

which is associated with alcoholism. While there is strong evidence GABRA2 is linked to alcohol dependence, the gene doesn't automatically produce alcoholism the same way Gregor Mendel's pea plants reliably passed on traits. GABRA2 seems to have little or no effect on women, and the predisposition toward alcoholism of those with GABRA2 "virtually washes away" for men with supportive families, Pescosolido and colleagues found.

Guang Guo of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, studied the effect of the presence of the 9R/9R gene variant on the number of sexual partners young white men were likely to have. With two colleagues, he tracked the role of 9R/9R, which seems to be a kind of "good boy" marker associated with better grades, less binge drinking, and more seat belt

## EXCERPT

## Taste Test

*[Since President Barack Obama's election] there's been a thick jam of optimism smeared on the burnt toast of my generation's apathy. Now we'll find out how the whole thing tastes.*

—AKIVA FREIDLIN, a New York City writer, in *The Oxford American* (Spring 2009)

wearing, and which also appears to act as a kind of brake on sexual activity involving the dopamine transporter genes in the brain.

Although dopamine is not completely understood, its line of work has earned its label as "the feel-good chemical." Young male 9R/9R carriers (about six percent of the sample population) are less likely to engage in risky behaviors (such as having multi-

ple sexual partners) than similar young men with a different combination of genes—called the Any10R men. Guo and his colleagues, however, found that the "protective" effect of 9R/9R can easily be overwhelmed by environment. In schools where half or more of the 9R/9R group's fellow students have experienced sex by age 16, the "protective" effect of the 9R/9R gene vanished.

In fact, according to Guo, environment seems to play a bigger role in the sexual decision-making of 9R/9Rs than on their peers. When the 9R/9Rs were surrounded by other young men who had already become sexually active, their predicted number of partners more than tripled. For those without the 9R/9R genotype, peer pressure raised the number of partners by only a little more than 20 percent.

## PRESS &amp; MEDIA

## The Web News Fallacy

**THE SOURCE:** "Print Is Still King: Only Three Percent of Newspaper Reading Happens Online" by Martin Langeveld, in Nieman Journalism Lab at [www.niemanlab.org](http://www.niemanlab.org), April 13, 2009.

NEWSPAPERS ARE MIGRATING to the Web at a furious pace, and advertisers began fleeing there long ago. But one group has been left behind: readers. According to Mar-

tin Langeveld, a blogger at *News After Newspapers* and a former newspaper business executive, only three to four percent of newspaper reading occurs online.

The Newspaper Association of America estimates that newspapers have a daily print audience of 116.8 million. Each reader looks at 24 pages, about half the pages published in the average paper, and reads for

roughly 25 minutes. All this adds up to about 87 billion print page views per month. On the Web, the association says, Nielsen figures show that newspaper sites get 3.2 billion page views in an average month. Thus, the online share of newspaper readership is only 3.5 percent. All told, newspapers claim the attention of readers for a total of 99.5 billion minutes per month, with only three billion of those minutes spent in front of a computer screen, according to the Nieman Lab figures.

Langeveld's specific numbers have a back-of-the-envelope feel, but his general conclusion jibes with those of

other writers who believe that the much-discussed tidal wave of newspaper readership moving from print to the Internet is more fantasy than fact. A British blogger has written that online sites account for only 17 percent of the page views by British newspaper readers. An important caveat is that total newspaper readership—including paper and electronic readers—has been sliding for 30 years. Circulation has dropped by more than 10 million since the late 1970s, reaching 48,408,000 last year. Many people are simply getting the news from other sources—or not at all.

Commenters on Langeveld's post questioned whether each newspaper copy is truly read by 2.128 readers, as the industry has long claimed, whether readers look at half of the pages in their papers every day, and whether they spend anything like 25 minutes at the task.

Langeveld maintains that the "pass-along" rate, showing that each paper copy is read by more than two people, is based on sound survey statistics. He acknowledges that his measures of pages read and time

spent are estimates. Even if they are cut in half, he says, they show that the overwhelming number of newspaper readers are still getting their fix from ink and dead trees.

## PRESS &amp; MEDIA

## Cashiering the Critics

**THE SOURCE:** "Thinking on Film" by John Podhoretz, in *The Weekly Standard*, May 18, 2009.

THE NATION'S CADRE OF MOVIE reviewers has been shrinking so rapidly that by the end of the year only 10 to 15 American newspapers may still have their own film critics, writes John Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary* and movie critic for *The Weekly Standard*. The newspaper film critic may be well along the path of the ichthyosaurs, soon to be extinct.

It's a development much lamented . . . by movie critics, Podhoretz says. Readers, for the most part, don't care. Typical readers don't know the difference between a staff critic

and one who works for a wire service or moonlights as a reviewer after a day of, say, telemarketing. What the stereotypical Joe Reader wants, Podhoretz says, is not cinematically erudite film criticism but sports scores, stat boxes, TV schedules, and, especially, weather maps.

Although movie criticism has been around for a century, most of it has not been memorable, Podhoretz says. "One can count the standout critics throughout that time on maybe two hands."

Podhoretz isn't concerned over the supposed harm done to the "national cultural conversation" by the decline of salaried critics. That's because there are hundreds, maybe thousands, of nonprofessional critics reviewing feverishly on the Web. Amateurism may be the best thing that has happened to the field, he says. It will bring out some "very interesting work" by moviegoers who are seeking to "express themselves in relation to the work they're seeing" instead of cranking out 300 words per movie in return for a regular blip in their electronic deposit account at the bank.

## HISTORY

# Who Voted for Hitler?

**THE SOURCE:** "Ordinary Economic Voting Behavior in the Extraordinary Election of Adolf Hitler" by Gary King, Ori Rosen, Martin Tanner, and Alexander F. Wagner, in *The Journal of Economic History*, Dec. 2008.

NO QUESTION OF VOTING BEHAVIOR has been studied more extensively than how the Germans

managed to elect a party that destroyed democracy in their country and left Europe ravaged. The conclusion has generally been that the Nazi victory was a "unique historical case." Now an international team of interdisciplinary researchers has

compared voting results in six German elections between 1924 and 1933 with what is known about economic voting behavior in other countries. They find nothing unique about the Nazis' rise to power. Germans, like many other nationalities at many other times, voted according to what they perceived as their economic self-interest.

Harvard political scientist Gary King, University of Texas, El Paso mathematician Ori Rosen,