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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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On the Front Cover

Geoffrey Haddock, author of the study “Do I Get Better Looking Each Day?” See page 22.



On the Back Cover

Detail from the patent “Device for Waking Persons From Sleep.” See page 27.



Some Coming Events

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

September 14, 2017
27th First Annual Ig Nobel Prize Ceremony

September 16, 2017
Ig Informal Lectures

October/November 2017
U Manchester, UK
EMBL, Heidelberg, Germany

January 21, 2018
Princeton U, USA

February 2018
SLAS Conference, San Diego, CA, USA
Salk Institute, La Jolla, CA, USA
AAAS Annual Mtg, Austin, TX, USA

March 2018
Ig Nobel EuroTour

April 26, 2018
Portland, Oregon, USA

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

STRANGE COUNTING QUESTIONS

Research About Questions That Might Strike You As Being Strange

compiled by Alice Shirrell Kaswell, Improbable Research staff

Would Bohr Be Born If Bohm Were Born Before Born?

“Would Bohr Be Born If Bohm Were Born Before Born?” Hrvoje Nikolić, *American Journal of Physics*, vol. 76, no. 2, February 2008, pp. 143-146. (Thanks to Tom Roberts for bringing this to our attention.) The author, at Rudjer Bošković Institute, Zagreb, Croatia, explains:

The Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics was the first interpretation of quantum mechanics that achieved significant recognition among physicists. It was proposed very early by the developers of quantum mechanics, especially Bohr and Heisenberg. Later, many other interpretations of quantum mechanics were proposed...

I argue... that if some historical circumstances had been slightly different, it would have been very likely that the Bohm deterministic interpretation would have been proposed and accepted first. Consequently, this interpretation would be dominant today.

*Hrvoje Nikolić, author of the the study “Would Bohr Be Born If Bohm Were Born Before Born?”
Drawing by Nan Swift, Improbable Research staff.*



Would Bohr be born if Bohm were born before Born?

Hrvoje Nikolić^{a)}

Theoretical Physics Division, Rudjer Bošković Institute, P. O. B. 180, HR-10002 Zagreb, Croatia

(Received 24 May 2007; accepted 13 October 2007)

I discuss a hypothetical historical context in which a Bohm-like deterministic interpretation of the Schrödinger equation is proposed before the Born probabilistic interpretation and argue that in such a context the Copenhagen (Bohr) interpretation would probably have not achieved great popularity

What Are Some Strange Questions About Braids?

“Strange Questions About Braids,” Patrick Dehornoy, *Journal of Knot Theory and Its Ramifications*, vol. 8, no. 5, 1999, pp. 589-620. The author, at the University of Caen, France, explains:

Most of these “strange” questions about braids seem to be non-trivial, and we hope that they can be of interest for topologists.

Can One Count Things That Might or Could Exist?

“Counting Things that Could Exist,” Tobias Rosefeldt, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, epub May 16, 2016. The author, at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany, explains:

The paper deals with cases of counting things that could exist but do not actually exist that resist common strategies for actualist paraphrases and that play an important role in motivating Timothy Williamson’s ontology of contingently concrete objects....

Consider a tailor who works for a company that sells business suits as well as hipster suits. She has two business trousers and two business jackets in front of



*Patrick Dehornoy, author of the study
Strange Questions About Braids.”*

continued >

STRANGE COUNTING QUESTIONS [CONTINUED]

her and wonders in which combinations she should arrange them and whether she should dye the resulting suits pinkish in order to produce hipster suits or not. She asks herself the following question: ‘How many possible suits could I make by combining and dyeing the two jackets and the two trousers?’

Can Population Growth Rule Out Reincarnation?

“Can Population Growth Rule Out Reincarnation? A Model of Circular Migration,” David Bishai, *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, vol 14, no. 13, 2000, pp. 411-420. (Thanks to Isabel Oliveira for bringing this to our attention.) The author, at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, concludes:

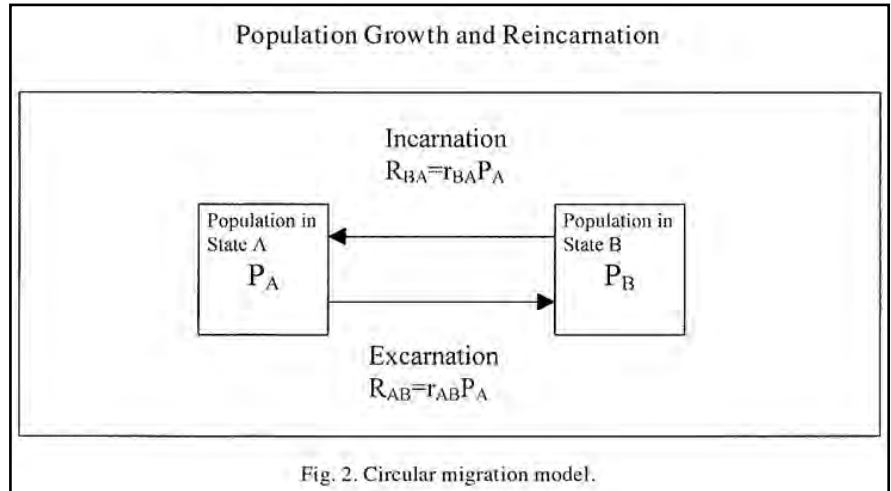
Because multiple conflicting theories about the existence and nonexistence of an afterlife are consistent with the currently available data, there can be no conclusion regarding which is correct.

Measure Calories By Counting Words?

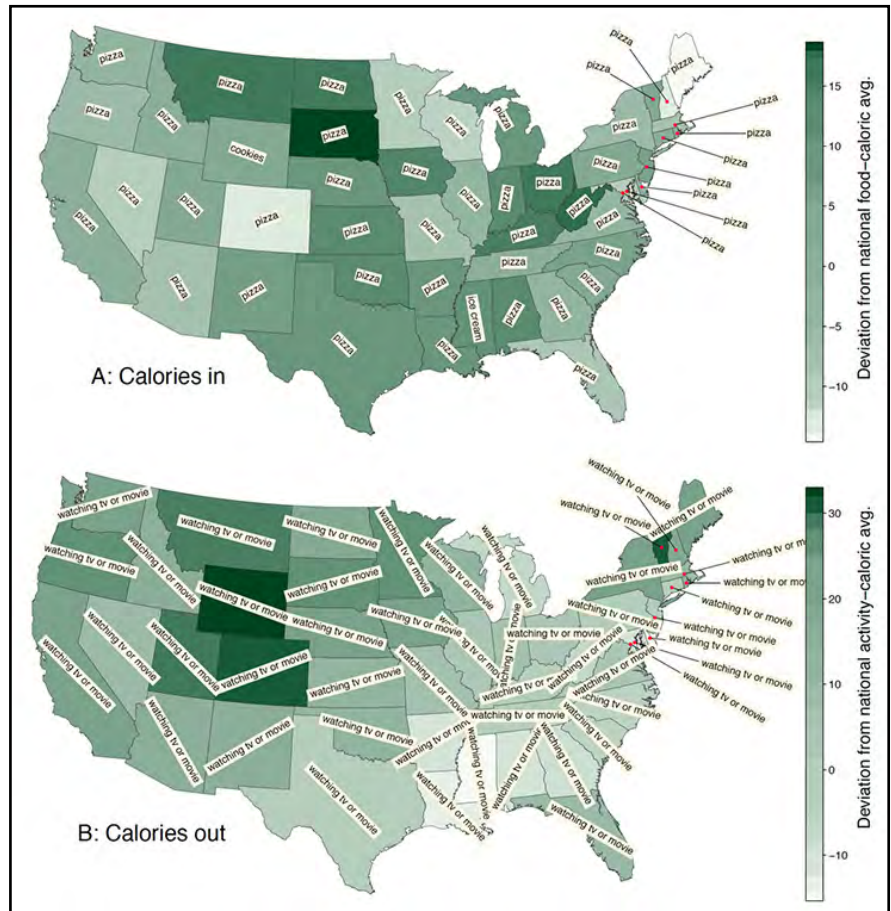
“The Lexicocalorimeter: Gauging Public Health Through Caloric Input and Output on Social Media,” Sharon E. Alajajian, Jake Ryland Williams, Andrew J. Reagan, Stephen C. Alajajian, Morgan R. Frank, Lewis Mitchell, Jacob Lahne, Christopher M. Danforth, and Peter Sheridan Dodds, arXiv:1507.05098v2, May 31, 2016. The authors, at the University of Vermont, the University of California Berkeley, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Adelaide (Australia), and Drexel University, explain:

We propose and develop a Lexicocalorimeter: an online, interactive instrument for measuring the “caloric content” of social media and other large-scale texts. We do so by constructing extensive yet improvable tables of food and activity related phrases, and respectively assigning them with sourced estimates of caloric intake and expenditure. We show that for Twitter, our naive measures of “caloric input”, “caloric output”, and the ratio of these measures are all strong correlates with health and well-being measures for the contiguous United States.

Detail from the study “The Lexico-calorimeter: Gauging Public Health Through Caloric Input and Output on Social Media.”



Detail from the study “Can Population Growth Rule Out Reincarnation? A Model of Circular Migration.”



continued >

STRANGE COUNTING QUESTIONS [CONTINUED]

How Can One Design Three-legged Pantyhose?

“Pantyhose Garment With Spare Leg Portion,” U.S. Patent 5713081, granted April 9, 2002, to Annette L. Pappas and Nita A. Vaccaro.

A hosiery item including a panty member having three absorbent crotch members provided therein, each absorbent crotch member having a...

United States Patent [19]
Pappas et al.

[11] **Patent Number:** **5,713,081**
[45] **Date of Patent:** **Feb. 3, 1998**

[54] **PANTYHOSE GARMENT WITH SPARE LEG PORTION**

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

[76] Inventors: **Annette L. Pappas**, 907 Poplar St., Metairie, La. 70001; **Nita A. Vaccaro**, 4517 Lake Louise, Metairie, La. 70006

partial translation of the German reference '675, Jan. 1973.

Primary Examiner—Jeanette E. Chapman
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Joseph N. Breaux

[21] Appl. No.: **751,501**

[57] **ABSTRACT**

[22] Filed: **Nov. 18, 1996**

[51] **Int. Cl.⁶** **A41B 11/00**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **2/409; 2/239; 66/178 R**

[58] **Field of Search** **2/239, 240, 409, 279, 237; 66/178 R, 169 R, 170, 172 R, 173, 172 E, 174, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 178 A, 189**

A hosiery item including a panty member having three absorbent crotch members provided therein, each absorbent crotch member having a pocket formed therein; and three leg portions secured to the panty member in a manner such that an absorbent crotch member is positioned between any two leg portions, each leg portion having a leg insertion opening in connection with an interior of the panty member. In use the wearer inserts her legs into two of the leg opening in the conventional fashion of donning a pair of pantyhose. The remaining unused leg portion is then gathered and the toe end tucked into the pocket of one of the absorbent crotch members. If a run or hole develops in one of the leg portions being worn, the leg of the wearer can be easily and rapidly removed from the damaged leg portion and placed into the undamaged spare leg portion. The damaged leg portion is then gathered, folded and tucked into a pocket of one of the absorbent crotch members as wearer to select and use any two of the three leg portions for use.

[56] **References Cited**

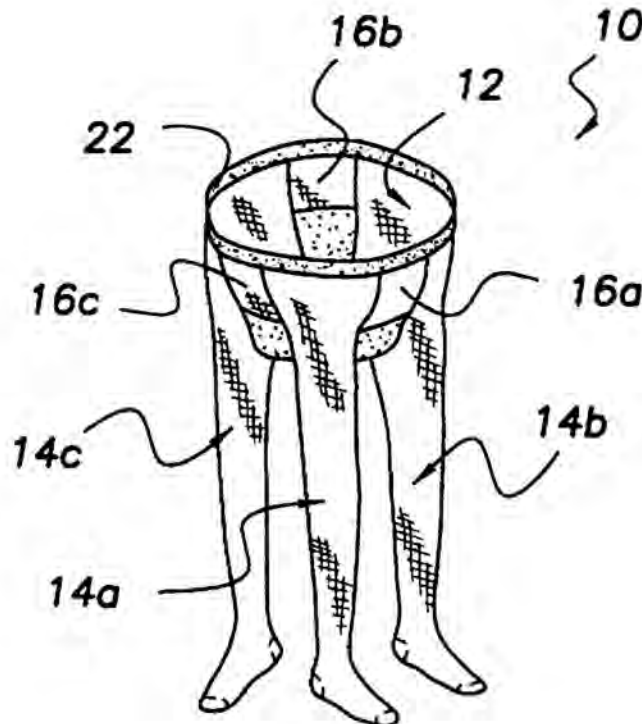
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8 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets



Detail from the patent for “Pantyhose Garment With Spare Leg Portion.”