



The Real Problem of Self-Assessment:
Implications for the Self-regulating Professional

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The Rhetoric of Self-Assessment



- Adult education literature promotes expertise as a process of effective self-reflection
 - Lifelong, self-directed learners
- The health professions have embraced a philosophy of professional autonomy and self-regulation
 - "Demands competent and trustworthy self-assessment by members"

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The Reality of Self-Assessment

- Hundreds of articles
- Many literature reviews
- One conclusion:

Self-assessment ability is generally poor

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Three Key Patterns of Data

- Little or no relationship between externally generated scores and self-assessed scores
- All but the very highest performers tend to overestimate ability
- Worst offenders are in lowest quartile of performance



The Result

- Morbid fascination
- Disbelief
- Concern
- Efforts to justify
- Efforts to improve

- (Still no acceptance)



The Problem of Self-Assessment

(why are they so bad at it?)

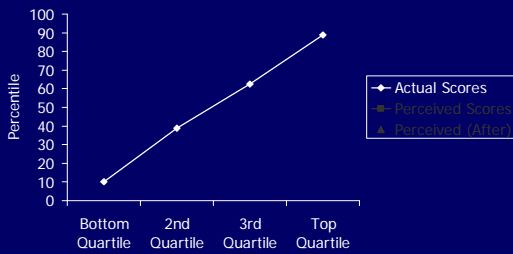


The Ubiquitous Kruger & Dunning Study

- “Unskilled and unaware”
 - The skills required to **know** whether you are performing well are also the skills required to **actually** perform well



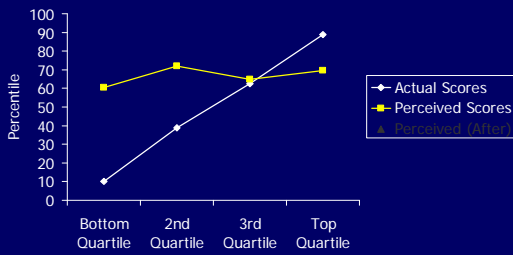
Undergraduate Students' Performance on a Grammar Test



Kruger and Dunning 1999



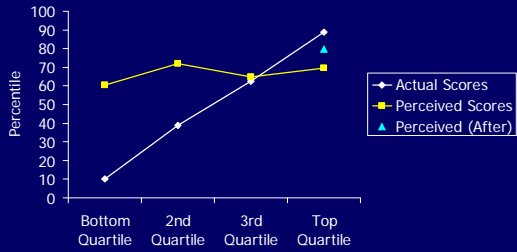
Undergraduate Students' Performance on a Grammar Test



Kruger and Dunning 1999



Undergraduate Students' Performance on a Grammar Test



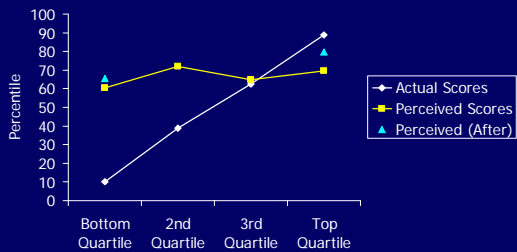
Kruger and Dunning 1999



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Undergraduate Students' Performance on a Grammar Test



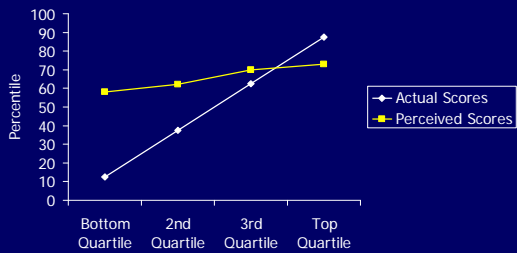
Kruger and Dunning 1999



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Undergraduate Students' Performance on a Humor Test



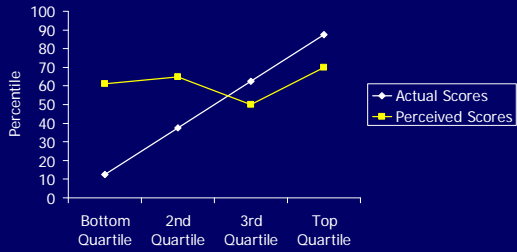
Kruger and Dunning 1999



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Undergraduate Students' Performance on a Logic Test



Kruger and Dunning 1999



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Kruger & Dunning's Conclusions

- "Unskilled and unaware"
 - The skills required to **know** whether you are performing well are also the skills required to **actually** perform well
 - A form of perceptual deficit



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"Domain Specificity" of Self-Assessment

- Good or poor self-assessment **NOT** a "generalizable" trait of an individual
 - Better for domains where one excels
 - Worse for domains where one is poor



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“Domain Specificity” of Self-Assessment

- Good or poor self-assessment **NOT** a “generalizable” trait of an individual
 - Better for domains where one excels
 - Worse for domains where one is poor
- Therefore:
 - Can’t test for “lack of insight” (cf Hayes, 2002)
 - Can’t teach as a generic skill
 - Domains where you are most likely to need self-awareness are the domains where you are least likely to have it



“It is impossible to make people understand their ignorance, for it requires knowledge to perceive it; and therefore, he that can perceive it hath it not”

-Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667)



The Real Problem of Self-Assessment

- Everyone believes this is a “**they**” problem
- Everyone thinks they are **above average** in self-assessment ability



Perpetuating the **Myth** of Accurate Self-Assessment

- Easy to find extreme examples of “knowing” where you are weak
 - I would never go on American Idol (obviously I have more insight than those people)
 - I could never play in the NFL (although I never tried)



Perpetuating the **Myth** of Accurate Self-Assessment

- Easy to feel confidence in “knowing” where you are strong
 - Difficulty of getting corrective feedback
 - I give good talks (people who come up always say nice things)
 - Ease of discounting corrective feedback
 - “The exception that proves the rule”
 - “It’s a one time thing it just happens a lot.”



The **2x2** Table

		Reality	
		WEAK	STRONG
Belief	WEAK	Football Singing	
	STRONG		Talks



The 2x2 Table

		Reality	
		WEAK	STRONG
Belief	WEAK	Football Singing	???
	STRONG	???	Talks



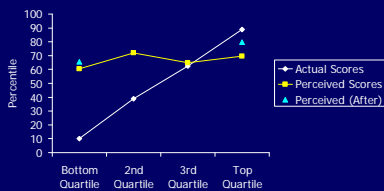
The 2x2 Table

		Reality	
		WEAK	STRONG
Belief	WEAK	??? Singing	???
	STRONG	???	???



Be Very Afraid...

- For any given skill, where are you on the curve (and how do you know)?



"Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge"

-Charles Darwin (1809-1882)



Implications for Regulatory Bodies

- Those most in need of improvement are those least likely to know
- For any given skill, 25% of us are in the bottom quartile of performance
- Those of us who are in the bottom 25% think we are above average
- So whose job is it to tell us (and how will they be able to convince us)?



"New" Directions to Explore

- From independent self-assessment to guided self-reflection
- From providing raw data to offering meaningful feedback
- From "assessors" to "mentors"



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Shaping the theories
and activities of learning
in the health professions



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