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Adults' Evaluations of Rote and Reflective Teachers

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Abstract

Decision-making can be automatic (“rote”) or on-the-fly (“reflective”). Are people sensitive to whether others are behaving rotely or reflectively? The rote-versus-reflective inference may be particularly relevant when learning from others: good teachers should be actively considering the learner’s needs. When teachers rely on rote systems, this may “break” the mental state recursion that facilitates learning from pedagogy. This study takes a first step in investigating learning and inference when teachers use rote-versus-reflective reasoning, using uniqueness of feedback as a cue to reflectivity. Adult participants viewed videos of teachers providing either identical, similar, or unique feedback to three different groups of students; participants evaluated that teacher along several metrics. Consistent with our predictions, rote teachers were evaluated as poorer informants than reflective teachers, and students paired with rote teachers were expected to learn less. These results are the first to demonstrate sensitivity to, and impact from, inferences about others’ rote-versus-reflective behaviors.