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Subject: article round up

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Hope you are having fun in Paris. Here's all the stuff we're missing since you're in a stupid time zone... Short summary, then link. Am off to Hawaii to give my keynote to all the old white guys next week. Ugh.

Science Needs Better Statistical Analysis

A respected psychology journal's decision to accept a research report that claims to show the existence of extrasensory perception has inflamed one of the longest-running debates in science. Some statisticians have argued that the standard technique used to analyze data in much of social science and medicine overstates many study findings — often by a lot. The literature is littered with positive findings that do not pan out: “effective” therapies that are no better than a placebo; slight biases that do not affect behavior; brain-imaging correlations that are meaningless. ...Statistical analysis must find ways to expose and counterbalance all the many factors that can lead to falsely positive results — among them human nature...and industry money.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/11/science/11esp.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>

Sleep-Disrupted Mice Get Fat & Dumb

McEwen's team turned lab lights on and off to create 20-hour days for mice, while a control group was kept on a regular 24 hour schedule. Within six weeks, the disrupted group started to gain weight, despite eating the same diet as controls. They grew obese, and had altered levels of insulin and leptin, two key metabolic hormones. Effects extended to their brains. In the prelimbic prefrontal cortex, a region important to emotional control and cognitive flexibility, neurons shrank and were arranged in less complex ways. The mice had trouble learning to navigate mazes, and were spooked by new environments. The researchers hope their model of disruption will be used for further investigation of circadian disruption.

<http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2011/01/circadian-disruption/>

Prostitutes in China

“Women going astray...” typical to blame the woman! Enough said. Short article, English.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2010-12/15/content_11703915.htm

Storing Data in Your Intestines

I don't think this needs a description either.

<http://www.macworld.com/article/157266/2011/01/intestinalstorage.html>

How Personality Determines Happiness

Humans are notoriously bad at predicting their future happiness. A new study published in Psychological Science suggests that part of the reason for these mispredictions lies in failing to recognize the key role played by one's own personality when determining future emotional reactions. The new evidence comes from Jordi Quoidbach, a psychological scientist at the University of Liege, Belgium who found that our natural sunny or negative dispositions might be a more powerful predictor of future happiness than any specific event. They also

discovered that most of us ignore our own personalities when we think about what lies ahead—and thus miscalculate our future feelings.

<http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/news/releases/people-neglect-who-they-really-are-when-predicting-their-own-future-happiness.html>

With Age Comes Happiness

When people start out on adult life, they are, on average, pretty cheerful. Things go downhill from youth to middle age until they reach a nadir commonly known as the mid-life crisis. So far, so familiar. The surprising part happens after that. Although as people move towards old age they lose things they treasure—vitality, mental sharpness and looks—they also gain what people spend their lives pursuing: happiness. This curious finding has emerged from a new branch of economics that seeks a more satisfactory measure than money of human well-being. See the part about extroversion and neuroticism...just sayin’.

<http://www.economist.com/node/17722567>

The Sleeping-Around Gene

A particular version of a dopamine receptor gene called DRD4 is linked to people's tendency toward both infidelity and uncommitted one-night stands, the researchers reported a bit ago Nov. 30 (it's been that long!) in the online open-access journal PloS One. The same gene has already been linked to alcoholism and gambling addiction, as well as less destructive thrills like a love of horror films. One study linked the gene to openness to new social situations, which in turn correlated with political liberalism. I see a test in your future...

<http://www.livescience.com/culture/gene-linked-to-promiscuity-infidelity-101201.html>

Feed the World or Save It?

Poverty, your favorite. Indulge me on one agro economics story. Chronic underinvestment in agriculture over the last 20 years combined with trade liberalization has trapped many developing countries in a vicious cycle of low agricultural productivity and dependence on cheap food imports. The one exacerbates the other as local farmers struggle, and fail, to get a decent price for their produce in competition with imports, which have often benefited from government subsidies. Local farming goes into steep decline leading to migration to the cities. This is a serious market failure. Faced with large hungry (and often jobless) urban populations, government policy is driven by the need to keep food cheap at all costs or risk political instability. Do you think we have to choose? I do. Maybe futile.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jan/21/olivier-de-schutter-food-farming>

Africa's Economic Lion

Over the past decade sub-Saharan Africa's real GDP growth rate jumped to an annual average of 5.7%, up from only 2.4% over the previous two decades. That beat Latin America's 3.3%, but not emerging Asia's 7.9%. Asia's stunning performance largely reflects the vast weight of China and India; most economies saw much slower growth, such as 4% in South Korea and Taiwan. The simple unweighted average of countries' growth rates was virtually identical in Africa and Asia. Over the next five years Africa's is likely to take the lead. In other words, the average African economy will outpace its Asian counterpart. Suckers. Hey when are we going to Madagascar?

<http://www.economist.com/node/17853324>

The New Global Elite

Some insight into your peeps. Our light-speed, globally connected economy has led to the rise of a new super-elite that consists, to a notable degree, of first- and second-generation wealth. Its members are hardworking, highly educated, jet-setting meritocrats who feel they are the deserving winners of a tough, worldwide economic competition—and many of them, as a result, have an ambivalent attitude toward those of us who didn't succeed so spectacularly. Perhaps most noteworthy, they are becoming a transglobal community of peers who have more in common with one another than with their countrymen back home.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/01/the-rise-of-the-new-global-elite/8343/>

(Finally...fun book for the week!)

Swallowing Foreign Bodies

Not what you are thinking...The new book, "Swallow," is a remarkable testament to the strangeness of the human experience, and our ability to swallow. Mary Cappello uncovers the stories of the odd objects people ingest and Dr. Chevalier Jackson, a man who dedicated much of his life to removing them from people's insides. He saved thousands of people's lives by perfecting a technique that most people were too trepidatious or didn't have the patience to develop; he used broncoscopes without anesthesia to enter the delicate passageways of the upper torso and treat each foreign body as a unique mechanical problem. Pretty awesome book to have around the house! 😊

http://www.salon.com/books/nonfiction/index.html?story=/books/feature/2010/12/18/swallow_interview