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NOVEMBER 2008 ATLANTIC

Ghetto tax; Taliban talking points; biblical trauma

Quick Study

THE ACADEMY

Google Scholar

As academic journals have gone online, their audiences have grown and their content has become more accessible. But scientists and scholars now cite far fewer journals, reference recent articles much more often, and tend to ignore older studies in their research. While they can now find “prevailing opinion” more easily, they might be exploring a more limited range of ideas and accelerating consensus.

—“[Electronic Publication and the Narrowing of Science and Scholarship](#),” *Science*

PSYCHOLOGY

After the Crash

Why do so many people die in the immediate aftermath of plane crashes and other disasters, even when they’ve avoided injury? One clue: Royal Air Force crews did poorly on a battery of memory and cognition tests during a simulated crash, suggesting that the mind’s ability to focus deteriorates in survival situations, when sound decision-making is essential.

—“[Impairment in Attentional Processing in a Field Survival Environment](#),” *Applied Cognitive Psychology*

GOVERNMENT

Jackboot Junkies

People living under the yoke of corrupt governments tend to want ... more government regulation. It’s a vicious cycle: in trusting societies, people act civilly and expect less government interference. In distrustful societies, people act selfishly and expect tighter regulation. But more government corruption leads to less-trusting societies, and citizens will generally “prefer state control to unbridled production by uncivil firms”—even when they know their leaders are crooked.

—“[Regulation and Distrust](#),” [PDF] National Bureau of Economic Research

TERRORISM

Guerrilla Marketing

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MARC AMBINDER

Overwhelmed militarily, the Taliban have mastered the modern art of spin, using asymmetrical warfare to project false strength, then controlling the resulting media narrative by responding quickly to press inquiries and threatening or killing unsympathetic reporters. The group augments its message control with a flood of DVDs, MP3s, and multilingual online propaganda that wildly exaggerates the Afghan government's incompetence and the coalition's brutality.

—“Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words?,” [PDF] International Crisis Group

ECONOMICS

Rich Man's Discount

Poor inner-city residents have access to more locally owned stores than do inhabitants of wealthier big-box suburbs, but they have to pay more for the same groceries as a result. Prices at the independent corner stores that dot city streets run about 7percent higher than those at chain supermarkets—effectively levying a “ghetto tax.”

—“Cost of Being Poor: Retail Price and Consumer Price Search Differences Across Inner-City and Suburban Neighborhoods,” *Journal of Consumer Research*

RELIGION

Odyssey of the Mind

Biblical evidence suggests that after suffering through years of slavery in Egypt and exodus into the desert, the Israelites began to manifest classic symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, such as disregarding traditional rituals and being haunted by anguishing memories. But creating a narrative of transgression followed by divine punishment seems to have helped ease the pain and restore a sense of control—and make the Jews more resilient in the long run.

—“Collective Trauma and Post-Traumatic Symptoms in the Biblical Narrative of Ancient Israel,” *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*

CULTURE

Ink-Stained Wretches

Among three dozen men undergoing court-ordered psychiatric evaluation, those with tattoos were far more likely to have antisocial personality disorder than their unmarked peers, and those with the disorder had tattoos that were larger and more numerous. Tattooed subjects were also more likely to report past sexual abuse, substance abuse, and suicide attempts. Ink may be one way of expressing emotions for a group that otherwise struggles to show them.

—“Tattoos and Antisocial Personality Disorder,” *Personality and Mental Health*

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