

Sociological/Psychological Phenomenon

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I am curious about something.

What is it about math and crypto that makes an amateur believe that he/she can actually come up with a new theorem or algorithm that has somehow been miraculously missed by large numbers of previous (or current) mathematicians???

I am sure that these same people would not post their ideas for (say) a new neuro-surgical technique. They do recognize that they have no competence.

What is it about math in particular, as opposed to other technical fields of knowledge, that amateurs are unable to recognize their lack of competence? People are certainly able to recognize that they know nothing about surgery. Why do they fail to recognize the same thing with regard to their mathematical knowledge?

We also see the same thing in sci.physics— Amateurs (and cranks) who post their own (mostly mistaken) 'ideas'. These people do not seem to similarly pollute medical newsgroups.

Clearly these people are looking for fame for solving some famous problem. But they do not seem to look for fame by (say) semi-serious efforts to cure disease.... They know they lack skills for the latter.