

SOCIAL COGNITION (Part 12)

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Overconfidence Barrier

Overconfidence is greatest when accuracy is near chance levels, and reduces as accuracy increases from 50% to 80%. Once accuracy exceeds 80%, people become *under*-confident. Related to this, in what has been called the 'God Complex', we tend to believe that we know the answer to complicated problems. This can be seen in daily gossip where individuals confidently propose solutions to world issues. Researchers like Fischhoff, Slovic and Lichtenstein (1977) gave subjects a general knowledge test and then asked them how sure they were of their answer. Subjects reported being 100% sure when they were actually only 70%-80% correct. For example, teachers sometimes decide that some individuals and groups are more intelligent than others. This can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

There are many ways that might improve our overconfidence barrier:

- 1) When asked to consider the point of view opposite to their own, people can realize there were other ways to construe way, the world than their own way, and consequently make fewer judgment errors.
- 2) Teaching people basic statistical and methodological principles about how to reason correctly may help them apply these principles in their everyday lives.
- 3) When asked to consider the point of view opposite to their own, people can realize there were other ways to construe the world than their own way, and consequently make fewer judgment errors.
- 4) Teaching people basic statistical and methodological principles about how to reason correctly may help them apply these principles in their everyday lives. So if you were dreading taking a college statistics course, take heart: It might not only satisfy a requirement for your major but improve your reasoning as well.