it should not be understood this way at all. Relational responsiveness may be relevant to personal relationships, the objection allows, but not to novice/expert and fellow-expert trust relationships: for those, all that really matters is finding an expert who knows their stuff. My hope is that my remarks in this paper can help to challenge this presumptive dichotomy between personal trust relationships and expert trust relationships. There are differences, to be sure, ranging from our different reasons to trust or distrust family and friends on the one hand and trust or distrust experts on the other, as well as different objects we entrust to family and friends compared to what we entrust to professionals who are relative strangers to us. Each of us trusts experts with things we would not trust to close friends. While such decisions turn in part on their relative capabilities, this alone would be insufficient for rational trust if all that we attended to were indicators of competence and not also indicators of care and conscientiousness. Here I would echo Kristina Rolin (2021) on the relevance of good will for expert trustworthiness and Karen Frost-Arnold's (2013) argument that even experts need moral (that is, on her formulation, broadly affective) trust-worthiness.

Another possible objection is that evaluating experts' reliability can be difficult enough already without complicating matters further by also attending to evidence of experts' positive, neutral, or negative responsiveness for varied trusting parties. I certainly agree that distinguishing between actual and putative expertise and identifying which experts truly know their stuff are vital social-epistemological tasks. But I also think Goldman is right to remind us that the novice/2-expert problem is theoretically and practically important, and practically speaking,

sometimes what we need to know is not which experts know their stuff but which ones we should trust, or trust more. My point is that this latter question is not entirely reducible to identifying expertise or assessing expert reliability. Furthermore, attending to experts' relational responsiveness does not just make evaluations of trust and distrust harder, but also expands the ranger of factors available to us for evaluating overall expert trustworthiness. This might make it more difficult to tell which experts are trustworthy with particular entrusted objects by particular dependent parties, but also easier to tell which ones are not.

Note

1. Here I borrow the notion of operationalization from philosophy of science (see Bridgman 1927; for an initial defense and Chang 2019 for a survey of criticisms), where one reformulates an idea in terms of more straightforwardly measurable (and thus purportedly more properly meaningful) criteria. My thanks to this journal's referee for pushing me to clarify this usage.

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