D. Y. O. R.!

Do Your Own Research!

Mike Stone
Dec 16

"If you are trying to get at me as a public health official and a scientist, you're really attacking not only Dr. Anthony Fauci, you're attacking science,"

-Anthony Fauci

As the "pandemic" stretched out far beyond the 2 weeks needed to flatten the curve, an interesting thing began to happen. Ordinary frustrated citizens started questioning the official "viral" narrative supplied by the pharmaceutically owned and operated MSM/CDC/WHO. Curious parties dove into the origins of "SARS-COV-2" by combing through the main studies bandied about as proof for the existence of a new "virus" and picked apart the lack of any actual scientific evidence within. Demands for the proof of the purification and isolation of the assumed "viral" particles became a rallying cry for the oppressed. The use of the Polymerase-chain-reaction (PCR) as a diagnostic tool was challenged by looking to and quoting the words of Kary Mullis, the man who invented the technique who was against its use as a diagnostic tool. Others tore apart the PCR protocol developed by Christian Drosten which was created entirely in a computer without any "virus" material whatsoever and based on nothing but social media reports. Forty-plus years of studies showing the ineffectiveness of mask use for stopping "viral infections" were rounded up in support of the growing backlash against the draconian measures. Regular everyday people were engaging in a concept which seems so logical and so simple today and yet, in hindsight, almost unbelievable that it took so long to finally occur. People began to fight back against the official “viral” narrative by doing their own research and sharing what they found with others in far greater numbers than ever before. These independent investigations uncovered and exposed many of the fraudulent methods and fear-based propaganda strategies being used to fool the masses into accepting the "pandemic." Whether it was through uploading informative videos on Youtube and related sites, sending out thought-provoking tweets on Twitter, composing critical analysis on Facebook and blogs, crafting impactful memes to share across social media, or just participating in debate and discussion to get the message out into the ether, people were passionately engaged in exploring the so-called “scientific” literature and exposing the fraud of germ theory for others to see. A growing army of researchers from many walks of life emerged to combat the lies spewed forth onto the frightened public by the pharmaceutical mouthpieces in white coats paraded across the MSM as “experts.”

However, as this resistance began to coalesce into a fine-tuned counter-operation, those in power did what they do best to try and stifle the conversation and control the dissent. They pushed out catchy slogans and platitudes such as “listen to the experts” and “trust the science” in order to keep those beginning to question the story placated. They projected their own actions onto others and painted anyone challenging the “science” as science-deniers even though it was those backing the data-driven consensus who were in

denial of the actual scientific method and investigation. The independent researchers were promptly labelled with the term “conspiracy theorists” in an effort to dismiss any claims that they made countering the narrative. A new category was created with the rise of the “virus denier” which seemed to include other ridiculed groups such as Q-anon followers, Trump supporters, flat-earthers, and anti-vaxxers all lumped together into one. “Fact-checking” and blatant censorship on social media platforms soon followed along with tabloid-style smear campaigns against many of the prominent voices such as Dr. Andrew Kaufman, Dr. Tom Cowan, and Dr. Sam Bailey in attempts to make them look like discredited health professionals when nothing could be further from the truth. It seemed as if anything and everything but the kitchen sink was being launched at the growing resistance in order to scatter the movement into the wind.

The kitchen sink finally came along late in July 2020 as the restless public continued to fight back after growing weary of lockdowns, maskings, forced testing, social-distancing, and quarantines. In what can only be seen as a last-ditch effort by those in power to clamp down on critical thought and logic, an article appeared in *Forbes* online that made a very simple yet highly illogical argument:

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You Must Not 'Do Your Own Research' When It Comes To Science

Ethan Siegel Senior Contributor

Starts With A Bang

Contributor Group ⓘ

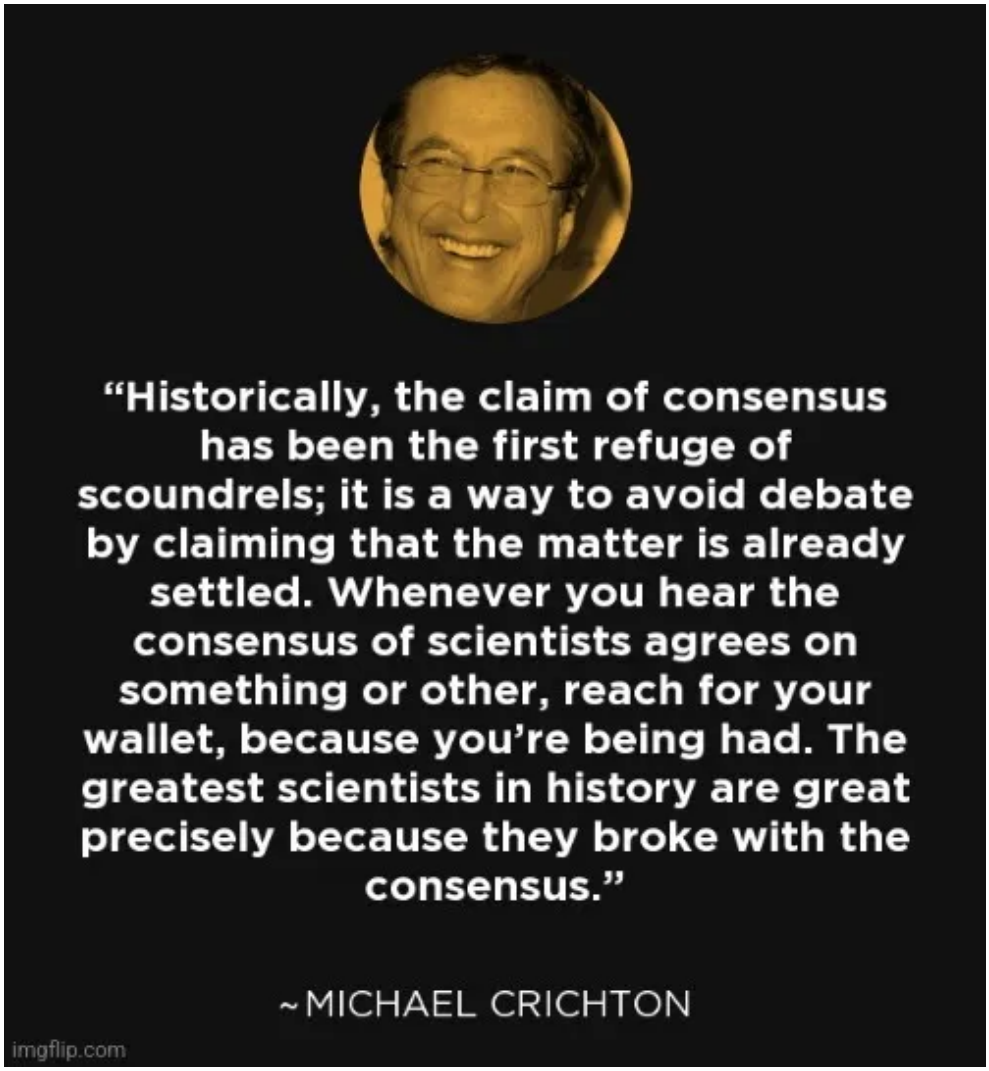
Science

The Universe is out there, waiting for you to discover it.

I remember when I first saw this headline when it was posted to a Facebook group. I laughed as I thought it was likely a *Babylon Bee* satire article poking fun at the rise of a

slew of new independent researchers. Surely this could not be the actual title of an article in a mainstream publication? Seeing the state of journalism now, I'm not sure why I was so shocked back then. At the time, the headline was an amusing distraction and I took it as the opinion piece of one person. However, as the years went on, I realized that this wasn't any ordinary opinion piece. It was the beginning of an effort to dumb down the "sheep" and steer the herd away from becoming empowered and doing their own due diligence on matters directly related to their own health and well-being. It was an attempt to pacify the resistance and to re-establish the puppet "experts" as the real authorities; the rightful bastions of knowledge and information. The message was loud and clear. Normal everyday people could never achieve such expertise by doing their own research and investigations. Their feeble minds were incapable of understanding such complex "science." Do not stress over the details. Give authority to the real "experts" to do the research and thinking for you.

As I have continued to see this ridiculous "don't do your own research" slogan pop up many times throughout the last few years, I wanted to highlight excerpts from a few of these sources in order to stress the utter insanity in this line of thinking and attack. Reading from these pieces is a great way to remind yourself of the depravity that we are up against here. Hopefully, by seeing the sheer absurdity in this line of thinking, it will help to motivate everyone to stay strong and to continue on this path of discovery.



"There is no such thing as consensus science. **If it's consensus, it isn't science**. If it's science, it isn't consensus."

In the inaugural article from *Forbes* by Ethan Siegel in July 2020, an attempt was made to make the case that doing your own research, especially in matters such as "Covid" and vaccination, is a dangerous path. It is argued by Siegel that even the scientists themselves, who we are supposed to accept as the "experts," lack the relevant scientific expertise needed to adequately evaluate research on their own. We are told that those who do independent research mischaracterize, misquote, and misrepresent the real "science" and thus we must trust those who have spent a lifetime devoted to the pursuit of (pseudo)science to explain real science to us. We are told that we are foolish if we think that, by utilizing our own brain to incorporate critical thinking skills and logic in order to examine a topic, we can discern truth from untruth. Why is it that we are incapable of such cognitive prowess? According to Siegel, it is because we lack the anti-scientific concept known as scientific consensus to discern truth for us. Siegel argues that it is not

up to any one individual to determine what is truth. This is a job for an elite group of individuals with the associated credentials and letters behind their names to tell us what they have agreed upon as the truth for us. From Siegel's point of view, it is ridiculous to believe that any of us have the capability and the intellectual capacity to understand the science on par with or better than the "expert." We must be protected from doing our own research lest we are able to find shunned and suppressed medical professionals and scientists who happen to agree with our position. We are told that if we do happen to find these medical professionals, scientists, researchers, etc. who agree with us, we are not actually engaged in research and are doing nothing but confirming our own biases. If we do this, we are attacking real "experts" like Anthony Fauci and thus we are attacking science:

You Must Not 'Do Your Own Research' When It Comes To Science

> "**Research both sides and make up your own mind." It's simple, straightforward, common sense advice.** And when it comes to issues like vaccinations, climate change, and the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, **it can be dangerous, destructive, and even deadly.** The techniques that most of us use to navigate most of our decisions in life — gathering information, evaluating it based on what we know, and choosing a course of action — can lead to spectacular failures when it comes to a scientific matter.
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> **The reason is simple: most of us, even those of us who are scientists ourselves, lack the relevant scientific expertise needed to adequately evaluate that research on our own.** In our own fields, we are aware of the full suite of data, of how those puzzle pieces fit together, and what the frontiers of our knowledge is. When laypersons espouse opinions on those matters, it's immediately clear to us where the gaps in their understanding are and where they've misled themselves in their reasoning. When they take up the arguments of a contrarian scientist, we recognize what they're overlooking, misinterpreting, or omitting. **Unless we start valuing the actual expertise that legitimate experts have spent lifetimes developing, "doing our own research" could lead to immeasurable, unnecessary suffering."**

> "There's an old saying that I've grown quite fond of recently: **you can't reason someone out of a position they didn't reason themselves into.** When most of us "research" an issue, what we are actually doing is:
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> - formulating an initial opinion the first time we hear about something,
> - evaluating everything we encounter after that through that lens of our gut instinct,
> - finding reasons to think positively about the portions of the narrative that support or justify our initial opinion,
> - and finding reasons to discount or otherwise dismiss the portions that detract from it.
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> Of course, that's not what we think we're doing. We think of ourselves as the heroes of our stories: cutting through misinformation and digging up the real truth on the matter. **We think that, just by applying our brainpower and our critical reasoning skills, we can discern whose expert opinions are trustworthy and responsible.** We think that we can see through who's a charlatan and a fraud, and we can tell what's safe and effective from what's dangerous and ineffective.
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> Except, for almost all of us, we can't. Even those of us with excellent critical thinking skills and lots of experience trying to dig up the truth behind a variety of claims are lacking one important asset: **the scientific expertise necessary to understand any finds or claims in the context of the full state of knowledge of your field. It's part of why scientific consensus is so remarkably valuable: it only exists when the overwhelming majority of qualified professionals all hold the same consistent professional opinion.** It truly is one of the most important and valuable types of expertise that humanity has ever developed.
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> But only if we listen to it. **It's absolutely foolish to think that you, a non-expert who lacks the very scientific expertise necessary to evaluate the claims of experts, are going to do a better job than the actual, bona fide experts of separating truth from fiction or fraud.** When we "do the research for ourselves," we almost always wind up digging in deeper to our own knee-jerk positions, rather than deferring to the professional opinions of the consensus of experts."

> "The science overwhelmingly indicates that vaccines are one of the safest public health interventions ever undertaken by humanity. **But if you "do your own research," you can find a small percentage of online activists, and even a few medical professionals, who rail against the overwhelming science**, pushing discredited claims, fear, and often unproven cures or supplements as well. This fraud-driven controversy created an enormous public health disaster that's still ongoing today."
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> "Although there's still much to learn about the science of this, from how it spreads to who is most likely to spread it to what the best treatments are to the true infection rate and so on, **there's a lot that the scientific experts have achieved a consensus about.** In particular:
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> - the disease is airborne and easily spread from person-to-person contact,
> - it's more easily spread in indoor settings,
> - older people are more likely to get critically ill and die from it,
> - staying home except for essential errands,
> - and the interventions of wearing masks when you go out, not touching your mask once its on, and remaining physically distant (2 meters/6 feet minimum) from others not in your household are all effective.
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> But even those basic messages — **for which there's virtually no scientific doubt surrounding them** — have sparked enormous amounts of controversy. Despite the safety and efficacy of masks, many are refusing to wear them, leading to spikes in new infections. Despite the importance of avoiding close contact with others not a part of your household, many people continue to visit friends and relatives, accelerating the spread of the disease. Despite the fact that over 150,000 Americans have already died from it, many continue to claim "it's just like the flu," even though the last time 150,000 or more Americans died from the flu was 1918: the year of the infamous Spanish flu.
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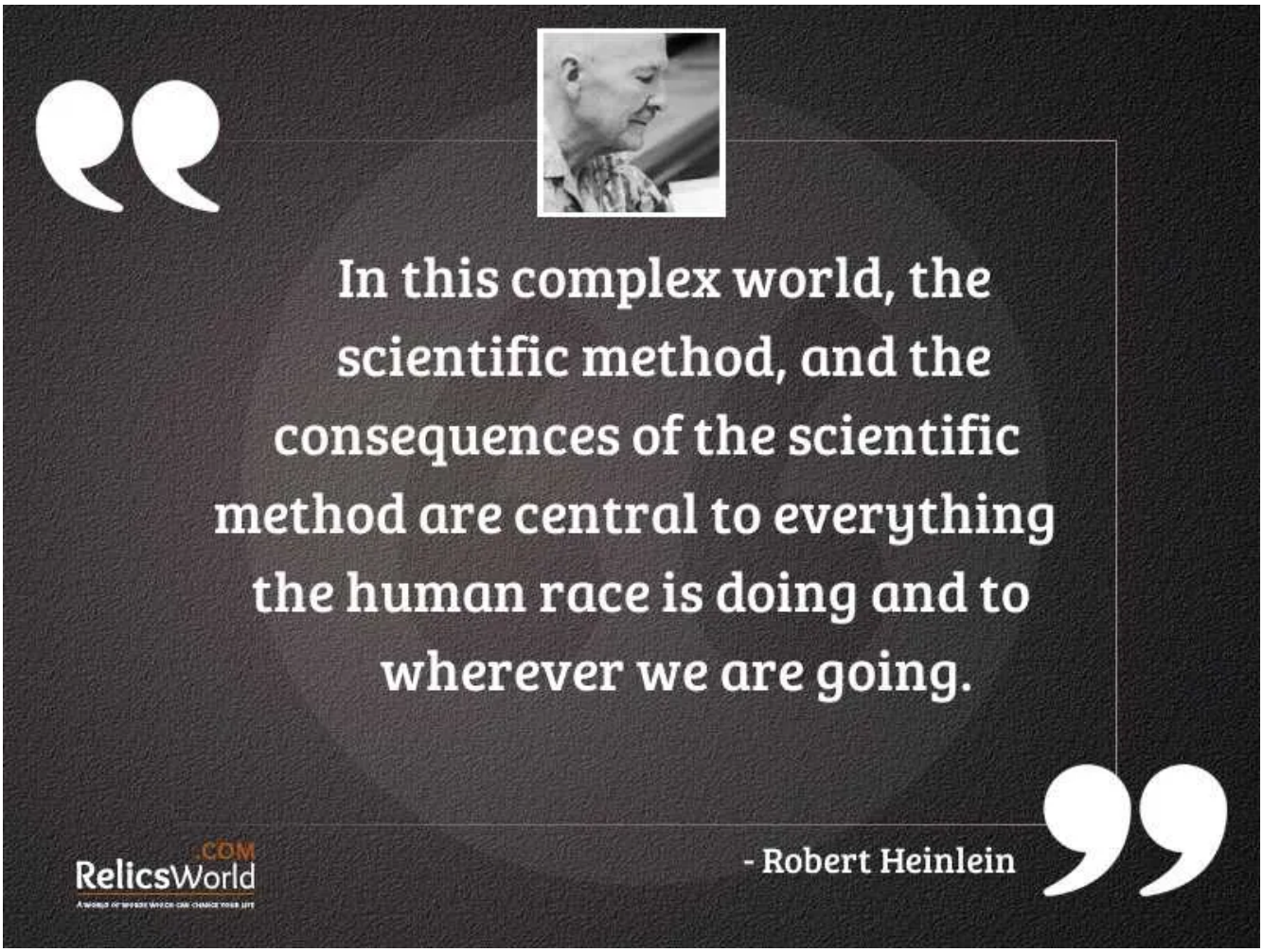
> If you "do your own research," you can no doubt find innumerable websites, social media accounts, and even a handful of medical professionals who are sharing opinions that confirm whatever your preconceived notions about COVID-19 are. **However, do not fool yourself: you are not doing research. You are seeking information to confirm your own biases and discredit any contrary opinions. Each time you do this, you exemplify the problem of anti-science bias that Dr. Fauci warned about in June:**

> “If you go by the evidence and by the data, you're speaking the truth and it's amazing sometimes, the denial there is. It's the same thing that gets people who are anti-vaxxers - who don't want people to get vaccinated, even though the data clearly indicate the safety of vaccines. That's really a problem.”

https://www.forbes.com/sites/startswithabang/2020/07/30/you-must-not-do-your-own-research-when-it-comes-to-science/?sh=8b2f3d2535ea



After the *Forbes* article caused a bit of a stir in late July, a piece from *Science-Based Medicine* came out in Aug 2020 defending it. The condescending tone of this article by David Gorski was set immediately when he equated anyone saying to “do your own research” as “antivaxxers, cranks, advocates of pseudoscience, and conspiracy theorists.” The intent to paint anyone doing their own research as, for lack of a better term “crazy,” was clear from the very start. The only instances where Gorski accepts one doing their own research is when it applies to “choosing a place to live, buying a car, picking a

smartphone, and any of a number of decisions we make in our day-to-day lives." Otherwise, Gorski argues that D.Y.O.R. crowd are engaging in an activity that they are entirely incapable nor qualified to be participating in by themselves. Interestingly, in the first of many ironic twists, Gorski projects what the scientific-community has been engaged in over the decades onto those doing their own research by claiming it is the independent researchers who "start with a conclusion and then go looking for facts, observations, and studies that support that conclusion, ignoring context and, often, uncertainty." What he fails to realize is that virologists start with the unproven assumption that "viruses" exist and then look for indirect evidence that does not adhere to the scientific method in order to confirm their own preconceived conclusion. Gorski argues that many of us have too much faith in our own critical thinking and discernment skills and thus we are incapable of judging between pseudoscience and cranks from valid scientific research. He provided an example from a presentation by "America's Frontline Doctors" where Gorski claims people were easily fooled by professionals using their backgrounds and credentials in order to sell their evidence and opinions. Somehow Gorski missed the irony in this argument altogether as the "experts" paraded about by the MSM regularly claim that they are right based upon their own credentials and inflated egos:

"So it's easy to criticize, but they're really criticizing science because I represent science. That's dangerous."

-Anthony Fauci

Gorski stated that there was a time when those without a formal education could make observations and opinions but this age has somehow passed and those skills are off the table for the layperson. Instead, he argues that it is scientific consensus that matters in this day and age as well as legitimate authority, two very anti-scientific concepts espoused by a site claiming to be "science-based." This was followed up by yet another twist of irony when he declared that the freshness of the "Covid" science made it a "ripe area for cranks to promote bad science and pseudoscience" by claiming that the findings conflict with past evidence and thus the science was wrong before. Somehow, he must have been

oblivious to the constant flip-flops and backtracks by the so-called "experts" as new "scientific" data came in and they immediately disregarded the previously accepted science only to then state that the new data was wrong (mask effectiveness, aerosol transmission, asymptomatic spread, etc.). In one last ironic twist, Gorski concluded his article by appealing to the scientific method as a barometer to use for those who are skeptical in order to judge the scientific evidence so that one does not fool oneself. However, it is readily apparent that he has chosen not to apply this same standard to virology, "Covid," nor the "science" he championed in his article such as evolution:

The perils and pitfalls of "doing your own research" about COVID-19 (or any other science)

> Ethan Siegel at *Forbes* argues that you "must not 'do your own research.'" While the title grates, **Siegel is correct that most of us are not really capable of "doing our own research" about most scientific and medical questions because we lack the necessary background.** We must therefore be humble and be very, very careful about "doing our own research."
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> "I've done my own research."
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> "Do your own research."
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> **How many times have you heard various antivaxxers, cranks, advocates of pseudoscience, and conspiracy theorists repeat these phrases, or variants thereof?** In medicine, advocates of what I like to call pseudomedicine—a category that encompasses antivaxxers, COVID-19 denialists and conspiracy theorists, cancer quacks, and all manner of other quacks—are particularly prone to claim that they've "done their research" about, for instance, vaccines, and that's why they think the MMR vaccine causes autism and that vaccines cause sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), autoimmune diseases, and all manner of other diseases (and, oh, by the way, their "research" has told them that vaccines don't protect against disease and "natural immunity is better," too).

Of course, "doing one's own research" and then "making up one's own mind" makes perfect sense when it comes to, for example, choosing a place to live, buying a car, picking a smartphone, and any of a number of decisions we make in our day-to-day lives, although it should be noted that even those decisions are not necessarily so straightforward or easy to research. **When it comes to science, the fact is that the vast majority of us are not capable of "doing our own research"**. I started thinking about this question again with respect to science-based medicine (and science in general), thanks to an article that bubbled up on social media late last week by former ScienceBlogs blogger Ethan Siegel (who now writes for *Forbes*), entitled "You Must Not 'Do Your Own Research' When It Comes To Science".

"Anyone with expertise who dips their toes into deconstructing pseudoscientific or crank claims regarding issues about which they are deeply knowledgeable will instantly realize that **one of the hallmarks of pseudoscience and conspiracy theories is the cherry picking of studies, data, facts, and observations.** The reason is simple. The people espousing pseudoscience tend not to look at the evidence base and then make their conclusions fit the evidence. **Rather, they start with a conclusion and then go looking for facts, observations, and studies that support that conclusion, ignoring context and, often, uncertainty.** It's known as motivated reasoning, in which a bias towards a conclusion that conforms to what a person already believes leads that person to overvalue information that supports that belief and undervalue disconfirmatory information."

"Precisely. **Many, if not most, of us have a far higher opinion of our critical thinking abilities than is actually warranted.** (Some might argue that this description might also apply to me, and so it might, at least for some topics. One always has to take such a possibility under consideration and keep it in the back of one's mind.) Many, if not most, of us also have a far higher opinion of our knowledge base than is actually warranted. Many, if not most, of us have a far greater confidence in our ability to spot grifters, cranks, pseudoscientists, and charlatans than we, in fact, possess, just as Siegel observes."

"Basically, like any lay person, when faced with beliefs that they wanted to embrace, "America's Frontline Doctors" engaged in motivated reasoning and sought out observations, evidence, and cherry-picked studies to give them a reason to support the

belief, regardless of whether science actually did support the belief or not. **Worse, they very intentionally used their status as physicians to promote those beliefs and persuade lay people to believe them, too.**"

"**There once was a time when it was possible for people without formal education in science to make observations about the universe and formulate them into laws and hypotheses that characterize reality. That time ended a long time.** The reason is that science builds on what was discovered. The more it builds, the more background information there is that has to be mastered in order to be able to make useful contributions. Although there can be lots of controversy in science, certain fundamental things are agreed upon because overwhelming evidence has led scientists to provisionally accept them as correct. For instance, you can't suddenly posit a "theory" that says that atoms aren't made up of protons, neutrons, and electrons, **because there is a massive body of evidence that has led to a scientific consensus** that they are, in fact, made up of such particles, whatever scientists choose to name them. At least, you can't do it and have scientists take you seriously unless you can produce evidence that is at least compelling enough to call such well-established science into doubt. Cranks don't acknowledge this and, through arrogance, think that they alone are able to see what all of science isn't. As a result, they tend to be upset that science doesn't recognize their apparent genius.

Many years ago, I once examined the contention that a "real skeptic always sides with the scientific consensus." **As I noted at the time, in matters of science it is undoubtedly true that the scientific consensus is always the best place to start when evaluating unfamiliar issues. While it is certainly possible that a given scientific consensus regarding an issue can be wrong in almost any area, it nonetheless almost always represents the best current scientific understanding. It is also correct that legitimate authority matters.** I emphasize the word "legitimate" because in pseudoscience arguments from authority are common, but rarely is the authority relevant to the point being argued. Often it's not even legitimate, as in when anti-vaccine activists point to Andrew Wakefield's work as justification for their claims that vaccines cause autism and other conditions. I also noted that not all scientific consensuses are created equal because, in different fields the strength of scientific consensus can vary quite markedly depending upon the topic or even the subtopic within the topic. For example, the scientific consensus supporting the theory of

evolution, particularly common descent, is exceedingly strong. It's one of the strongest of all scientific consensuses, arguably the strongest. Similarly, the consensus that natural selection is a major driving force behind evolution is very nearly as strong. However, as the discussion devolves into more detailed areas, inevitably the consensus weakens. Eventually, subsidiary areas of a discipline are reached where the consensus is weak or where there is no consensus, such as what the function of "junk DNA" is, whether it is subject to natural selection, and if so how much. (Real evolutionary biologists could probably come up with a better example.) These sorts of questions are often at the cutting edge of scientific knowledge, and it is not always easy to recognize what they are. It is also these issues at the edge of our knowledge that are attacked as proxies for the much more strongly supported core theory.

This brings me back to COVID-19. What makes scientific conclusions about COVID-19 somewhat different than conclusions about vaccines is that the pandemic is new, having only been going on since the disease and virus were first recognized in China in late 2019, and the science is rapidly evolving. **That makes it a particularly ripe area for cranks to promote bad science and pseudoscience, particularly given that they can easily invoke the "science was wrong before" trope in real time as new findings come in.** However, there are several conclusions that are now pretty firm, including that masks work to slow the spread of coronavirus; that the virus spreads through respiratory droplets, particularly in enclosed spaces; that social distancing works. To that I add that hydroxychloroquine is almost certainly ineffective against COVID-19. It's possible to challenge these conclusions, but if you do so, you'd better have strong evidence.

In the end, the way to judge claims that go against the current scientific consensus boils down at least as much to tactics and how evidence is used to support such contrarian arguments. **Scientific skepticism looks at the totality of evidence and evaluates each piece of it for its quality.** In contrast, cranks are very selective about the data they choose to present, often vastly overselling its quality and vastly exaggerating flaws in current theory, in turn vastly overestimating their own knowledge of a subject and underestimating that of experts. In medicine in particular, denialists frequently emphasize anecdotes over epidemiology, clinical trials, and science. **They also tend to leap to confuse correlation with causation.** Similarly, crankery, denialism, pseudoskepticism (or whatever you want to call it) tends, either

> intentionally through ideology or unintentionally **through an ignorance of the scientific method, to conflate and/or confuse emotional, nonscientific, and/or ideological arguments with scientific arguments.** This is not to say that scientists and skeptics and supporters of SBM are free from their own biases, whether ideological or simply a desired result that they hope to find. Far from it. **However, skepticism means applying the scientific method to claims, and whatever its faults, the scientific method is the best method thus far devised to minimize these biases.**
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> As scientists, the reason we use the scientific method is not because we consider ourselves superior to the cranks, but rather because we recognize that we are human too and thus just as prone to falling into the same traps as they. As Richard Feynman once famously said, "The first principle is that you must not fool yourself—and you are the easiest person to fool. So you have to be very careful about that. After you've not fooled yourself, it's easy not to fool other scientists. You just have to be honest in a conventional way after that." **The scientific method is, above all, a methodology by which scientists try to avoid fooling themselves.** Skeptics cross the line dividing skepticism and denialism and quacks the line between science and quackery when they forget that. Doubting a scientific consensus is not in and of itself the mark of the crank. It's *how and why* that skepticism exists that distinguishes crankery from genuine scientific skepticism.
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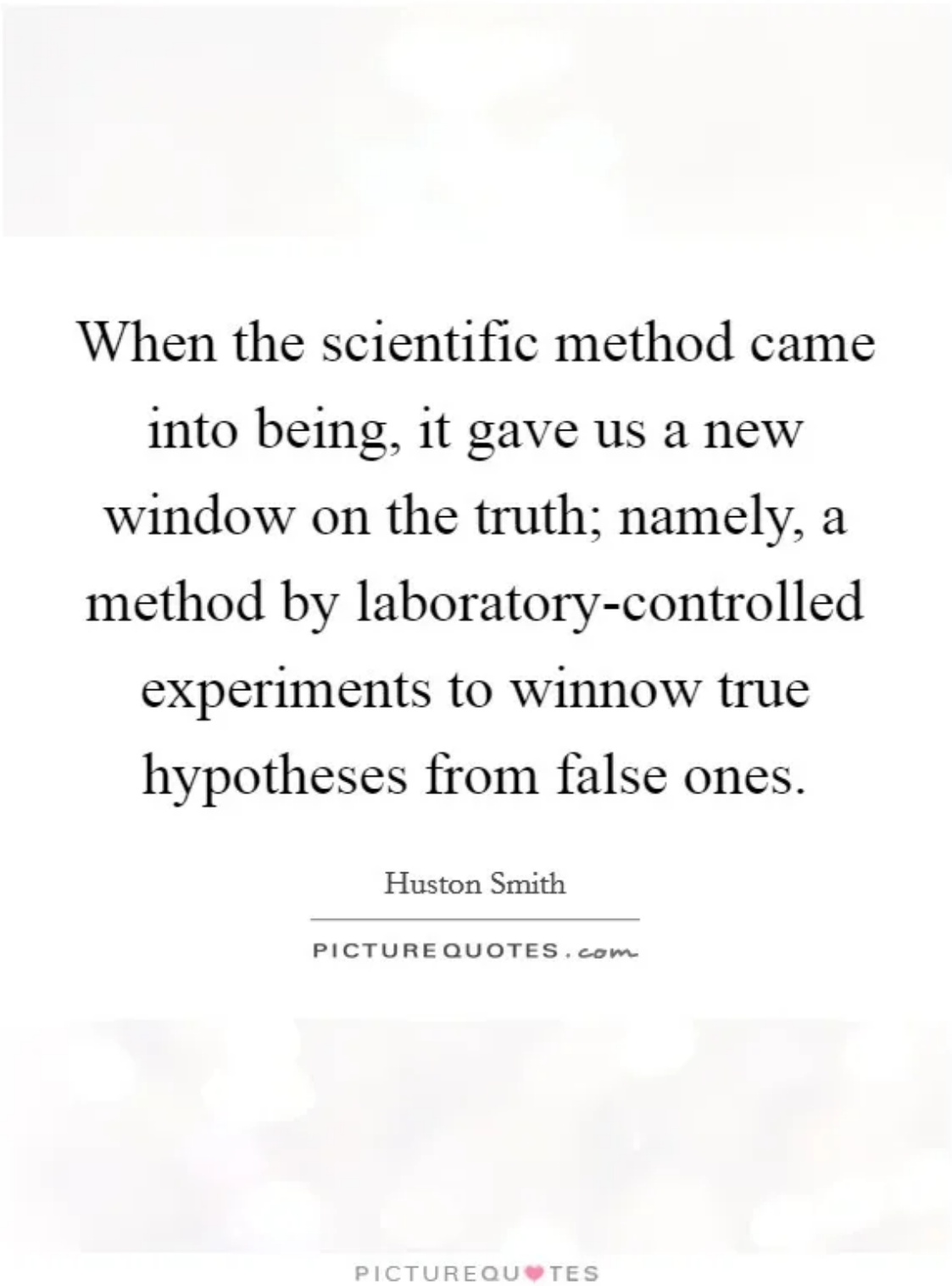
> The problem with "doing your own research" is that rarely does a lay person (or even a physician or scientist venturing too far outside of his area of expertise) have the background knowledge and skillset to be confident of avoiding crossing that line, whether intentionally or not. It's not so much that you "must not do your own research." **It's that you really need to understand that you probably can't "do your own research" and that the conclusions you reach "doing your own research" are highly likely to be more in line with your prior beliefs than scientifically correct."**

https://sciencebasedmedicine.org/the-perils-and-pitfalls-of-doing-your-own-research-about-covid-19-or-any-other-science/



From the above two articles, a clear pattern can be seen emerging where it is stated that the idea of doing research is a phrase pushed by conspiracy theorists. We, as individual laypeople, are incapable of understanding the science and using critical thinking and logic in order to discern truth. Thus, an anti-scientific consensus agreed upon by all

“experts” must be made in order for truth to be determined for us. Questioning this consensus is a dangerous path that must be avoided. This theme was carried into a video and accompanying article from *CNN* in September 2021 where the D.Y.O.R. phrase was said to be hurting the “pandemic” response. It was argued that people are doing nothing but confirming their own biases as they do not know how to do real research by looking to “authoritative” sources. We are told that people do not understand the difference between theoretical science and that of consensus science. In other words, we are apparently not well versed in pseudoscience. Fortunately, at least one of the speakers presented can see the value in doing your own research and keeping a healthy skepticism:

How 'do your own research' hurts America's Covid response

> "We should have a healthy skepticism of the information that is fed to us," Yael Eisenstat says. **But a phrase like "do your own research" is often peddled by conspiracy theorists and vaccine-deniers. "It is always easy to find information that confirms your biases,"** she points out.

https://www.cnn.com/videos/business/2021/09/19/how-do-your-own-research-hurts-americas-covid-response.cnn

These four words are helping spread vaccine misinformation

> “**Four little words — "do your own research" — are hurting the US pandemic response**, CNN's chief media correspondent Brian Stelter said on "Reliable Sources" Sunday. And it is having real consequences as personalities from Nicki Minaj to Sean Hannity continue to promote the idea.”
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> **The problem is that most people simply don't know how to do their own research**, especially when it comes to understanding the complexities of medical science.
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> **The concept has lately become associated with Covid-19 and QAnon**, but the phrase "do your own research" dates back to the 1890s when it was associated with skepticism

> surrounding the smallpox vaccine, Renee DiResta, research manager at the Stanford Internet Observatory, said on "Reliable Sources." **The notion of doing your own research is not a bad idea in itself, DiResta said, as it's important to maintain a healthy level of skepticism about information being fed to you.** But in today's media environment fueled by clicks and engagement, it's all too easy to come across misleading data that confirms biases.
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> "**Nobody's going to the library and looking up authoritative sources to do their own research,**" Yael Eisenstat, a Future of Democracy fellow at the Berggruen Institute, said."
>
> That's because **many of the subtle differences between understanding scientific research that is still theoretical versus that which has been tested and widely agreed upon** are not well communicated to the public. As new information and new research comes out, the media needs to take that extra step to explain the changing landscape."
>
> "**Science is a consensus building process,**" DiResta said. "Not something where we know the facts immediately, the moment that someone wants to be Googling for them."

https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.cnn.com/cnn/2021/09/19/media/reliable-sources-covid-research/index.html

Someone should have told the “experts” that they are supposed to know what they are doing… 🤔

Never to be outdone, *The New York Times* jumped into the “don’t do your own research” fray in May 2022. Once again, the D.Y.O.R. phrase, which is just simple common sense logic, is linked to conspiracy theorists in order to discredit anyone from questioning the mainstream narrative. Unlike the *CNN* piece claiming that the slogan began in the 1890's, this version of history sets the origin in conspiracy circles in the 1990's. The reader is warned that those who do their own research are often misguided and become misled rather than informed. Within their “confusion,” they become increasingly confident that the information they sought out and deciphered through critical thought and logic is correct over that which they are told by the authorities. These researchers have the gall to believe that their knowledge is equal to that of doctors, scientists, and other so-called “experts.” The anti-scientific concept of consensus makes yet another appearance as we are told there is no shame in accepting the consensus opinion and deferring to it. Why think for yourself when others have already done the thinking for you? The conclusion is

that we should not do our own research as we are not capable of doing so properly. We must submit to the agreed upon conclusions of the hand-picked experts:

Skeptics Say, 'Do Your Own Research.' It's Not That Simple.

> "**A new slogan has emerged in the culture: "Do your own research.**" On internet forums and social media platforms, people arguing about hotly contested topics like vaccines, climate change and voter fraud sometimes bolster their point or challenge their interlocutors by slipping in the acronym "D.Y.O.R."
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> "Two days after getting the jab, a friend of mine's friend had a heart attack," a Reddit user wrote recently in a discussion about Covid-19 vaccines. "I'm not saying they're connected, but D.Y.O.R."
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> **The slogan, which appeared in conspiracy theory circles in the 1990s, has grown in popularity over the past decade as conflicts over the reliability of expert judgment have become more pronounced.** It promotes an individualistic, freethinking approach to understanding the world: Don't be gullible — go and find out for yourself what the truth is.
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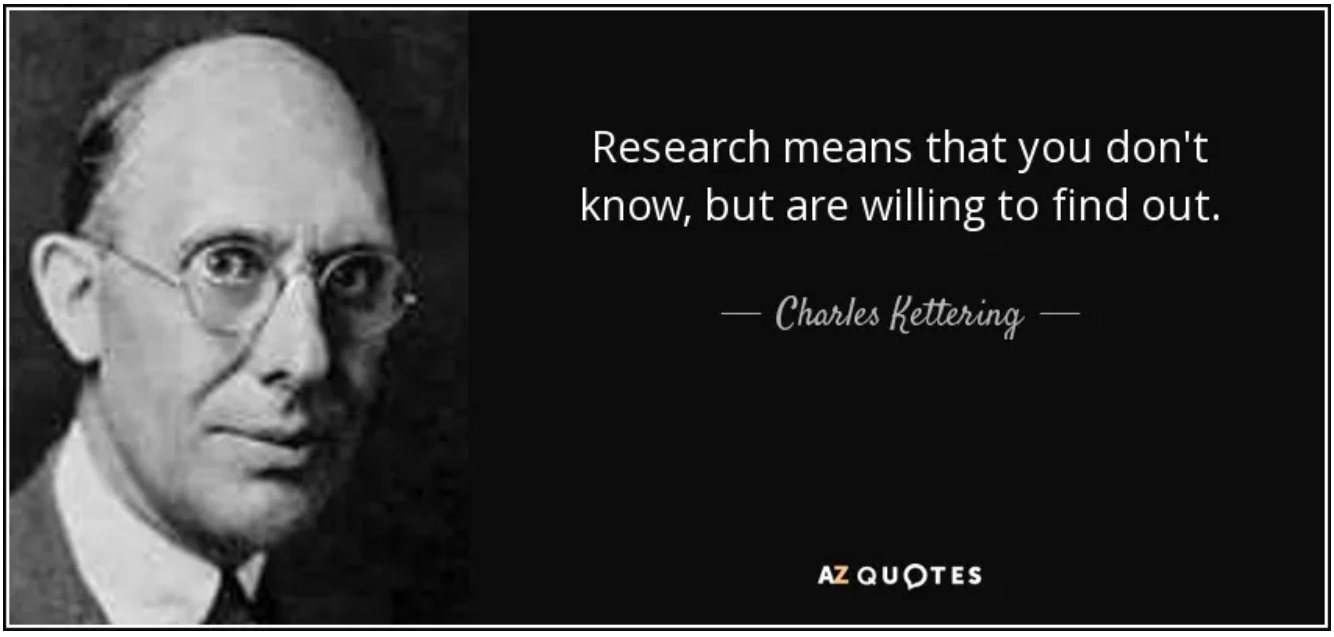
> **That may seem to be sound advice.** Isn't it always a good idea to gather more information before making up your mind about a complex topic?
>
> In theory, perhaps. **But in practice the idea that people should investigate topics on their own, instinctively skeptical of expert opinion, is often misguided.** As psychological studies have repeatedly shown, when it comes to technical and complex issues like climate change and vaccine efficacy, **novices who do their own research often end up becoming more misled than informed — the exact opposite of what D.Y.O.R. is supposed to accomplish.**
>
> Consider what can happen when people begin to learn about a topic. They may start out appropriately humble, **but they can quickly become unreasonably confident after just a small amount of exposure to the subject.** Researchers have called this phenomenon the beginner's bubble."

> "Likewise, a 2018 study of attitudes about vaccine policy found that when people ascribe authority to themselves about vaccines, **they tend to view their own ideas as better than ideas from rival sources and as equal to those of doctors and scientists who have focused on the issue.** Their experience makes them less willing to listen to well-informed advisers than they would have been otherwise.
>
> **There should be no shame in identifying a consensus of independent experts and deferring to what they collectively report.** As individuals, our skills at adequately vetting information are spotty. You can be expert at telling reliable cardiologists from quacks without knowing how to separate serious authorities from pretenders on economic policy.
>
> For D.Y.O.R. enthusiasts, one lesson to take away from all of this might be: **Don't do your own research, because you are probably not competent to do it.**
>
> Instead, our message, in part, **is that it's not enough for experts to have credentials, knowledge and lots of facts.** They must show that they are trustworthy and listen seriously to objections from alternative perspectives.
>
> We strive to offer careful guidance when it comes to our own areas of expertise. Even so, some D.Y.O.R. enthusiasts may reject our cautions. If they do, we hope that they will nonetheless heed at least one piece of advice: **If you are going to do your own research, the research you should do first is on how best to do your own research.**"

https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.nytimes.com/2022/01/03/opinion/dyor-do-your-own-research.amp.html



In this final article from August 2022, we get a “don’t do your own research” message disguised as a D.Y.O.R. one. The author is Neil Levy, a professor of philosophy, and as the other authors did before him, he immediately equates anyone expressing the importance of D.Y.O.R as a conspiracy theorist. Oddly enough, throughout the article, Levy makes many arguments that suggest the importance of people investigating matters for themselves. He admits that contrary to what those who accept the official narrative say, “contranian theorists” are not “all talk” and do actually research topics and look at the evidence presented to formulate an opinion. He states that “contrarian theorists” actually spend a great amount of time poring over the data and analyzing the material. “Contrarian theorists” engage in more effort to evaluate evidence than those who blindly accept the official narrative. While Levy makes the argument throughout his article that research can lead to understanding, he claims that it is risky and can ultimately take one away from knowledge if the research contradicts the accepted story. He makes this claim despite admitting that at times conspiracies are in fact true and that the official story can be false, noting that the research by laypersons can help to uncover this. Levy admits that “non-experts” may even be more valuable in certain situations than the “experts” who are more concerned with losing access to official information or going out on a limb and having their reputations tarnished. Still, he concludes that research by laypeople on subjects that have been combed over by many “experts” has more costs than benefits, especially when there is a consensus (there's that unscientific concept again). Even though Levy titled his paper *“Do Your Own Research!,”* he ultimately argued that people should be weary of doing their own research with the absurd concept that even though they may

gain understanding, they will lose knowledge. According to Levy, doing our own research has cut us free from the moorings of truth. That conclusion hardly fits the title of the article:

Do your own research!

> **"Q: Why did the conspiracy theorist cross the road?**
>
> **A: Do your own research!**
>
> The joke may be weak, but it points to an interesting challenge. Contrarian thinkers—including those people disparaged as 'conspiracy theorists'—are often proud of their intellectual autonomy. **'Do your own research'; 'think for yourself'; the accusation that other people are mere 'sheeple,' blindly accepting everything fed to them by government and mainstream media—these familiar slogans and phrases express the heavy emphasis they place on thinking for themselves.** Contrary to almost equally familiar tropes, moreover, these contrarian thinkers often have good grounds for their pride in their intellectual autonomy."
>
> "The utility and descriptive accuracy of the term 'conspiracy theorist' is highly contested (Coady, 2003; Dentith, 2014; Pigden, 2017). Since these controversies are orthogonal to the issues I'm concerned with here, I avoid using it here. I'm concerned not just with those theories that are described as conspiracy theories, but with *contrarian theories* more generally: theories that conflict with what Coady (2003) calls the 'official story'. More narrowly still, I'm concerned with theories that conflict with the official stories of *epistemic authorities* (that is, those people socially acknowledged as the relevant experts on a topic). Such theories are, of course, common. Well-known examples include theories about the moon landing, the QAnon conspiracy theory and the belief that the vaccines against Covid-19 kill more people than the disease.
>
> Those who accept contrarian theories often advocate doing your own research to test the official stories. **Conversely, those who accept the official stories and denigrate contrarian theorists often accuse them of credulousness in believing what they hear or read (paradigmatically, on social media), and take doing our own research as the**

***antidote* to such theorising; they disparage contrarian theorists as all talk when it comes to doing their own research.**

The available evidence suggests that, contra the stereotype, **contrarian theorists are actually quite likely to do their own research; that is, to engage with and attempt to assess the first-order evidence.** If those who are active on the conspiracy subreddit—probably the largest and most influential online discussion forum for conspiracy theories (Klein et al., 2019)—are representative, contrarian theories are often developed and elaborated by people who are very concerned with gathering and assessing evidence. **They spend a significant amount of time reflecting on the status of various sources of information *as* evidence, and pride themselves on being discerning in what conspiracies they accept (Klein et al., 2018). Similarly, work on online groups promoting dissent from the official story on masks and other measures as a response to Covid-19 finds that these groups prize grappling with the data.** Some ban links to interpretations of data from outside the group. **Instead, they encourage members to analyse the raw figures (e.g. county-by-county data on mask usage and infection rates) for themselves, and they even hold tutorials on how to gather and analyze data (Lee et al., 2021).** This empirical work backs up the intuition and observations of some philosophers, **that contrarian theorists are often *more* engaged in the search for and the evaluation of evidence than are most people who accept the official story (Harris, 2018).**"

"**Doing one's own research is therefore valuable because it can lead to understanding. It is an unreliable and risky route to knowledge, but may be indispensable for epistemic outcomes that are also very valuable.** There's therefore a prima facie case for doing one's own research, not *instead of* deferring, but alongside it. Jonathan Matheson (Matheson, 2022), who has identified the conflict between doing one's own research and securing knowledge before me, prescribes a similar response: research for understanding; deference for truth. But Matheson overlooks the risks of doing one's own research. **How are we to hang on to knowledge if our research seems to fail to confirm the official story?** I'll suggest that such failures are common. And of course contrarian theorists are keen to bombard us with evidence that, often, really seems inconsistent with the official story. Isn't the risk of losing knowledge too great to justify the expected gains in understanding?

We seem to confront a dilemma. If we engage in our own research, we may secure understanding but we risk knowledge. If we simply defer, we lose understanding. We also risk other benefits. **After all, sometimes the official story is false, and lay research helps uncover this fact. As Coady and Pigden stress, conspiracies are sometimes real** (**Coady,** 2012**; Pigden,** 2017), **and occasionally digging by laypeople uncovers them.** These kinds of cases occur when those in powerful positions are able to create a consensus (via manipulation of information or by suborning epistemic authorities), or to create a sufficiently convincing appearance of a consensus by strategic promotion and discrediting of experts (the lead up to the Iraq war, with an apparent expert consensus around WMDs, may be an example of the latter). **In these kinds of cases, non-experts may have certain advantages over experts in uncovering the truth. Experts may be hampered by their dependency on the conspirators. Some experts, for example, depend on ongoing access to official sources for their work, and will be unwilling to go out on a limb, on a mere hunch, if that threatens their access. Others will be mindful of their reputations and how they can be smeared with the accusation 'conspiracy theorist'.** Moreover, when evidence has been hidden or obscured, a non-expert might just happen to be in the right place to detect it; whistleblowers play a valuable social role."

"**When contrarian theorists urge us to "do our own research", it is of course truth-directed inquiry they have in mind. They advocate not accepting the official story** (**about 9/11, vaccines, climate change**) **on trust, but instead finding out for ourselves.** They are passionately concerned with the results of the inquiry, not the process (as we saw, they may be attentive to the process, but they attend to it in order to make the results more reliable). Descartes, Locke and Kant, too, are concerned with truth-directed inquiry. They are motivated by the conviction that only when we have confirmed findings for ourselves will our knowledge be secure.

It's truth-directed inquiry that is most risky. We risk knowledge in undertaking it. We will be lucky if we hit upon or retain true beliefs through truth directed inquiry, and luckier still if those beliefs are well enough justified to count as knowledge. Of course, contrarian theorists and the canonical philosophers who urge its importance are right in thinking that it's important: truth-directed inquiry is essential to the progress of knowledge. **But truth-directed inquiry by laypeople, on topics that have been**

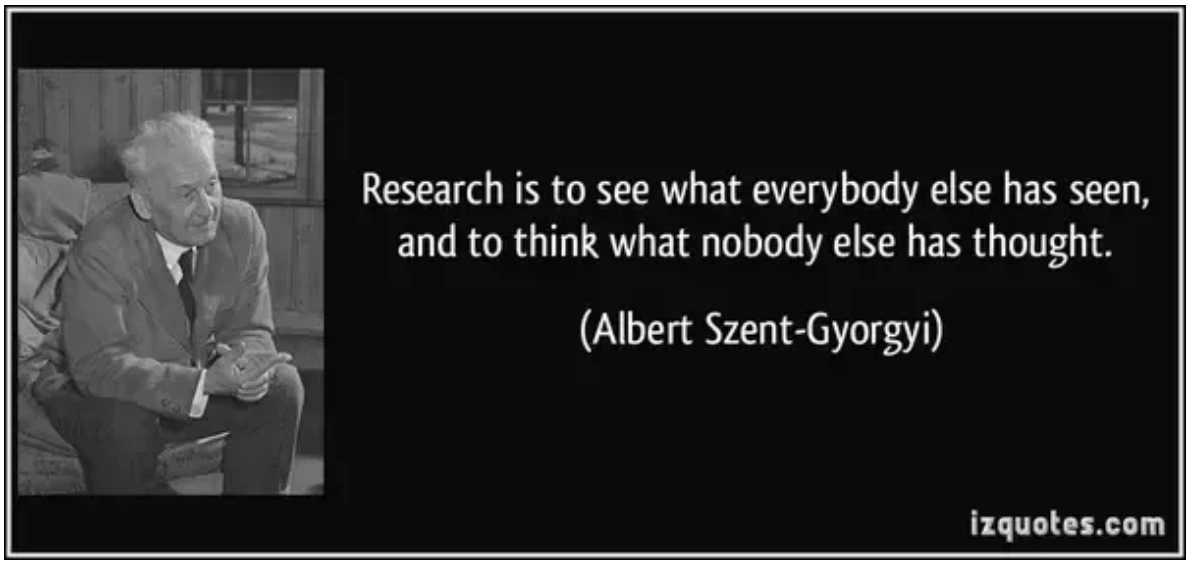
subjected to a great deal of scrutiny by diverse experts, has epistemic costs that routinely far outweigh its benefits."

Conclusion

"The call to do our own research is seductive. Autonomy is a central value for many of us, and few want to be seen as mere followers of the herd. **In this paper, I've argued that we ought to be wary of doing our own research.** It's no accident that contrarian theorists especially laud it: their independent research (or the independent research of those in their circles) has indeed been crucial in leading them to their views. **Doing their own research has cut them free from the moorings of truth. When there's an expert consensus, or expertise is required for a reasonable view on a topic, doing our own research risks truth and justification.**

But doing one's own research can have epistemic benefits. **Cases in which laypeople are able to correct the experts are unusual, but they do occur, especially when the expert consensus represents too narrow a range of viewpoints. Correction may be rare, but when it occurs it may also be very significant.** Moreover, there are other benefits to lay research, such as the capacity to apply political pressure when needed. **Finally, doing one's own research tends to increase understanding, even when it undermines knowledge.** These facts entail that the attractions of doing one's research are genuine."

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9392429/



If one were to lay out the main arguments made by these articles, the message behind the “don't do your own research” campaign becomes very clear:

1. We are nothing but crazy conspiracy theorists.
2. We are incapable of understanding the science.
3. Doing our own research is dangerous and harmful.
4. Scientific consensus is what matters most.
5. We are misguided and misled by our findings.
6. We start off with a preconceived conclusion and only look for information which confirms our own biases.

I think many of us would agree that this narrative is laughable. Personally, I did not start my own journey looking to disprove virology or germ theory. My research began as I sought answers to an HIV diagnosis for a family member that did not add up based on what we knew. I was also looking for the best possible treatments for this person. I was yearning to understand the situation and to find out what I could do to help. Contrary to what the authors of the above articles say, the research and investigation led me, not the other way around. As anyone should do, I looked into the accuracy of the HIV tests used to make the diagnosis and what I discovered was that the accuracy was not what we are told. When I spoke with the doctors who then told me that the tests were 100% accurate, their statements did not add up with the information I had uncovered. This fueled me to investigate even further which led me to those questioning the whole HIV=AIDS paradigm. My journey evolved and progressed naturally. I went in looking to understand the situation and what I came away with was true knowledge that had been suppressed by those who have every interest to keep this information from the public.

What I learned is that we must always do our own research and we must always verify for ourselves whether or not the information being provided is accurate. We must trace each and every claim back to the original source. We must read from the official sources, learn the lanuage, and understand the techniques. We must rely on our own abilities to think critically and logically in order to discern the truth.

It is not for the experts to decide what the truth is for us. We do not need to rely on a consensus of experts in order to tell us what the truth is. Consensus is not science and is

counter to the goal of scientific inquiry and discovery. Even if the majority agree on something to be true, that does not make it so. Consensus can be wrong and has been shown to be many times before:

As the quote above by Hungarian biochemist Albert Szent-Gyorgyi stated, the goal of research is to look at all of the evidence and to think what no one else has thought. If one goes in with the attitude of being open-minded and willing to learn, this leads to new understanding and discovery. In this day and age, we have no excuse not to research and verify the legitimacy of the information provided for ourselves. We have the tools to do so right at our very fingertips. Do not let them discourage you from believing in your own ability to research and understand. We are all capable of pursuing truth whether we are the common layperson or the "expert." Therefore, we owe it to ourselves and to future generations to disregard nonsense articles designed to suppress independent thought and investigation and to continue doing our own research.