



The Hypomaniac Edge: The Link Between (A Little) Craziiness and (A Lot of) Success in America

By John D. Gartner

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Why is America so rich and powerful? The answer lies in our genes, according to psychologist John Gartner.

Hypomania, a genetically based mild form of mania, endows many of us with unusual energy, creativity, enthusiasm, and a propensity for taking risks. America has an extraordinarily high number of hypomanics -- grandiose types who leap on every wacky idea that occurs to them, utterly convinced it will change the world. Market bubbles and ill-considered messianic crusades can be the downside. But there is an enormous upside in terms of spectacular entrepreneurial zeal, drive for innovation, and material success. Americans may have a lot of crazy ideas, but some of them lead to brilliant inventions.

Why is America so hypomaniac? It is populated primarily by immigrants. This self-selection process is the boldest natural experiment ever conducted. Those who had the will, optimism, and daring to take the leap into the unknown have passed those traits on to their descendants.

Bringing his audacious and persuasive thesis to life, Gartner offers case histories of some famous Americans who represent this phenomenon of hypomania. These are the real stories you never learned in school about some of those men who made America: Columbus, who discovered the continent, thought he was the messiah. John Winthrop, who settled and defined it, believed Americans were God's new chosen people. Alexander Hamilton, the indispensable founder who envisioned America's economic future, self-destructed because of pride and impulsive behavior. Andrew Carnegie, who began America's industrial revolution, was sure that he was destined personally to speed up human evolution and bring world peace. The Mayer and Selznick families helped create the peculiarly American art form of the Hollywood film, but familial bipolar disorders led to the fall of their empires. Craig Venter decoded the human genome, yet his arrogance made him despised by most of his scientific colleagues, even as he spurred them on to make great discoveries.

While these men are extraordinary examples, Gartner argues that many Americans have inherited the genes that have made them the most successful citizens in the world.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Diagnosing the psychiatric condition of dead historical figures is risky business, and in a largely unconvincing book, Johns Hopkins psychiatrist Gartner falls prey to the modern tendency to reduce an individual's actions to a psychiatric diagnosis. He argues that hypomania--a mild form of mania--drove many of America's most famous leaders and entrepreneurs to succeed. The characteristics of hypomania include a restless energy channeled into wildly grand ambitions, a tendency toward euphoria and a feeling of being destined to change the world. In nine brief psychobiographies, Gartner imposes this diagnostic scheme on figures ranging from Christopher Columbus and John Winthrop to David O. Selznick and Craig Venter, the genome entrepreneur. He also contends that hypomania is a peculiarly American trait. Applying terms like "depression" and "hypomania" to Winthrop's spiritual ups and downs, for instance, is anachronistic and reductionist. Gartner does provide some proof of his theory with Venter, whose life and work can be scrutinized firsthand, though he hasn't been on Gartner's couch. The author offers us few useful insights into the lives of these historical figures, nor does he seem to have any qualms about framing his case for an "American temperament" solely in male terms.

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From [Booklist](#)

By *success*, clinical psychologist Gartner means the impressive material achievements of the U.S. When he says "hypomaniac," he refers not to clinical mental illness but to "a temperament, characterized by an elevated mood state that feels 'highly intoxicating, powerful, productive and desirable,'" that can, and sometimes does, easily tip over into full-blown manic depression. One by one he puts several Founding Fathers and a handful of epic-level business leaders--the likes of Columbus, Alexander Hamilton, Andrew Carnegie, and genome giant Craig Venter--through psychological tests to determine whether they fit the hypomaniac mold. Turns out, Gartner says, that not only have many of the nation's most charismatic leaders been certifiable hypomaniacs but at least one was, quite likely, genuinely bipolar. Lest anybody think this is a bad thing, Gartner asserts that without the risk-taking, no-holds-barred temperaments of these overachievers, the U.S. would never have gained its current status as the wealthiest nation in the world. Entertaining, thought-provoking stuff. *Donna Chavez*

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Review

"'American entrepreneurs are largely hypomaniac,' Gartner declares, but the story doesn't begin and end with today's would-be Donald Trumps. The United States is a land of immigrants, he observes, populated by those whose ancestors were energetic and optimistic enough to leave a familiar homeland for strange shores...America's long history of immigration...has made it a 'hypomaniac nation.'"

-- *Boston Globe*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Anderson:

Here thing why that The Hypomaniac Edge: The Link Between (A Little) Crazy and (A Lot of) Success in

America are different and trusted to be yours. First of all looking at a book is good but it depends in the content of computer which is the content is as yummy as food or not. The Hypomaniac Edge: The Link Between (A Little) Crazy and (A Lot of) Success in America giving you information deeper and different ways, you can find any reserve out there but there is no book that similar with The Hypomaniac Edge: The Link Between (A Little) Crazy and (A Lot of) Success in America. It gives you thrill reading journey, its open up your eyes about the thing this happened in the world which is possibly can be happened around you. It is easy to bring everywhere like in area, café, or even in your way home by train. When you are having difficulties in bringing the printed book maybe the form of The Hypomaniac Edge: The Link Between (A Little) Crazy and (A Lot of) Success in America in e-book can be your substitute.

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Jennifer Stanley:

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