

Social Psychologists Behind “Unskilled and Unaware of It” Bias Idea Receive 2023 Grawemeyer Award

December 08, 2022



APS Fellow [David Dunning](#), a psychology professor at the University of Michigan, and [Justin Kruger](#), a senior research scholar at New York University’s Stern School of Business, were named co-winners of the 2023 University of Louisville [Grawemeyer Award in Psychology](#) for identifying a cognitive bias that causes people to overrate their own competence in domains in which they have little knowledge or skill.

Their idea “unskilled and unaware of it,” also known as the Dunning–Kruger effect, shows that people who perform worse on certain tasks tend to have overly flattering opinions of their ability to perform them.

The two first described the effect in a 1999 paper in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, proposing that “those with limited knowledge in a domain suffer a dual burden: Not only do they reach mistaken conclusions and make regrettable errors, but their incompetence robs them of the ability to realize it.” Since then, their findings have been cited in more than 8,500 scholarly publications and mentioned regularly in popular media discussions on a range of topics. An example is a recent study of whether vaccines and autism are linked, in which “participants who knew the least about autism were

most likely to claim they knew as much as doctors and scientists. Studies with gun owners, emergency responders, chess players, budget officials, debate teams and wine tasters have produced similar results,” according to a [news release](#) announcing the 2023 award.

“The Dunning–Kruger effect has always been an important finding, but the idea is likely to have even more impact in the years ahead as information and misinformation become more available to us and our society struggles with when and how to trust experts in a variety of domains,” said Nicholas Noles, psychology award director, in the news release.

“The research highlights the value of humility in our opinions and beliefs, particularly ones we hold about ourselves,” Dunning said in an [announcement](#) in the *Michigan News*. “So it is quite easy just to be humbled by this award.”

Psychologists who recently received a Grawemeyer Award include APS Fellow Terrie Moffitt in 2022, William James Fellow Robert Plomin in [2021](#), and APS William James Fellow Terry Robinson and APS Fellow Kent Berridge in [2019](#). The awards, which come with a \$100,000 prize, also honor seminal ideas in music, world order, education, and religion.