

In-Sight Publishing
Ask A Genius 136 – Crowd Psychology¹
Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner
April 2, 2017

[Beginning of recorded material]

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I wonder if crowd psychology relates to that hierarchy of competition. So men create a system, build a hierarchy, compete within that, very few men will make it to the top. And it will get more exaggerated the bigger the population. Maybe, with crowd psychology, there's something where the more men not necessarily consciously realizing that they're lower on that system's hierarchical layering.

They de-individuate. They become more group minded. They lose themselves in it – watching sports would be one example.

Rick Rosner: I'm sure tribes of gorillas wouldn't—there's that number like 150, which is the number of friends and acquaintances you can have in mind, at most. We can't have that many people in mind. Somebody hypothesized that is the maximum number of primate troops before history. But now, we live in aggregations and cities with populations in the millions. And yea, that means, we have to find sub-groups that provide the satisfaction of hierarchies.

Where we don't have to rank ourselves among the millions, we can either rank ourselves as part of a group. If you follow an NFL team, one of 32 groups. If you follow an NBA team, there are 30 NBA teams, maybe. If pro baseball, there are 30 MLB teams. Then you have narratives, each around those teams. And so yea, you have to either—people join amateur sports leagues. There's a process through which—when you go to school, people take themselves out of contention when it becomes apparent to them that they're not going to win in this particular area.

A lot of people go into science, I assume, because they want to be an Einstein or a Newton. They either dropout or pick a specialty where they can excel. There aren't that many cosmologists or general relativists, or people trying to unify gravitation and quantum mechanics. There are

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1. Bold text following “Scott Douglas Jacobsen:” or “SDJ:” is Scott Douglas Jacobsen & non-bold text following “Rick Rosner:” or “RR:” is Rick Rosner.
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For further information on the formatting guidelines incorporated into this document, please see the following documents:

1. American Psychological Association. (2010). Citation Guide: APA. Retrieved from <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/system/files/28281/APA6CitationGuideSFUv3.pdf>.
2. Humble, A. (n.d.). Guide to Transcribing. Retrieved from <http://www.msvu.ca/site/media/msvu/Transcription%20Guide.pdf>.

probably thousands of people working on that. But there are millions, or even tens of millions, of people working in physics.

SDJ: I suspect 1 in a 1,000 or 1 in 4,000 can take on those most difficult fields, have the general ability to do it. Even among those that would dare to do it, they may not have the general ability to do it.

RR: There are two manifestations of that. One is people taking themselves out of the field. Another is crackpots who being inexperienced in the field decide that they can take in on. It is apparently a super common thing. That everybody who is a credentialed physicist working at a university. Anyone who has a public presence as a physicist gets hit very frequently – I don't know how frequently, probably not every day. It could be every month.

But they get hit with a unified theory of everything, or a new field theory. I am one of those crackpots. But I know better than to try to talk about my stuff to credentialed physicists because I don't want to be disappointed. I keep thinking that if I keep working I will have a defendable theory. But until then, I don't dare. There have been a couple times, when I talked to my teacher in Group Theory a CSUN about meta-primes.

She blew me off savagely. At which point, I thought, "Fuck it!", so I dropped the class. It is not the right way to approach someone as a dumb shit after class that is only vaguely related to what you're teaching. Of course, she had her own shit to worry about. Anyhow, to circle back to what this thing started about, which is legacy, I guess the best chance at having any kind of legacy that survives into the future is for you yourself to survive into the future.

SDJ: [Laughing] The best immortality is to keep living.

RR: Yea! Where Newton made a lot of contributions as a younger man, but I am sure it didn't hurt to live to 88 at a time when almost nobody or some tiny fraction of everybody lived that long. Even though, the great revolutionary scientists are stereotypically known to do their best work as young people. It helps if you can live for another 40 or 50 years after you come up with your great theories to defend them, and to just be a continuing symbol of what you came up with.

When people think of Einstein, they don't think of the young Einstein with black hair. The guy had black hair for a normal length of time. he didn't have the crazy poof when he was 30. That kicked in in his 50s. He managed to stay around until he was 76 or 75. He had about 30 years of scientific celebrity. Alright, he becomes the world's greatest scientific celebrity shortly after General relativity is proven.

He came up with it in 1915. They proved it with evidence from an eclipse, after the world war, which makes it 1919. He lives until 1955. So 1919 to 1955, so 36 years to be th world's most famous scientist. So anyway, he hung around. That helped his immortality. So yea, if you want to have a shot at immortality, eat right, exercise, take metformin, keep looking around, take aspirin, floss your teeth, maybe get a long-term partner or part, or both, and masturbate.

[End of recorded material]

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