

"The Intuitive Statistician Turns 50: Views of Human Judgment"

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Abstract:

How good are people at learning and using statistical properties of their environment? About 50 years ago, Peterson and Beach reviewed the research on people's statistical intuitions, and found that man can be seen as an intuitive statistician. Five years later, Kahneman and Tversky conducted their own experiments, revealing a contrasting picture. They found that people follow simple heuristics that work well most of the time, but that lead to predictable errors. The view of people as prone to committing judgmental errors became prevalent, and the intuitive statistician was quickly forgotten. Recently, however, researchers exploring risky choices have identified that learning from experience and learning from described sources can lead to systematically different choices. This observation allows us to look back critically, and examine whether the description-experience distinction can help us understand the contradicting views of the mind in the early sixties.