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The features marked with a star (*) are based entirely on material taken straight from standard research (and other Official and Therefore Always Correct) literature. Many of the other articles are genuine, too, but we don't know which ones.

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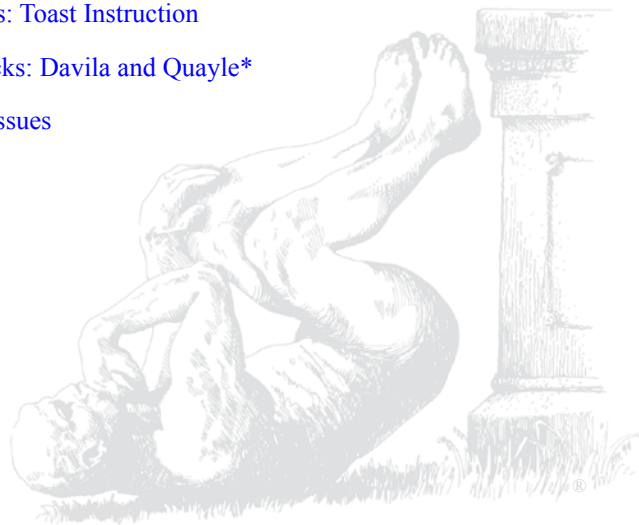
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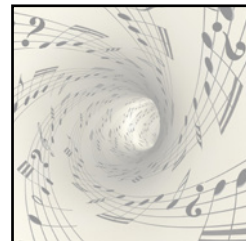
ANNALS OF

IMPROBABLE RESEARCH



On the Front Cover

Music is a source of confusion and thus inspiration, for some scholars.



On the Back Cover

Chocolates that resemble tools and hardware, on sale in a train station in Manchester, UK. Photo: Alice Shirrell Kaswell.



Some Coming Events

See IMPROBABLE.COM for details of these and other events:

March–April 2018

Ig Nobel EuroTour

July 2018

Ig Nobel Ceremony Tickets go on sale

September 13, 2018

Ig Nobel Prize Ceremony, Harvard U

September 15, 2018

Ig Informal Lectures, MIT

September 2018

Japan

October 10, 2018

Hartford, CT, USA

Autumn 2018

Ig Nobel Fall EuroTour

Where There's More

There's always new improbable — it's not what you expect! — stuff on the **Improbable Research** blog at IMPROBABLE.COM



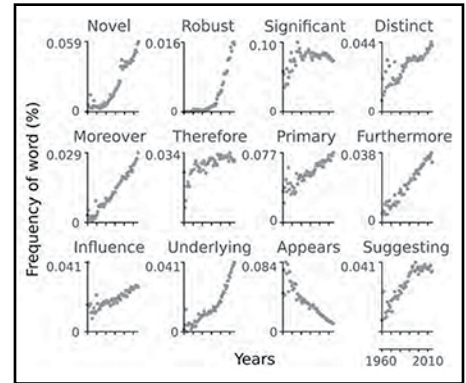
IMPROBABLE RESEARCH: UNREADABILITY, CANDY-SNATCHING, COUNTER-CLOCKWISE

Improbable theories, experiments, and conclusions
compiled by Dirk Manley, Improbable Research staff

Research Reports Are Becoming Harder to Read

“Research: The Readability of Scientific Texts is Decreasing Over Time,” Pontus Plavén-Sigra, Granville James Matheson, Björn Christian Schiffler, and William Hedley Thompson, *eLife*, vol. 6, 2017, e2772. (Thanks to Margaux Phares for bringing this to our attention.) The authors, at the Karolinska Institutet, Sweden, explain:

Clarity and accuracy of reporting are fundamental to the scientific process. Readability formulas can estimate how difficult a text is to read. Here, in a corpus consisting of 709,577 abstracts published between 1881 and 2015 from 123 scientific journals, we show that the readability of science is steadily decreasing. Our analyses show that this trend is indicative of a growing use of general scientific jargon.



Detail from the study “Research: The Readability of Scientific Texts is Decreasing Over Time.”

Upper-Class People More Likely to Take Candy From Babies

“Higher Social Class Predicts Increased Unethical Behavior,” Paul K. Piff, Daniel M. Stancato, Stéphane Côté, Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton, and Dacher Keltner, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 109, no. 11, 2012, pp. 4086-4091. The authors, at the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Toronto, report:

[A]t the end of the study, the experimenter presented participants with a jar of individually wrapped candies, ostensibly for children in a nearby laboratory, but informed them that they could take some if they wanted. This task was adapted from prior research on entitlement and served as our measure of unethical behavior because taking candy would reduce the amount that would otherwise be given to children.... Central to our hypothesis, participants in the upper-class rank condition took more candy that would otherwise go to children than did those in the lower-rank condition.

Higher social class predicts increased unethical behavior

Paul K. Piff^{a,1}, Daniel M. Stancato^a, Stéphane Côté^b, Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton^a, and Dacher Keltner^a

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Edited* by Richard E. Nisbett, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, and approved January 26, 2012 (received for review November 1, 2011)

Seven studies using experimental and naturalistic methods reveal that upper-class individuals behave more unethically than lower-class individuals. In studies 1 and 2, upper-class individuals were more likely to break the law while driving, relative to lower-class individuals. In follow-up laboratory studies, upper-class individuals were more likely to exhibit unethical decision-making tendencies (study 3), take valued goods from others (study 4), lie in a negotiation (study 5), cheat to increase their chances of winning a prize (study 6), and endorse unethical behavior at work (study 7) than were lower-class individuals. Mediator and moderator data demonstrated that

for cash—than did lower-class participants, v of their credits with a stranger (7). These re tionwide survey data showing that upper-class h a smaller proportion of their incomes to chari class households (10). These findings suggest individuals are particularly likely to value their the welfare of others and, thus, may hold more toward greed.

Greed, in turn, is a robust determinant of u Plato and Aristotle deemed greed to be at the

A Possible Reason Track Meet Races Run Counter-Clockwise

“The Reason Why Do Athletes Run Around the Track Counter-Clockwise?” M.H. Tavakkoli, *International Journal of Educational Development*, vol. 2, no. 4, October 2013, pp. 23-30. (Thanks to Scott Langill for bringing this to our attention.) The author, at Kerala University, India, explains:

We run counter-clockwise because everything in nature tends towards counter-clockwise motion. That spectator will perceive the runners as moving left to right - the same direction our eyes move when we read. The human body is slightly heavier than the right because of the heart and when running anticlockwise, the body would tend to very slightly incline towards the left, which could be an advantage while running anticlockwise most people are right hand/leg dominant.



We welcome your suggestions for this and other columns. Please include the full citation (no abbreviations!) and, if possible, a copy of the paper.