

# Mediocracy

bebee.com/producer/mediocracy

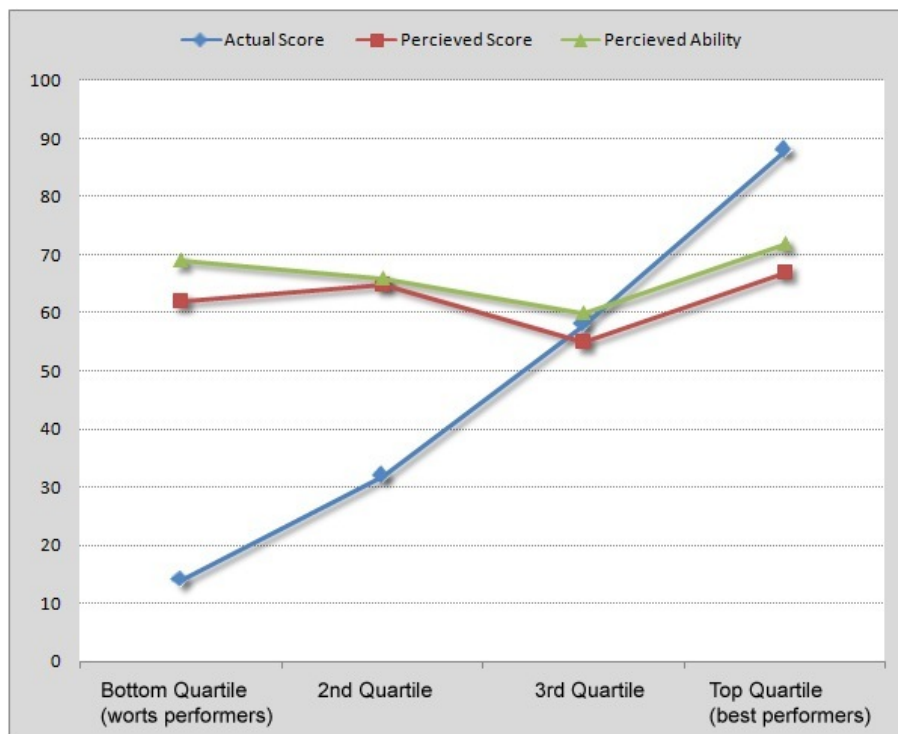


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## Introduction

There are two common mistakes in self-judging that are interesting to analyse together.

## Dunning-Kruger effect



The Dunning-Kruger effect is a cognitive bias that warps our ability to judge our own competence. To put it very bluntly, stupid people tend to think that they are quite brilliant, because they are too stupid to tell that they are, in fact, stupid. (Don't worry, I know it's a bit more subtle than that.)

–Source: [explorativeapproach.com](http://explorativeapproach.com)

## Impostor Syndrome

The *Impostor syndrome* is a concept describing high-achieving individuals who are marked by an inability to internalize their accomplishments and a persistent fear of being exposed as [they were] a "fraud".[...]Despite external evidence of their competence, those exhibiting the syndrome remain convinced that they are frauds and do not deserve the success they have achieved.

–Source: [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

Image from *The Curious Case of Impostor Syndrome*



–Source: [www.byrdseed.com](http://www.byrdseed.com)

## Put two and two together

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The *Impostor Syndrome* is a perception bias for which brilliant people think they are cheating others instead of recognise themselves as high performers. A very simple explanation could be that people do not tend to underline great achievements to others because it seems them obvious and moreover many people are affected by *Dunning-Kruger* effect which makes to value themselves better than they are in real.

Looking at the graph above, the most interesting thing is that almost all the people value themselves above the middle (>50) but in reality the score are distributed between 10 and 90 c.a. and only less than half will pass above the middle (>50) and more than 25% undervalue themselves. This means that about 60% of people overrate themselves.

## Education

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Looking at the *Dunning-Kruger effect* and the *Impostor Syndrome* as two sides of the same phenomenon, clearly indicates that there is a methodical problem in education system that do not allow people to know and to value themselves correctly.

It is highly probable that this lack of recognition of themselves will impact on the recognition of merit of the others, as well. When this happens, the overall balance would be in favour of the two bottom quartiles, penalising the two top quartiles, mainly switching the best half with the worst half, in any context in which it is not possible or easy to establish or rely on an effective score system.

## Democracy

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Popular democracy could be a good example in which the score criteria allows the merit inverse switching overall effect leading to a mediocracy rather than a meritocracy.

A harsh but interesting article is "*mediocracy as inversions & deceptions in the new hegemony*" about opposition to the ideological bias in mainstream academia. The beginning "*There is a new model of society. Let us call it mediocracy: the rule of the mediocre, the triumph of style over substance.*" fits with the main idea that a lack of reliable and objective metric will induce a merit inverse switching: *style over substance*.

## Workplace and career

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*Why some people think they're great even when their work is terrible?*

Unfortunately, we know from the more than 10,000 people who've taken the online quiz "*How Do You React To Constructive Criticism?*" that only 39% of employees handle constructive criticism by systematically dissecting every step leading up to the thing they just got criticized for.

They don't freak out or fight the feedback, instead, they want to understand and correct the underlying issues. Now, it's not guaranteed that the other 61% are ensconced in Dunning-Kruger, but it's worth being concerned [...]

In "*Fewer Than Half Of Employees Know If They're Doing A Good Job*", more than 30'000 employees answered dozens of workplace questions, including "I know whether my performance is where it should be." And frighteningly, only 29% of employees say they "always" know whether their performance is where it should be.

–Source:[forbes.com](http://forbes.com)

## Innovation

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The following text fits with the *egalitarianism* symptoms displayed into the graph, almost all the people value themselves in a tiny band above the middle.

- In a mediocracy, real cultural progress is impossible because it requires conditions that are incompatible with a commitment to egalitarianism. There is no room for genuine cultural innovators, because one cannot permit any individual to think they are special. Nevertheless, mediocracy maintains a cultural elite, to validate its ersatz culture and to protect it from criticism.

–Source:*Mediocracy: Inversions and Deceptions in an Egalitarian Culture* by Fabian M. Tassano, ed. 2004.

Cutting the individual top edges contributions and maintaining a dominant elite of averages impairs the innovation, in facts.

## Estimation indexes

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We may define the *perceived bands* the range in which the merit scale has been warped by collective biased perception. This could be a valuable index for the *egalitarianism*: as tiny the *perceived bands* are, as stronger the *egalitarianism* effect is.

In the graph above, the *perceived bands* are both about 10÷11 wide over an excursion of about 75 which means an index of 13÷15% circa.

About the *merit warp*:  $88-13=+75$  means no merit inversion and  $13-88=-75$  means a complete *merit inversion* which is equivalent to have a reliable demerit score system. Thus, as much these ranges tend to zero which is equivalent to a random choice, to have no metric at all, as worse merit perception is getting.

In the graph above, the *perceived ability* data {69, 65, 60, 71} varies with an almost inverse trend  $-4-5+11=2$  while the *perceived score* data {61, 65, 55, 68} waves along  $+4-10+13=7$ . These two values brings to a *merit warp* index of 3÷9% circa.

The only way to enforce the *egalitarianism* is to mess up the score system which breaks the education system in one basic aim: acknowledge people about their own abilities.

## Conclusion

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The combination of the *Dunning-Kruger* effect and the *Impostor Syndrome* is a product of the education system? The education system is established by dominant elite. The dominant elite is a product of the education system. If the education system fails to teach people how to correctly value themselves and others, then the consequences would be a domino effect over the entire society.

Once the *egalitarianism* becomes a driving trend into education system, it will enforce itself along the time like a vicious loop. This will move the entire society forward to deeper form of mediocracy: the perception band will get tiny and tinier along the time. Until the total lack of meritocracy will degrade the group or the society at the point that it will collapse by itself (decline) or by external pressures (collapse).

## TED-Ed Lessons worth sharing

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- Date: November 9th, 2017
- Educator: [David Dunning](#)

*Why incompetent people think they're amazing? Let's Begin...*

How good are you with money? What about reading people's emotions?

How healthy are you, compared to other people you know?

Knowing how our skills stack up against others is useful in many ways. But psychological research suggests that we're not very good at evaluating ourselves accurately. In fact, we frequently overestimate our own abilities. David Dunning describes the Dunning-Kruger effect. [...]

Full lesson link:

- <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/why-incompetent-people-think-they-re-amazing-david-dunning>

YouTube video link:

- [https://youtu.be/pOLmD\\_WVY-E](https://youtu.be/pOLmD_WVY-E)

In a single image

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