

Successes of the Intuitive Psychologist: Observers make reasonable judgments in the role conferred advantage paradigm

Drew Walker

UCSD, San Diego, California, United States

Nicholas Christenfeld

University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, California, United States

Ed Vul

University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, California, United States

Abstract

In a now classic experiment Ross, Amabile & Steinmetz (1977) showed that observers think that a participant who is randomly assigned to invent questions has more general knowledge than a participant assigned to answer these questions. This is taken to be an error arising from a reasoning process in which observers ignore social roles, and instead rely on surface behavior to make social judgments. Here we test two potential explanations for this observation: (1) observers are using a flawed reasoning process in which they do not consider the advantages and disadvantages that different social roles may confer, or (2) observers are using an unbiased reasoning process in which they do consider the influence of social role, but they are simply operating with an imperfect estimate of the advantage afforded the questioner. In a series of five studies, we show that not only is reasoning in this task consistent with an unbiased inference account, but, that observers are also surprisingly well calibrated to the influence of the social roles used in this paradigm.