

discoveries

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FEMA photo by Win Henderson

Victims of Hurricane Katrina are evacuated from New Orleans by bus on Aug. 31, 2005.

what went wrong after katrina

Welfare critics have argued that reliance on government assistance instead of “legitimate” work has created a class of people so dependent on help that they lack the ability to care for themselves.

These are the people, the party line goes, who failed to evacuate prior to Hurricane Katrina.

To test this “welfare dependency” theory, Timothy Brezina (*Social Problems*, February 2008) used data from the Survey of Hurricane Katrina Evacuees to examine the characteristics of the New Orleanians hit hardest by the storm.

His findings indicate, contrary to the claims of welfare dependency theorists, that more than half of these New Orleanians were employed full time before Katrina and many showed great initiative after the storm. Upwards of 60 percent, for example, were already seeking new jobs just two weeks after the evacuation.

Brezina found the best predictor of pre-storm evacuation was awareness of the evacuation order, not employment

or welfare status, a result consistent with previous research on evacuation. **J.W.**

why women give life

Surrogate pregnancy and egg donation are often viewed as altruistic actions or opportunities for profit.

In interviews with a large number of women in New Zealand who have donated eggs or been surrogates, Rhonda Shaw (*Sociology*, February 2008) found women also give these reproductive gifts for personal reasons, rather than motivations of either profit or altruism.

New Zealand highly regulates surrogate pregnancy and egg donation, and actually makes it illegal for a woman to profit from them. These restrictions have limited surrogate pregnancies to a few a year and egg donations to just 20 or 30 a year.

The restriction on profit has created a social and institutional structure that reinforces the altruistic nature of reproductive gifts. But according to Shaw, this isn’t why women give.

Some women gave as a way to move past painful memories such as

abortions and relationship break-ups. Others gave as a way to mourn the death of loved ones. Still others indicated they wanted to experience something they had yet to experience.

Though on the surface these responses appear quite different, Shaw argues they all represent the idea that women have highly personal reasons for their reproductive gifts. **K.C.**

growing into your own

Studies of shy young adults born in the 1920s and 1950s indicated men felt more stress and anxiety than women as they moved into adulthood. That’s because shy women were more likely to settle quickly into isolating roles as housewives, which allowed them to avoid the many difficult transitions young men experienced in their greater contact with society.

Looking to update this research, Larry J. Nelson and colleagues (*Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, May 2008) explored how shy young adults today make the adjustment from adolescence to adulthood.

They found shy young women now have the same problems transitioning to adulthood as young men did in the ‘20s and ‘50s. Today, both shy young women and men are likely to have low self-worth and report low levels of relationship quality with friends, parents, and romantic partners.

The authors speculate the change in shy women’s experiences is related to broader changes in American society for women that promote a culture of personal exploration, developing relationships, paid work, financial independence, and delays family life. **K.C.**

jesus may not rehabilitate criminals...

Many rehabilitation programs center on the healing and reformative power of spirituality. Yet sociologists studying delinquency usually emphasize the impact of non-spiritual factors like marriage, job stability, and the criminal behaviors of friends and close relatives.

To see which factors had the most impact on leaving or staying in a life of crime, Peggy C. Giordano and colleagues (*Criminology*, February 2008) followed 152 serious offenders from 1982 to 2003.

They found that while many participants spoke of the importance of spirituality, neither perceived closeness to God nor church attendance had any effect in helping people stop criminal behavior.

Instead, the researchers' findings were more in line with previous sociological research on the subject. It's the much harder-to-obtain positive catalysts for change—steady employment and housing, non-criminal social networks—that truly made the difference between successful rehabilitation and a relapse into crime. **J.W.**

...but he'll keep you from cheating...

Turns out it's not so much faith and prayer that keeps the religious from coveting their neighbors' wives. Rather, it's merely religious attendance that predicts marital fidelity, according to David Atkins and Deborah Kessel (*Journal of Marriage and Family*, May 2008).

Using data from the 1998 General Social Survey, the authors constructed nine different ways of measuring religiousness. Among indicators such as nearness to God, attendance, prayer, and taking a punitive view of God, religious attendance was the only measure that significantly predicted infidelity.

Individuals who rarely, if ever,

attended services were roughly four times more likely to have an affair than those who attended services with great frequency. (Higher education, extreme high or low income, previous divorce, and marital unhappiness were also predictors.)

The authors argue religious attendance helps prevent infidelity because it's often a shared activity among spouses, implying shared values, and opens up cheaters to shame and embarrassment from a community if revealed.

Apparently, dragging our spouses to church on Sunday morning does more than restore their faith in God. **H.M.**

...and making money

Praying may have its benefits, but it won't necessarily bring you wealth—especially if you're a conservative Protestant.

According to Lisa Keister (*American Journal of Sociology*, 2008), conservative Protestants maintain specific cultural values that limit asset accumulation over their lives. Lower educational achievement expectations, having children early, larger families, and limited labor force participation are all partially responsible for curbing a family's long-term income. Religious beliefs may also be part of the problem. Because adherents believe money belongs to God, they seek divine guidance in managing their wealth and avoid amassing more than they need. Doing so reduces accumulation over time because they don't reap the benefits of compounding interest, which in turn reduces money inherited by the next generation.

Along with beliefs, Keister found that more exposure to the conservative protestant values often left members with fewer resources. Those who were raised in and maintained the faith had the lowest wealth, those raised in and who subsequently left the church had the second lowest wealth, and those

who only joined the faith as an adult were the least disadvantaged.

Known for its high levels of inequality and religiosity, the United States offers an important case study in understanding how religion, in contrast to The Protestant Ethic, may inadvertently cause poverty. **R.A.**

meet the new medium, same as the old medium

In this age of mass media and corporate news giants, many hope blogs will revolutionize a stagnant news industry.

Ray Maratea (*Social Problems*, February 2008) examined the role of blogs in today's news culture and found they do, in fact, offer many advantages over traditional media.

Thanks to the speed at which blogs can be updated and posts quickly spreading through the Internet via hyperlinking, blogs can be an effective means of drawing public attention to issues.

However, in other respects blogs aren't as revolutionary as they may seem. The blogosphere is very hierarchical, for example, with a small number drawing most of the traffic. Moreover, blogs tend to use the same criteria as traditional media when deciding what deserves attention, such as drama and novelty. **J.S.**

the digital echo chamber

Like analog communities, digital communities often consist of like-minded individuals and discourage dissent and diversity. But does the Internet's promise of being "just one click away" from anything diminish the echo chamber effect of social groups, or simply amplify it?

Eszter Hargittai, Jason Gallo, and Matthew Kane (*Public Choice*, January 2008) studied the most popular political blogs and found some evidence for both.

On the one hand, conservative

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blogs were more likely to link to conservative blogs and liberal blogs were more likely to link to liberal blogs. Moreover, when cross-ideological links did occur, the most common treatment of these links was a “straw man” approach that simply dismissed the other sides’ views.

However, they also found that conservative bloggers were more likely to link to liberal bloggers. Conservative bloggers were also more likely to agree (if only 14 percent of the time) with liberal blogs they link to, while liberal bloggers agreed with conservatives only 5 percent of the time. *J.S.*

surfing the internet may make you richer

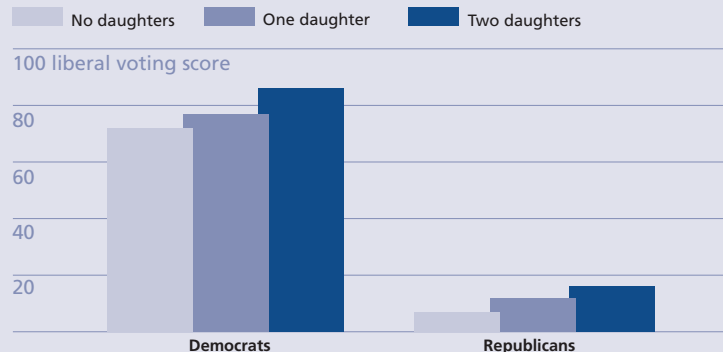
Internet surfers of the world, stop feeling guilty. Some skills and behaviors developed while using the Internet may help you on the job market.

Paul DiMaggio and Bart Bonikowski (*American Sociological Review*, April 2008) found evidence to suggest that Internet users benefit from access to better job information and from the signaling effects of using fashionable technology. The evidence? Between 2000 and 2001, U.S. workers using the Internet increased their earnings at a faster rate than those stuck offline.

Most existing studies attribute increased earnings to increased productivity at work. But DiMaggio and Bonikowski found at-home Internet users also see an earnings boost, suggesting other factors than just productivity are at play.

It seems Internet use not only gives people access to information, but it broadens social networks and functions as a cultural signal of competence and intelligence. *C.S.*

have daughter will vote



Ebonya Washington (*American Economic Review*, March 2008) found legislators—especially dads—with more daughters voted more liberally than their colleagues with more sons, particularly on reproductive rights issues. Voting also shifted to the left for issues like the environment, foreign policy, and health. The chart depicts the average voting score given by the National Organization for Women for U.S. Representatives in the 105th Congress with only two children.

women faring worse in democracy

With the transition from state socialism to liberal democracy, countries in Central and Eastern Europe also experienced a precipitous and unexpected decline in the number of women in government.

Although this fact is old news to those who study the region, scholars still disagree over why this gap persists. Yvonne Galligan and Sara Clavero (*Gender and Society*, April 2008) interviewed 71 female politicians in seven of these countries to better understand the situation from the women’s points of view.

The authors found that while these political women feel the lack of women in politics is a problem, they don’t think they can do much about it.

Whether conservative or liberal, the female politicians unanimously named family responsibilities as an important reason why so few women are in politics. A strong majority also thought it was important for more women to be in the political arena.

Unlike their counterparts in established democracies, however, these politicians didn’t see themselves as acting on behalf of their countrywomen. In

fact, the authors found even as the interviewees saw politics as a male world that could benefit from the influence of more women, these elite women didn’t place the responsibility for the lack of women on party gatekeepers or a masculine political system, but rather on individual women themselves.

The authors noted the female politicians all believed vehemently in the fairness of democratic electoral rules, suggesting that faith in the power of democracy may itself be part of the problem with gender inequality in politics. *M.K.*

hold the phone

Because 32 percent of low-income young adults live in households with only a wireless phone, traditional telephone surveys may be misjudging important health behaviors.

According to Stephen J. Blumberg and Julian V. Luke (*Public Opinion Quarterly*, Special Issue 2007), low-income and young adults smoke and binge drink more than previously measured, but they’re also more physically active, less obese, and more likely to have been tested for HIV than previously thought.

There's good reason to think telephone survey validity is the culprit. Blumberg and Luke found that even when limiting the population they analyzed to low-income and young adults, there were small but significant differences between those with landlines and cell-phone only households. Perhaps more importantly, the authors found that standard techniques for adjusting the bias of landline-only surveys work only when applied very carefully.

The spread of cell phones may mean survey researchers need new techniques for gathering crucial information about the public. **M.K.**

other consequences of immigration policy

Stringent U.S. immigration laws and the deportation of non-citizens can have consequences Americans fail to realize.

Jacqueline Hagan, Karl Eschbach, and Nestor Rodriguez (*International Migration Review*, Spring 2008) drew on a random sample of 300 Salvadoran deportees in their home communities and found that when non-citizens are deported, it actually puts families in two countries in jeopardy.

Deportees are likely to have families and dependents in the United States. Because 95 percent of deportees are male, sending them back home removes the family's breadwinner and may lead to a greater reliance on the state.

As well, 72 percent of deportees remit to extended family (especially parents) in El Salvador. These remittances actually surpass national exports as a source of foreign exchange, and many families rely on the cash flow for survival. **R.A.**

the writing is on the wall

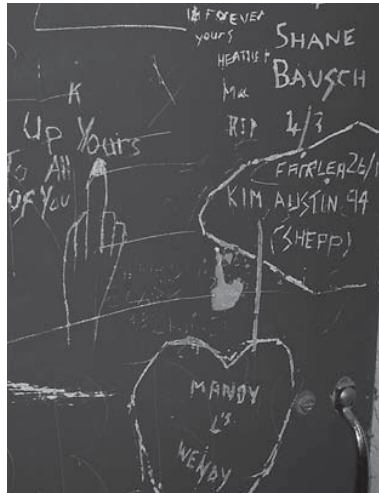


Photo courtesy Jacqueline Wilson

Women are more social than men in the statements they make in prison graffiti.

Jailhouse graffiti reveals interesting differences in how men and women cope with their time in short-term jails as they await trial and transfer to prison.

Focusing on gender, Jacqueline Wilson (*Ethnography*, March 2008) examined the pencil markings, scratches in paintwork, and carvings in wooden fittings of the decommissioned Melbourne City Watch House in Australia.

While male inmates were primarily interested in asserting themselves by simply "tagging" their names, women were more social in their statements overall, Wilson found.

Specifically, graffiti in the women's section showed more emphasis on networking and relationships between female inmates. Because Melbourne had only one facility for women with a small inmate population, the women's graffiti demonstrated a pervasive concern with establishing alliances before arrival in the prison. They demonstrated their connections by writing "Mandy L's Wendy," by which the writer meant "Wendy has Mandy's back, and vice versa." **M.K./E.B.**

many paths to 'white'

Despite the fact that the United States became a less hospitable place for them in the aftermath of 9/11, more Arab Americans than ever are declaring their racial identity as white.

Seeking an explanation for why, Kristine Ajrouch and Amaney Jamal (*International Migration Review*, Winter 2007) turned to the Detroit Arab American Study (DAAS)—the first-ever representative sample of Americans with Arab ancestry living in the Detroit metro area. (Unbeknownst to many, Detroit has one of the largest densities of Arab Americans in the United States.)

Different experiences with assimilation appear to be crucial. Being Lebanese/Syrian or Christian, for example, made a respondent more likely to identify as white. Being older was also linked with a higher likelihood of identifying with the white majority, as was having strongly held feelings about being Arab American (the pan-ethnic category, as opposed to smaller, more localized national or religion affiliations). Indeed, while some Arab Americans reported only a strong white identity, many expressed a strong pan-ethnic attachment as well.

Like many other immigrant groups, Americans of Arab descent don't necessarily see a conflict between their ethnic and racial identities in the United States. Being ethnic and white seems to be a way to claim a distinctive identity and place in the mosaic that is contemporary America. **M.K./E.B.**

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