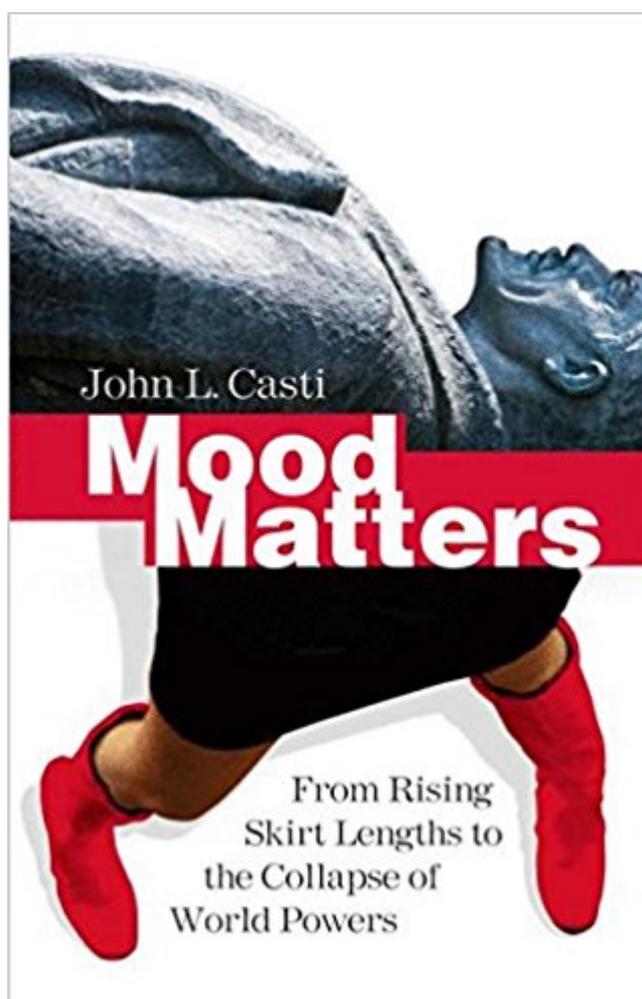


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Mood Matters: From Rising Skirt Lengths To The Collapse Of World Powers



Synopsis

"Mood Matters" makes the radical assertion that all social events ranging from fashions in music and art to the rise and fall of civilizations are biased by the attitudes a society holds toward the future. When the "social mood" is positive and people look forward to the future, events of an entirely different character tend to occur than when society is pessimistic. The book presents many examples from every walk of life in support of this argument. In addition, methods are given to actually measure the social mood and to project it into the future in order to forecast what's likely or not over varying periods of time. Casti's writing is a pleasure to read and its contents an eye-opener. "They [the chapters] tell an engrossing story, and the mystery heightens as it goes. . . . it's chatty and knowing." Greg Benford, Physicist and science-fiction writer, author of "Timescape" and "Deep Time" "I am struck by how thought-provoking it all is. I am sure that your book will draw a lot of attention" Tor Norretranders, Science writer, author of "The Generous Man" and "The User Illusion".

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Customer Reviews

The following review is based on an advance copy of Mood Matters (2010) by John L. Casti that I received from participation in the Library Thing Early reviewers program. So what exactly is socionomics? After all, that's what this book is about. I could only find two online resources with English definitions that include the word socionomics: Wikipedia and Investopedia. In the Wikipedia article, I learned that the word socionomics was coined by Robert R. Prechter, Jr. who postulated in

1979 that "social mood drives financial, macroeconomic, and political behavior, in contrast to the conventional notion that such events drive social mood." In the Investopedia article, I learned that socionomics was "the study of social mood and its effects of social behavior." To illustrate, Investopedia observes that "where the traditional view would be that recessions cause businesses to become cautious, the socionomic view says that businesses become cautious and cause recessions." That's the way Casti thinks and writes -- upside down and backwards. Prepare yourself. Casti's book is not an easy read. For instance, I extracted a randomly selected sample of Casti's prose, ran it through Gunning's Fog Index Calculator, and got a measure of 21.7, which places the text somewhere north of high school level. Thankfully, the book concludes with a very helpful annotated bibliography, greatly smoothing the pathway to our understanding of socionomics. Before reading Casti's book, let me hasten to say that the more you know about the following topics before reading what Casti has to say about them, the easier it will be to understand Casti.

The latest book from John Casti, polymath and popularizer, is *Mood Matters: From Rising Skirt Lengths to the Collapse of World Powers*, a presentation and extension of Robert Prechter's work on socionomics. *Mood Matters* can and should change the world; for its readers, it will surely do so. Over the past decade or two belief in a "rational" actor who makes decisions in his own best interest has given way to a more nuanced view that each of us has "ruts" in our thinking that we perceive as "grooves": bad cognitive habits that are maladaptations for modern man. Whether such theories are called evolutionary psychology or behavioral economics, nudges or predictable irrationality, mirror neurons or framing, what they have in common is an emphasis on the thought processes of individuals. At the least controversial level socionomics instead focuses on the reasoning of a society as a whole. Just as Durkheim insisted, there is also a collective "social mood" that can only be formed at the group level, and subject to the same kinds of weaknesses and flaws as individual psyches. Think of "herding instincts" or of all the reasons why *Popular Madness and the Delusions of Crowds* will never be out-of-date. If thinking is hard, read any newspaper. If reading is hard, listen to talk radio. The central hypothesis of socionomics, however, is a much less obvious statement; that is, it flies in the face of common sense, let alone the received wisdom: *Everything You Know is Wrong*. Socionomics believes that social mood affects later events, while events do not affect later social mood. (I use a weak term like "affect" because the causal chain is not that specific; Casti uses words like "bias" or "slant", i.e., the influence is in terms of shifting probabilities.

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