

Research Statement

In my dissertation, I offer a novel way of conceptualizing and organizing social and group epistemology. This framework also points to a largely unexplored possibility space in group epistemology—what I call *inter-group epistemology*. Nearly all the literature to-date in group epistemology can be classified as *intra-group epistemology*, tracking epistemically salient happenings *within* groups. Little attention has been paid to epistemic relations *between* groups. After identifying and motivating exploration of this frontier (under review), I take my own preliminary steps into it by analyzing the relationship between scientific research teams and their parent subfields (2016a; 2016b).

The Epistemology of Group Interaction

I intend to spearhead serious inquiry into inter-group epistemology. Such an area of epistemology is necessary given that justificatory labour generating group knowledge (or some other group epistemic good) sometimes extends beyond the membership, institutional bounds, and social practices of that group. Like individuals, groups are not always autonomous in their epistemic efforts. Given my background, I will pay special attention to the nature of collaboration between scientific groups.

One area inter-group epistemology can address is the relationship between science and the public. A good deal of literature analyzes unidirectional transference of epistemic goods *from science to the public*. I will undertake analyses of *bilateral* epistemic relations between science and the public, and of unidirectional transference of epistemic goods *from the public to science*. Consider one case. Onboard NASA's Juno Jupiter orbiter is the JunoCam. Most of the JunoCam's targets are chosen by the public and the public analyzes some data retrieved. So, some knowledge generated using the JunoCam involves epistemic labour extending beyond NASA's Juno team to groups of amateurs.

Inter-group epistemology can also consider dynamics internal to science. Toward the claim that individuals can have warranted trust in diffuse and variable scientific groups (e.g. climate science, science as a whole), I allude to how scientific fields police the methodological tools and practices of their constituent subfields and research teams (2017; under review). In *this* project, I propose to study science's internal monitoring in detail—not to some other end, but in its own right.

There is renewed interest in the nature of knowledge-how (e.g. knowing how to ride a bicycle). A few philosophers have begun exploring the nature of group know-how (e.g. knowing how to perform a symphony, run an experiment). This includes my own contribution (forthcoming). It remains to be seen whether these models can make sense of know-how grounded in collaboration *between groups* and in the methods, practices, and joint actions collaboratively employed and undertaken by sets of groups (e.g. knowing how to run an interdisciplinary experiment).

Epistemic Pathology & Group Polarization

I aim to generate a theory of deep epistemic failure or closed-mindedness—what I call *epistemic pathology*—which I intend to employ at the individual and group levels. I will start from a framework-dependency model of normative self-criticism: I can rationally assess a core commitment of mine (i.e. a norm, value, belief) only relative to my more fundamental commitments. On a Popperian model, there is no framework for self-criticism of one's deepest commitments. The Kuhnian alternative is that one can change one's deep commitments only arationally. According to Fisch's (2016) Hegelian middle-way, the critical scrutiny of trusted others can 'ambivilate' me toward a deep commitment of mine, dislodging it from my other deep commitments and bringing it under their rational purview. (I am reviewing Fisch (2016) for *Metascience*.) I intend to invert this Hegelian model. When I fail to stand in a relationship of trust to anyone whose criticism could ambivilate me toward one of my deep commitments, that commitment becomes *epistemically pathological*: immune to rational scrutiny.

In my recent work, I show that individuals are epistemically reliant on others. In this proposed project, I forward the more specific claim that one must rely on others in order to maintain the epistemic health of one's core commitments. I also expect this project to generate a theory of group polarization. An epistemically pathological individual associates strictly with like-minded individuals. Such a group is defined by the common pathological commitments of its membership. When opposing groups cease trusted inter-group dialogue, they are polarized. This portion of the project is concerned with deep inter-group epistemic failure. So, it will dovetail nicely with my project in inter-group epistemology. For individuals and groups, relationships of trust across ideological lines are needed to combat epistemic pathology. This ensures no ideology is taken to its extreme without trusted scrutiny.