

Community highlights

Written by The Conversation USA

The Conversation receives a lot of comments each day and you can't read everything. That's why we occasionally end the week with a selection of community highlights: comments we enjoyed or thought interesting. Read on for six comments and discussions I thought worth highlighting.

[Feminism has failed and needs a radical rethink](#)

[Jenny James](#) argued that women need to advance in society on their own terms:

So great to start this discussion. Understanding that we as women don't need to advance in society on men's, or anyone else's, terms is essential. Equal rights, equal pay, absolutely. But equality includes the right to be who we truly are, in all our strength and power and to not take on a stance that is in fact detrimental to our very wellbeing, and is the antithesis of womanhood.

Elsewhere, [Russell Edwards](#) discussed the interplay between work and gender equality:

Thank you Eva Cox for raising the issue of workforce participation as a supposed measure of emancipation.

Most men, no, most people, don't like "participating" in paid employment. They do it because they have to. (Marxists call it wage slavery.) This notion that somehow great fulfillment and emancipation is to be found in paid work is – with the minor exception of people who have found socially or ecologically useful paid work – a reflection of the privilege of those people who put that notion forth: those people who have jobs that are easy and very well-paid, and, in many instances which renders them the beneficiary of power imbalances that they mistake as emancipatory. (This seems to be a difficult point for many to notice, because most people who have the time or inclination to consider such matters are in such privileged positions themselves.)

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Your average working mum doesn't feel empowered by her work: she feels embattled. In most instances, dad is more or less an absentee parent (again by necessity, not choice), and she is left to pick up the pieces of that /and/ is compelled financially to go out and find paid work on top of that.

Now add to the mix the necessity for childcare. The social and nurturative aspects of that aside - how else can it work financially, except by ensuring that childcare workers are an underclass who are paid less than the people who are paying them to do what they can't do themselves, because they're pursuing their own, more lucrative work? Add to this that most childcare workers are women, and the picture grows even bleaker.

To be this is nothing to do with social emancipation. It's the opposite. It's GDP-lust, which in turn is motivated by the neoliberal agenda of ever-growing wealth and power inequality.

To which [Eva Cox](#), the article's author, replied:

Thanks for this posting it reinforces the views I'm putting about what really matters to us. We need to create ways of valuing time and tasks in ways that fit into our lives, rather than assuming narrow models of modern mass production were the model for the future way to go. Given the changes in the types of jobs and technology, couldn't we invent some better ways of meeting needs that also respected environmental overuse?

[Hidden housemates: the Australian redback spider](#)

Mike Swinbourne and Dave Arnold discussed the redback's heritage with Natalie Saez, the article's author.

[Mike Swinbourne](#) :

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I have read somewhere - I can't remember where - which suggests that the red-back is not indigenous to Australia, but may have been imported accidentally from the US. This is supported by their distribution, which is largely (as you say) restricted to urban areas.

[Dave Arnold](#) :

I have seen the suggestion that the Redback arrived after European settlers and now they have also invaded Japan.

[Natalie J. Saez](#) :

Hi Mike and Dave,

Thanks for your interest in this article. The origins of the redback spider have been a contentious issue for many years (and will probably continue to be).

There are definitely theories that the redback may have been introduced to Australia from overseas. There is also evidence to support that the spider is native to Australia. Either way, circumstantial historical evidence suggests that it is likely to have spread from south Western Australia. Understandably, it is a difficult thing to nail down retrospectively.

Given the short space in which I had to discuss the subject, I decided to highlight the most recent, general consensus.

[Dave Arnold](#) :

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Curiously, we in West Australia always thought the Redback came from Queensland.

[Mike Swinbourne](#) :

Hi Natalie

Would it be possible to do genetic analysis of the redbacks to see how closely related they are to similar species like the black-widow, and try and determine when the genetic split occurred?

[Natalie J. Saez](#) :

Hi Mike,

Yes, I believe that is the most reliable way to get some idea of their lineage. In fact, some research has been done. It suggests that spiders such as the redback and the katipo from New Zealand (belonging to the mactans clade of *Latrodectus*) have a large genetic divergence suggesting long-term geographical isolation.

(For the alternate *geometricus* clade, the data shows little genetic divergence, supporting the theory that expansion could have occurred by human transport more recently).

[Garb JE. et al. \(2004\) Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution 31 \(3\): 1127–42.](#)

[Marijne Slager](#) asked about redback behaviour and whether or not daddy longlegs can kill them:

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Interesting article! And timely, in my case. Having moved to Australia 5 years ago, I only just encountered 2 redbacks in the garage of our newly built house. We found them 3 months apart, sitting in a web in plain sight (not in a small nook, or under something), at exactly the same place. The second time, there were plenty of daddy longlegs around too.

So here are my two questions/myths waiting to be busted: Do redbacks commonly reside in plain sight, or is this a rare thing? And do daddy longlegs often kill redbacks (in other words, can you feel 'safer' if there are plenty of daddy longlegs around)?

[Natalie J. Saez](#) :

Hi Marijne,

Thanks very much.

I would say because the spiders are already inside the garage (if I understood correctly) they are probably already fairly sheltered (from winds etc.) and I imagine it would be quite dark in there most of the time, so they would not necessarily feel the need to 'hide' as such. I think as long as they feel safe and sheltered and no one is disturbing them too much, they can reside almost anywhere. The risk of being bitten is probably higher if they are properly hidden, and thus most warnings center around that.

For the daddy longlegs, they can kill redback spiders. Whether they constitute a main part of their diet or if they just fight back when threatened by a redback is unclear but it has been noted that redback numbers are reduced when the daddy longlegs population is high. So you can feel safer with the daddy longlegs around!

[**Alan Alda on the art of science communication: 'I want to tell you a story'**](#)

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[Robyn Dalziell](#) share what she feels to be the story of Australian science:

This may well have a lot of merit, in theory, and in reality in some contexts. Especially in the USA when storytelling is notionally linked with some kind or variety of celebrity. However, the saddest and truest “story” about science in Australia is that it has been so seriously discredited, and under- or de-funded, that there’s not a lot for our dedicated and clever scientists to be excited and “vivid” about. They might well be livid about their world and the lack of respect for their vast contributions from the top down. The real “story” all starts at the top, and when we have anti-intellectualism, anti-science and a hideous political sideshow occupying on such a grand scale, what chance have scientists of being taken seriously enough for a critical mass to be enthralled with their many and undoubtedly amazing stories? Plus, the story for most scientists in Australia is insecure employment, years of contract work, the constant threat of grant funding ending without any chance of renewal, wasted or stalled endeavours, poor career pathways, and, very often the medical profession seeking and taking all the glory, accolades, and “telling the story”. And then we have our cult of infotainment- how does any scientist’s story rise above all that? Humanity has always been drawn to narratives, but they must come from a broadly meaningful place. Perhaps people like Alda should start facilitating the powerful and clever packaging of the true story of our underfunded, underpaid, disrespected, discredited, but nonetheless persistent, dedicated, and very bright scientists, at a time when we, humanity, most crucially need them.

‘Girls Make Your Move’ exercise ads look good but are unlikely to deliver on their own

Finally, [Lorna Jarrett](#) suggested hoola hooping as a fun and and effective way to start exerising:

Hi Sandra,

I had a go at addressing the deficiencies you identified in the website:

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“tips for fitting physical activity into her busy day, a downloadable/printable schedule so she can set goals and targets instructional videos or demonstrations some recommended (free) apps – or even a dedicated Girls Make Your Move app”.

This took me 3 minutes...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mC_8ckG6WpU

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0visc3p6uAA>

Tips: - you need hardly any space to hoop. Some moves you can do in your bedroom, while you're on the phone or watching videos. - you can take your hoops to the beach or on walks, and do 5-10 minute sessions on the go. - get a group together to build the hoops and learn skills - or just make a stack of hoops and sell the ones you don't need to cover the costs of materials. Or give them away as Chrissie and birthday presents. - keep more than one hoop for future up-skilling.

Hoops, poi etc. can be home-made cheaply, they're non-competitive, you can do them alone or in a group, there are masses of online tutorials available, and they're a great form of artistic expression as well as fitness development.

And if you're sceptical about the fitness benefits, grab a hoop (or two or three) and do a basic waist spin for 10 minutes. You'll soon find out how strong your core muscles are, and what state your aerobic fitness is in.

Read a comment you thought interesting? Let me know during the week. You can leave a comment below or send me an [email](#).

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