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WEEK IN IDEAS | MARCH 5, 2011

Week in Ideas

By CHRISTOPHER SHEA



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Male CEO with a daughter moves to close the gender gap at his company.

Economics

The Boss's Daughter

When a male CEO has a daughter, he moves to close the gender pay gap at his company, a study finds.

The researchers examined data on 734,200 workers at 6,320 firms in Denmark's private sector, from 1995 through 2006. The data included information on the sexes and birth dates of the children of chief executives.

Over that period in Denmark, there was a gender wage gap of 21.5%, not adjusting for rank or hours worked, the authors said. But the birth of a daughter to a male CEO caused that gap to narrow in his company, in that same calendar year, by 0.5 percentage points. Breaking the data down, the birth of a first daughter caused the gap to close by 0.8 percentage points. If the first daughter was also a first child, the gap closed by 2.8 percentage points (representing 13% of the

gap).

There was no detectable change in the relative wages of men and women when female CEOs had children. The researchers didn't look at what happened to the male CEOs with daughters in the years following their birth, but they may do a follow-up study.

"Like Daughter, Like Father: How Women's Wages Change When CEOs Have Daughters," Michael S. Dahl, Cristian Dezsö and David Ross, working paper (Feb.)

PSYCHOLOGY

Getting Out of Your Head

People are more creative when they're thinking on someone else's behalf, according to a new study.

Two hundred sixty-two undergraduates had to quickly draw an alien that would serve as the inspiration for a science-fiction tale. Students were told that either they or a third party would write the story. Checking for unusual details on the alien, two coders consistently ranked the drawings done for other people as more creative than those done for one's self (1.55 versus 1.04, on a five-point scale, with higher numbers signaling more creativity).

In a less subjective test of creativity, 137 students tried to solve a brain teaser that involved escaping from a tower. Half were told to imagine themselves in the tower, half to picture someone else there. When the students imagined others in the tower, their success rate was 66%. When they imagined themselves there, their success rate dropped to 48%.

"Decisions for Others Are More Creative Than Decisions for the Self," Evan Polman and Kyle J. Emich, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin" (forthcoming)



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Helping customers with math leads to bigger tips.

Small Business

A Stimulus Act for Waiters

Waiters and waitresses, do you want bigger tips? Help customers with the math, a study shows.

Two waitresses at a casual, mid-range restaurant in northern Utah randomly gave diners either the usual bill or a bill that included the calculations for 15% and 20% tips. The servers assisted 113 parties, with sizes ranging from one to eight people.

Customers who saw the printed calculations tipped an average of 18.7%, while those who didn't tipped 16.3%. Apparently, the printed calculations served as a subtle—or not-so-subtle—nudge.

If the practice caught on (and customers' behavior didn't adjust over time), that could mean hundreds of dollars in additional annual income for each server, and millions more spent on the restaurant sector.

It's hard to say, though, what effect the Utah setting had on the results. Utah diners tip a relatively low average of 10%, the authors say.

"Persuasion by Way of Example: Does Including Gratuity Guidelines on Customers' Checks Affect Restaurant Tipping Behavior?" John S. Seiter, Garrett M. Brownlee and Matthew Sanders, Journal of Applied Social Psychology (Jan.)



Getty Images

A new study finds temperature affects whether pitchers will bean a batter of the opposite team to retaliate.

Sports

Hot Enough for Bean-Balls

If your pitcher beans our batter, our pitcher hits one of yours. So goes the old rule in baseball. But whether retaliation takes place has a lot to do with the game-day temperature, according to a new study.

The researchers looked at 57,293 games from 1952 to 2009 for which they had temperature data (including the temperature inside domes). At games played below 60 degrees Fahrenheit, if an opposing batter had been beaned, the likelihood of a batter being hit, in any single subsequent at-bat, was 0.71%. That figure rose only slightly, to 0.78%, when three opposing batters had been hit.

But if the temperature was 90-plus, and one opposing batter had been hit, the likelihood of a batter being hit in any one at-bat was 0.89%. And if three opposing batters had been hit, the likelihood rose to 1.15%

Put another way, roughly 1,500 batters are hit by pitches each year. If every game were played

at temperatures below 60, there would be 1,400 beanballs annually, the authors said. If every game were played in the 90s, there would be 1,600.

Temperature didn't much affect the initial probability of getting beaned, a rebuff to the theory that it's harder to control pitches on hot days.

"Temper, Temperature and Temptation: Heat-Related Retaliation in Baseball," Richard P. Larrick, Thomas A. Timmerman, Andrew M. Carton and Jason Abrevaya, Psychological Review (forthcoming)

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