



Hive Mind: How Your Nation's IQ Matters So Much More Than Your Own

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Over the last few decades, economists and psychologists have quietly documented the many ways in which a person's IQ matters. But, research suggests that a nation's IQ matters so much more.

As Garett Jones argues in Hive Mind, modest differences in national IQ can explain most cross-country inequalities. Whereas IQ scores do a moderately good job of predicting individual wages, information processing power, and brain size, a country's average score is a much stronger bellwether of its overall prosperity.

Hive Mind: How Your Nation's IQ Matters So Much More Than Your Own Details

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From Reader Review Hive Mind: How Your Nation's IQ Matters So Much More Than Your Own for online ebook

Jasper says

Politically correctly ignores genetics, but nevertheless an informative, and helpful (to nations and economists) book.

Muhammad al-Khwarizmi says

This is a short but interesting treatise on the effects of a nation's average intelligence on other national variables. The case made is largely very convincing even if I don't adhere to the author's apparently libertarian politics. Something unusual stood out to me though: Jones was willing to tackle controversial claims and yet made no mention of the notion of raising national IQ through direct intervention in citizens' biology before or after birth. This strikes me as a very major oversight.

Robert Jacoby says

Title: IQ matters. A lot. Both to you and your nation.

Let's just say it up front and get it out of the way: IQ matters. A lot. Both to you and your nation.

There's much to like about this book. Jones does a great job of stating the case for the validity and importance of measuring IQ (the intelligence quotient) and making correlations with a wide range of educational, occupational, economic, and behavioral variables. He does this in a clinical and dispassionate way, which is very helpful and refreshing, merely presenting findings from numerous studies over decades of time (from recent to 50 to nearly 100 years ago) from a range of sources (private and public military/government). The text is very plain and understandable, almost like an article in Scientific American or The Economist. He does address how to possibly increase IQ of nations over time (the Flynn effect) and why that's important. In other words, what state-level policies might be considered to improve quality of life for a country's citizens? It's a great question but he leaves others to answer because, as the book title says, he's merely making the claim that your nation's IQ matters more than your own IQ. In other words: Better to be a below-average IQ individual in a high-IQ nation than a high-IQ individual in a low-IQ nation.

This is a short book, at 168 pages, and Jones does a very nice job of going through the scientific literature to show how IQ correlates (predicts) a range of things, including brain size, education, job performance, memory, patience, creativity, cooperation, political attitudes, pro-market attitudes, handling complexity, and on and on.

For example, research shows that higher IQ people tend to be more:

- o patient
- o pro-market

- o cooperative
- o generous/pleasant
- o center or center-right in their political attitudes

Just from these five factors alone you can see a pattern forming already about a society built on mutual cooperation for everyone's benefit. All in all, because of these traits (and many more), higher IQ nations tend to be richer nations. The reverse obviously holds true.

Fascinating stuff.

The Notes, Bibliography (ten pages!), and Index are all thorough and helpful, especially if you, like me, enjoy doing your own sleuthing research online. Really helpful are the detailed indexing for entries like "IQ tests" and "IQ test scores." Here you can quickly find text for cross-country comparisons and IQ and its relationship to the wide variety of topics he covers. (To find these for yourself online, just search "IQ of nations".)

The book did have its shortcomings, though. As I was reading I thought what Jones **didn't** include or talk about much or at all **just** as important and interesting. I found it odd that he would write a book about "IQ by countries" but not include much on very related (really, "intertwined") topics. Do your own sleuthing on such search terms like "IQ and race" (yes, there are differences; if race were merely a social construct, then why would race matter for stem cell or bone marrow transplants?) and "IQ and gender" (male geniuses outnumber female geniuses 7 to 1) and "IQ and genetics" (yes, IQ is very heritable) and "IQ and crime" and "IQ and inbreeding," for example, and you'll be surprised by what you learn. (If you use Google Chrome, the peer-reviewed research articles appear atop your search results under Scholarly Articles.) Jones ignores or barely touches on these topics, perhaps because of where the data leads. If you want a real eye opener, cross check UN estimates for Africa's population growth to 2100 with African nation's average IQs and the world Fragile State and Corruption Indices. An unsettling picture quickly begins to form. Jones likely left all of this information out of his book for how some people would think of these topics. It's a real shame that we can't discuss scientific data in public, which would inform our public policy, but I'll leave it at that.

Like other reviewers, I find it very odd that Jones closes this book with a call for more immigration of low-skilled people into rich (high IQ) countries. I find his argument here to be the same "cheap, immigrant/migrant labor" argument that got us to this point in the U.S. (Maybe it's not so odd, though. Jones is a signatory to the 2005 Open Letter on Immigration.) During his research for this book Jones must have come across studies showing that a host of social pathologies (crime, drug abuse, illegitimacy, permanent welfare dependency) occur around/below the 75 IQ mark. He must know that. Anyone can find this information on the Internet from legitimate news and peer-reviewed scientific studies in less than 1 minute of searching. And, like most people, I define "public policy" as "policy" designed to help the "public"; specifically, the public of a community, state, nation. So why would a high-IQ country want to **import** low-IQ people when there are **plenty** of native low-IQ people to go around? And why focus on low-skilled workers, anyway? Why not try to bring in "the best and brightest"? Jones tries to explain it with his own theory that shows low-skilled immigration actually **helps** the rich (high IQ) nation. It's a little convoluted, he hems and haws a bit, and in the end it doesn't work for me. And I don't think it does for Jones, either. He's doing a delicate dance here, you can tell. Some reviewers have called Jones' concluding recommendation "counter-intuitive." I'll go ahead and just call it "dangerous" and "deceptive." I'm on board with rich (high-IQ) nations helping poor (low-IQ) nations, for moral and ethical reasons, but there are limited resources to go around; and, in the end, one of a nation's top priorities are to the safety and security of its own people. Just ask Israel, Japan, Saudi Arabia, or China.

Still, all in all, this is an excellent book to get you started on the topic of IQ and why it matters so much in your own life, and in the lives of nations.

May 30, 2017 update: Researchers find a 4 point drop in IQ in France over 10-yr period. A negative Flynn Effect in France, 1999 to 2008–9. Dutton and Lynn. *Intelligence*, Volume 51, July–August 2015, Pages 67–70. Review of findings at "The puzzle of falling French intelligence," James Thompson, December 5, 2015, *The Unz Review*.

April 16, 2018 update: Sweden is learning a hard lesson about opening their borders to low-IQ legal immigrants (and illegal migrants), facing a rising number of Islamic state attacks, bombings, and grenade attacks. See Sweden's violent reality is undoing a peaceful self-image, *Politico*, April 16, 2018.

Willy C says

a short intro to the importance of IQ on the personal and national scale-- hampered by it's relatively shallow or absent treatment of some of the important findings of IQ research: criminality and IQ (which seem clearly important for a book on national IQ and it's consequences), the importance of very high IQ in science and innovation (for more on this see: Roe's work on eminent scientists, the work on the SMPY cohort, etc.) and probably more stuff I'm not familiar with.

The O-ring 'channel' was an interesting argument and brought my score up from a 3 to a 4-- I hadn't heard or read it in such a clearly articulated form before.

Gwern says

Pop sci, which reads more like overgrown blog posts. Very weak overview of IQ's connection to income: poor overview of what IQ is, all its correlates, the evidence establishing its causal role like the iodization historical studies (which I think are extremely important yet there's not even allusions to their results), and surprisingly brief coverage of the cross-national correlational and longitudinal regressions (which you would think would be discussed at length). Jones pretty much doesn't discuss core issues like measurement error of IQ and income, and he is shockingly naively optimistic about the prospects of boosting global IQ - he takes the Flynn effect fully at face value, ignores education signaling (this, from a colleague of Caplan...?), and totally ignores the technical issues about IQ gains typically resulting from loss of validity of the test, publication bias, short-term gains fading out, and the almost total failure to find meaningful intelligence boosts from anything other than parasite eradication and iron & iodine supplementation - which have been largely done for most countries...

I am not surprised that I learned little from the book, but I am disappointed that it is so superficial & scattershot and I cannot link it to other people as a good explanation of why IQs matter so much to people & countries and why we should put very high valuations on charitable projects like iodization.

See also <http://slatestarcodex.com/2015/12/08/> / <http://slatestarcodex.com/2015/12/10/>

Alex Zakharov says

It is rather ironic that the book's content is undermining its cover – contrary to the subtitle Jones demonstrates pretty convincingly that individual IQ does matter (excellent predictor of many life outcomes, highly heritable, stable, no longer culturally biased) and then he tries to build a case for why your country's IQ matters even more. As an introduction to the field it is pretty good (many myths shattered, a few seminal studies described and open questions/unknown areas acknowledged), but in my view he falls short of defending his national IQ thesis. Yes mutually beneficial cooperation, healthy time discounting and positive dynamics of O-ring theory do tend to result in more win-win scenarios for better IQ-endowed groups but causation can go in either direction. More importantly, as pointed out by Arnold Kling and Scott Alexander among others, the stronger success signal coming from higher IQ nations should fall out automatically from basic stats – as you increase the sample size the predictive effect of the normally distributed variable (in this case - IQ) should become clearer, essentially your signal-to-noise ratio increases with the sample size.

There is a separate almost a one-of chapter on immigration where Jones makes a rather esoteric argument that in the light of his IQ thesis and implications of the O-ring theory the countries should open up their borders for immigration of *low-skilled* workers as such move will push the citizens out into the highly productive O-ring driven sectors. There are many good arguments for more open borders but this is definitely not one of them.

Still, I enjoyed the book quite a bit – it is a brief, balanced and thorough review of the subject interleaved with a respectable number of intellectually stimulating tidbits that will keep you engaged all the way through.

Anant Kanndpal says

At the end, it rather felt incomplete with an abrupt conclusion. A short read & expected more significant insights to follow. The crux is given in first few chapters

Nathaniel says

This book opens, rather than closes, the public discussion on national IQ. While Jones has some of the answers, he asks many more of the reader and his fellow researchers. How important is IQ to the economy? If so, the IQ of which portions of the population? How can IQ be increased? If so, what interventions are most effective?

A major take-away from the research is that IQ is mutable, at least on the generational level. Childhood nutrition and education can significantly increase standardized test scores, and offer great promise for breaking undeveloped nations out of vicious cycles of poverty. Even more conservative sorts such as myself should be interested in the possibility of one-time interventions permanently improving a society's lot.

Jones does struggle a bit at balancing the demands of writing for both professional and popular audiences. This is one of his first books, though, and I look forward to seeing where he goes in the future.

Clay says

IQ matters hugely for economic development. There are five main channels for this. First, people with high IQs save more. East Asians, for example have high average IQs and are more patient and future oriented, and thus save a lot. Second, high IQs cooperate more, a key process for sound economics and politics. Third, high IQs support market oriented policies. Fourth, high IQs better work in teams. And fifth, high IQs like to conform. This leads to other attributes. High IQs are more likely to consider evidence in making decisions, and thus are better voters and citizens. They are less likely to make mistakes, and thus are better suited for the complex o-ring jobs in advanced societies, where a faulty o-ring can bring down a space shuttle. Finally, high IQs make much more difference at the country level through network effects, than at the individual level. In the same country, high IQs don't necessarily make more or even as much as low IQs. But most workers in high average IQ places makes a lot more than in low average IQ places. All of this is supported by extensive behavioral research. Implications for policy: do everything you can to achieve the Flynn effect: growth in IQ over time from better schools, nutrition, and health.

Daniel Frank says

This is how an academic book should be written. Concise, clear and persuasive. I can't emphasize how much I appreciate the book being so short and digestible.

I view a lot of this book as intuitive, but I might be alone in that regard seeing as how nobody has published it before, so kudos to Garrett Jones.

My only complaint is that the chapter on low skilled immigration I think misses the importance of social capital and government expenditures. Jones cites Robert Frank earlier in the book, but fails to consider his research here when I think it would have been most relevant.

Oolala says

12/20

Murilo says

The book started a little slow, but as chapters went on, the author brings more and more extremely interesting insights that I had never thought about. Definitely changed the way I see IQ (didn't "believe" in it before) and how it influences people, society and governments.

Arbraxan says

In his book Garrett Jones sets out to explain what he calls "the paradox of IQ": differences in IQ test scores (and similar cognitive metrics) are a weak predictor of differences in individual performance, whereas the relationship between differences in countries' average test scores (relative to other countries) and cross-country economic inequalities is very strong. For this purpose, he begins with a comprehensive overview of the content and import of IQ scores and argues that they offer valid gauges of individuals' cognitive abilities. He then reviews the development of international IQ scores, most importantly based on the work of Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen ("IQ and the Wealth of Nations") and Heiner Rindermann's work on the "da Vinci effect", wherein a country's strong cognitive performance in one area suggests an over-average cognitive performance in a different area. He then narrates the story of the Flynn effect (named after its discoverer, James Flynn), a stylized fact referring to the massive gains in IQ many countries experienced throughout the 20th century, and discusses different factors which may have caused the Flynn effect (education, nutrition, etc.). These three first chapters form the groundwork of Jones' book.

In the next six chapters he describes and elaborates five major channels which explain why IQ matters more for nations than for individuals:

- (1) High-scoring people tend to save more, and some of those savings stay in their home country. Most savings are invested into productive capital, which helps augment the productivity of a country's overall workforce (and not single individuals). Cf. Frank Ramsey's "mathematical theory of saving".
- (2) High-scoring groups tend to be more cooperative and since cooperation is a key ingredient for the development of high-quality governments and more productive businesses countries with higher average scores tend to be better governed and richer. Cf. Robert Axelrod's work on evolutionary cooperation.
- (3) High-scoring groups are more probable to support market-oriented policies, which are generally associated with larger economic growth. High-scoring individuals also tend to have good memories and be informed voters, who in turn are important for holding governments accountable. Cf. Bryan Caplan's "The Myth of the Rational Voter".
- (4) High-scoring groups will tend to be more successful at using highly productive team-based technology. If team-based technologies are of the "weakest link" (O-ring) type, then workers with high, complementary skills are crucial. Cf. Michael Kremer's O-ring theory of economic development.
- (5) High-scoring groups provide good role models whose behavior in terms of cooperation, patience, and information it is good to imitate. The human tendencies of conformity and peer imitation work through this channel. Cf. Solomon Asch's conformity experiments.

The book is very well-written and replete with examples from all walks of life, which help nicely getting the authors' points across. The chapters are not too long and well-structured and sustained by figures that illustrate clearly the authors' arguments. In particular, I am thankful for the author having kept his text concise and avoided the verbosity I have found so often in economic books. The book provides a large bibliography and uses endnotes whenever further elaboration would excessively disrupt the body of the text.

Overall, a good read which sparked my interest for this topic at the intersection between economics and psychology.

Ryan says

This is a refreshing popular press entry for an economist. He focuses on evidence overlooked by many, yet

he does not throw the profession under the bus to raise his own status (as seems to be the norm among pop press economist writings lately). Jones quietly builds an interdisciplinary case without bragging about being interdisciplinary. He is candid about the quality of the evidence he surveys, and he does not oversell the argument. He outlines the limits of knowledge. He does it all in a very readable way. In the George Mason tradition, Jones is widely read and fun to read.

I'm not sure what to make of chapter 7--it is not clear how it advances the case. I'm also not fully sure about the causal claims of the book generally, though he does make a reasonable argument. Ultimately it may be thought of as a calibration argument: without getting too far off track, we can think of him as providing a model of IQ transmission to other outcomes, which we can calibrate in the thought experiment.

It's a short read, highly recommended.

Benjamin says

Adam Feuerstein said it best:

"Would anyone be surprised if we find out there's a freezer in some Chinese lab filled with CRISPR-made human-mutant corpses?"
