

Why People Dislike Really Smart Leaders

January 22, 2018

Intelligence makes for better leaders—from undergraduates to executives to presidents—according to multiple studies. It certainly makes sense that handling a market shift or legislative logjam requires cognitive oomph. But new research on leadership suggests that, at a certain point, having a higher IQ stops helping and starts hurting.

Although previous research has shown that groups with smarter leaders perform better by objective measures, some studies have hinted that followers might subjectively view leaders with stratospheric intellect as less effective. Decades ago Dean Simonton, a psychologist at the University of California, Davis, proposed that brilliant leaders' words may simply go over people's heads, their solutions could be more complicated to implement and followers might find it harder to relate to them.