



Policy, Expertise and Trust in Action (PERITIA)

- Horizon 2020 multidisciplinary research project exploring the conditions under which people trust expertise used for shaping public policy
- T :Coordinator and Project :Leader Prof Maria Baghramian, UCD School of Philosophy and UCD Centre for Ethics in Public Life
- 11 international partners bring together philosophers, social and natural scientists, policy experts, ethicists, psychologists, media specialists and civil society organisations
- The project received funding of 3 million euro from the European Commission



Universiteit Utrecht



PHASE 1: THEORETICAL

WP3 Science Advice
Mechanisms (UIO)

WP4 Trust in a Changing
Media Landscape (UU)

WP5 Social Indicators of
Trust and Trustworthiness
(UN)

WP6 Psychology of Trust
(STRANE)

WP7 Ethics of Trust
(UCD-CEPL)



PHASE 2: EMPIRICAL

WP8 Data Collection &
Analysis of Existing Data
(KCL)

WP9 Experimental
measures of trust &
behavioural determinants
of distrust (UCD-GEARY)

WP10 Behavioural tools for
building trust (UNISR)



PHASE 3: Ameliorative

WP11 Citizens and Experts
Forum on Trust and
Trustworthiness (SAS)



Report to EU
Parliament

Trustworthiness

WP2 Interaction and Public Engagement (ALLEA)

WP1 Project Coordination (UCD)

Currently in Phase 3

- Webpage: <https://peritia-trust.eu>
- **Phase 3: Practical recommendations and outreach**
- Citizens' Fora. Aim: A better understanding of role of trust in experts: London, Dublin, Berlin, Warsaw, Yerevan (completed)
- Essay Competition "Youth on Trust" (<https://peritia-trust.eu/youth-on-trust-essay-collection/>)
- Behavioural Tools for Building Trust : Trustworthiness Toolkit
- Policy Recommendations and Dialogue with Policy Makers (Brussels May 4 and 5, 2023. do please come).

Connections with the Problem of Disinformation

- Trust is experts i epistemic trust (contrasted with interpersonal trust)
- Key Element: Trust in testimony: Trust in what others tell you and you are not in a position to verify directly.
- Testimonial trust and our trust or distrust of experts are directly connected with the spread of fake information.
- Objective: to accept trustworthy testimonies and sources and to distrust the untrustworthy.
- Fake news is untrustworthy, but how do you decide what is fake?
- How do you avoid the post-truth syndrome, where belief is influenced by affective impact and personal connections than by evidence?

PERITIA Trustworthiness Toolkit

- Ensuring reliance on trustworthy media, and avoiding untrustworthy media, is one of the goals of PERITIA. But often family and friends are the trusted source of disinformation and misinformation. **So, a broader approach than media literacy is needed.**

Two possible approaches for addressing the crisis of misinformation and unwarranted trust and distrust.

1. Interventionist. vs
 2. Preventative approaches
- (1) is needed at times of crisis, e.g. Covid, when there is need for immediate intervention (TV advertisement, Government targeted announcements, etc.

Evidence that longer term, preventative methods are more effective in combating the spread of unwarranted trust and mistrust (e.g. , use of critical thinking training to immunize against conspiracy theories).

- The PERITIA Trustworthiness toolkit is a step towards (2) but can also be used as an interventionist method.

Background to the Toolkit

The project poses and answers seven questions. Four of these provide the material for the toolkit

Q.3 What is the role and impact of digital media and new communication technologies on judgements of the trustworthiness of experts

Q4. What are the key indicators of the trustworthiness of the experts? (**WP5**, WPs 8, 9, 10)

Q5. What are the psychological (affective, cognitive) mechanisms involved in trust in experts? (**WP6**, WP8 and WP10)

Q6. What are the essential ethical considerations relevant to trust in experts? (**WP7**, WP 9 and 10)

Theoretical Justification. Dimensions and Markers

- The multivalence of Trust and Trustworthiness.
- **Dimensions of trustworthiness: we proposes six dimensions**
Each dimension has a numbers of markers of trustworthiness.
- **D1. The Expertise Dimension (Is the source an expert?)**
- **Marker 1: Training**
- **Marker 2: Experience**
- **Marker 3: Credentials**
- **Marker 4: Knowledge of relevant policy issues and how they relatd to the the scientific field**
- **Negative marker:** Epistemic trespassing. A recognized expert in one area who gives recommendations on issues unrelated to their field.

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The Ethical Dimension (does the expert act with integrity and absence of malice)

- **Marker 1: Conflict of interest and transparency about it**
- **Marker 2: Track record of integrity**
- **Marker 3: Awareness of social consequences**
- **Marker 4: Transparency about moral and religious and political values**
- **Marker 5: Benevolence or willingness to act in the interest of the recipients of their advice.**
- **Marker 6: Taking responsibility for their testimony**
- **Negative Marker:** Dishonesty: Plagiarism, faking experiments, cherry-picking data and statistics, and systematic misrepresentation of others' work are symptoms of a person's dishonesty.

3. The Reputational Dimension.

- **Reputation is fully socially constructed, so different from the first two dimensions.**
- **Marker 1: Authority**
- **Marker 2: Status**
- **Marker 3: Influence**
- **Negative marker:** The type of social footprint they leave. For instance, who does or does not follow them on twitter or engage with them positively or negatively.

4. Credible content (is the message credible?)

- **Marker 1. Coherence (Avoiding contradictions, appropriate logical connections.)**
- **Marker 2. Scientific consensus in the field**
- Negative marker: Inflammatory rhetoric, glossing over inconsistencies.

. Trustworthy sources

- **Marker 1 Diversity of backgrounds and opinions**
- **Marker 2 Tone of the content**
- **Marker 3 Clear distinction between facts and opinion (reporting vs. editorialising)**
- **Marker 4 Willingness to acknowledge their mistakes.**
- **Negative Marker:** Click bait, unattributed sources., echo chambers.
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6. Self-reflection on Trustworthiness

- **Marker 1:** Personal and political biases and attempts at overcoming them.
- **Marker 2:** Truth vs material and emotional interests.
- **Marker 3:** Epistemic vulnerabilities. (Am I in a good position to reason about this particular area of expertise?)
- **Negative marker:** Cognitive biases such as confirmation bias, desirability bias, and motivated reasoning, *Dunning-Kruger effect*
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The toolkit: public interface

- The six dimensions of trustworthiness are translated into questions in an accessible language.
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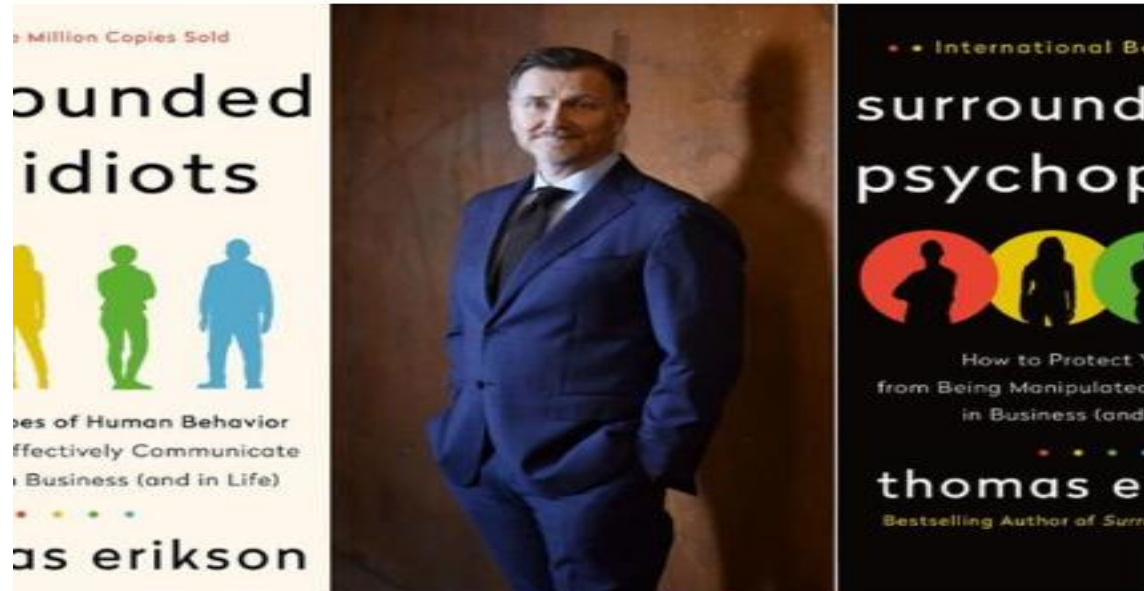
Step 2. Test yourself

- One of more news item or example relevant to each Question
- Is x trustworthy?
- Test yourself (pass or fail)
- Watch a video of 20 seconds
- Go to further questions and tips about trustworthiness relevant to the that question (dimension) based on the markers enumerated earlier.
- Click on resources relevant to the above.

Test 1: Is Thomas Eriskson a trustworthy expert?



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Medium In his book Surrounded by Idiots, Thomas Erikson proposed a psychological theory that can match people's personalities and show compatibilities and incompatibilities among people in the workplace, in schools, and in relationships. ... more

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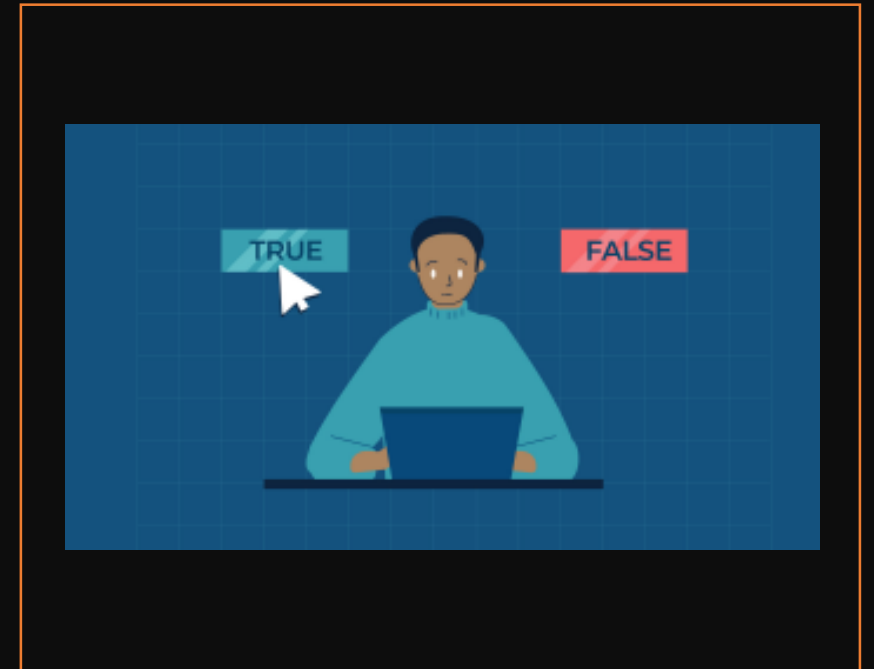
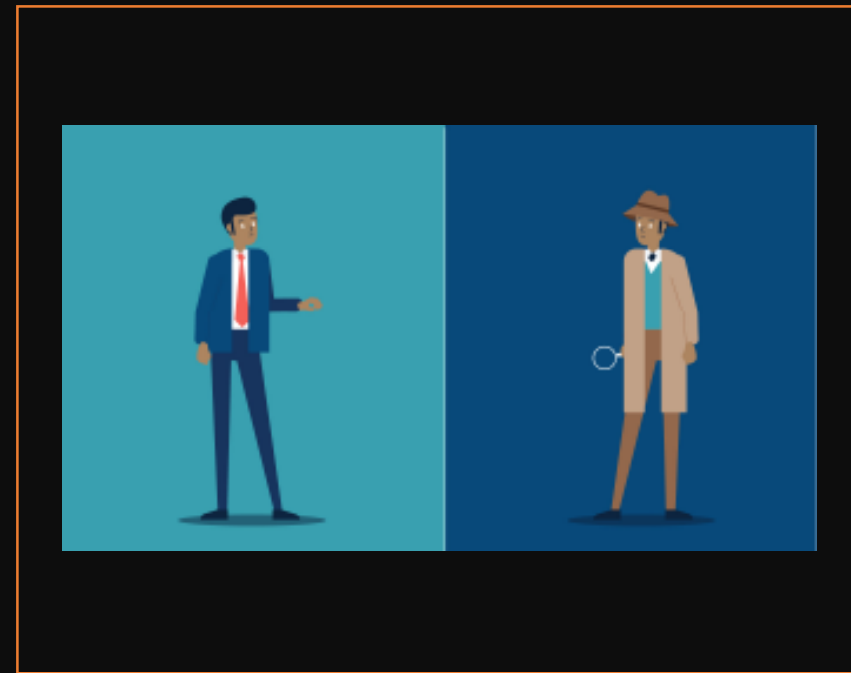
Add a comment

Click on yes or no and see if you were right

- Well done (too bad) , you have chosen the right (wrong) answer
- Explanation:
- Thomas Erikson was discovered a fraud and his book one of the biggest pseudoscience scandals in recent history. Not only was the science behind his book unreliable, but investigations in his background revealed his **complete lack of experience in the field.**

Followed by a 20 second video

- When you have to assess whether a piece of information is true or false,
- [Scene 1 - A person is shown in the middle of the screen, with a computer, and two boxes over them: True and False buttons. A cursor is moving behind them, from one button to another.]
- you can think like a lawyer or like a detective.
- [Scene 2- two screens are introduced from the left and right side. One contains the person dressed as a lawyer, the other as a detective.]



New page: Further questions and tips

- **Here are some points that you should consider when you want to decide who is a genuine expert in a particular field.**
- An expert should have good training in their field of expertise. This should be visible in their CV or other publicly available information. **Does the expert have proof of their qualifications, like education and professional achievements?** Be careful about experts with high reputation in one area making recommendations on issues clearly unconnected to their field.
- Recognition from peers is a key aspect when determining expertise, for instance references to them or their impact made by others working in the same field. **Is there evidence that they engage with other experts?**
- Experts who give advice on policy issues should show awareness and sensitivity about the policy implications of their advice. **Is the expert willing to engage with the public** on these issues?
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further hyperlinks and texts relevant to the above

- Simple guidelines
<https://statmodeling.stat.columbia.edu/2020/08/04/which-experts-should-we-trust/>
- Articles in suitable for the general public
<https://theconversation.com/why-we-trust-experts-even-when-they-admit-they-dont-know-the-answer-172562>
- Videos and podcasts <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kz3rImFSrbA>
- Manuals
- Academic articles
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/02691728.2022.2106459?needAccess=true&role=button>


A second example: Is this expert trustworthy?



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Time British Doctor Andrew Wakefield published a study showing a link between the the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine and autism. ... more

[View all 16 comments](#)

 Add a comment...

6 days ago

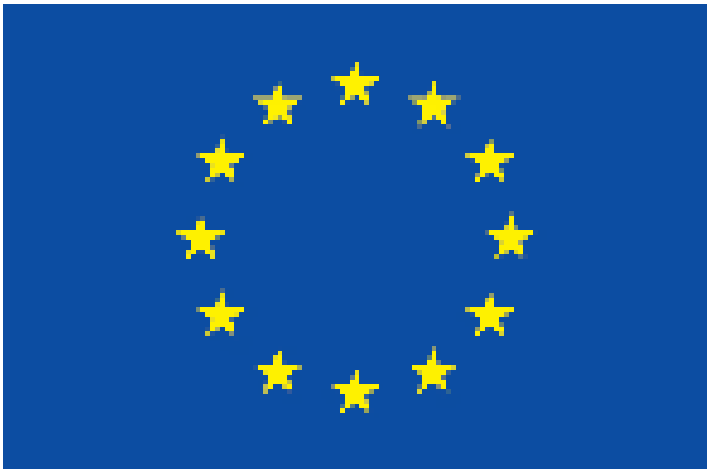
Participants click on yes or no button

- Yes/No answer
- Explanation
- Wakefield had a **conflict of interest** in the [litigation and testing businesses](#) that was not revealed until long after his study was published, and then retracted, by the medical journal The Lancet.
- Video
- Next page
- **Here are some questions and tips that you should consider when you want to decide if an expert is ethically trustworthy.**
- Experts who give advice on policy issues should show awareness and sensitivity about its implications. Do they **consider what is in the public interest** when giving expert advice? Do they show sensitivity towards those who are in a position of social and economic disadvantage?
- Personal political, social and religious views can influence an expert's advice or opinion, are they **open about their possible conflicts of interests?**
- Look out for signs of dishonesty: plagiarism, faking experiments, cherry-picking data and statistics, and systematic misrepresentation of others' work are symptoms of a person's dishonesty. **Is there past evidence of fraud?**

Future plans

- The prototype toolkit, with c. 10 entries, will be tested
- We would like to develop it fully across the various markers and add new dimensions, if necessary, and update the entries regularly
- To link the toolkit to a critical thinking course based on what is being delivered by a colleague in UCD and is one of the most successful undergraduate modules in the university.

Acknowledgement



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