

What I'm Reading (Nov. 19)



By Chuck Dinerstein, MD, MBA — November 19, 2020

Why is Facebook free? Walking the thin line between genetics and social determinants. Does history repeat itself? Turkeys in the time of COVID-19. Ten "scientifically proven" songs that will make you happy.



Image courtesy of Wokandapix on Pixabay [1]

“Why is Facebook free? Why are credit cards less than free? Why do singles bars sometimes have women drink free nights but never men drink free nights? All of these questions are in the domain of platform economics.”

Platforms are a term used to describe entities like Facebook and Twitter. They have been the subject of much concern at the time of the election and will remain moving forward. They are a new entry into the business world, having sprung up over the last twenty years. What are the economics behind them? Here is a short explanation from Marginal Revolution, [Platform Economics in Modern Principles](#) [2]

I have been fascinated for some time with genetic analysis of our traits, in trying to determine the line between nature and nurture in our development as individuals. It is a field fraught with political danger, a third-rail of scientific interest. It raises eugenics' specter, yet our genes must play some role; it can't all be nurture.

“Long before anyone understood why some twins look nearly identical and others look no more similar than other pairs of siblings, and even before anyone understood the molecular structure of genes, psychologists and social scientists such as Francis Galton turned to inherited differences to explain why human beings behave in different ways and come to occupy different positions in

Not until the 1960s, however, did a group of psychologists and geneticists, engaged in a field they called ‘behaviour genetics’, begin to systematically exploit basic facts about genetic inheritance to try to explain why human beings behave differently. ... One of the most significant achievements here was to overturn the psychoanalytic idea that conditions such as schizophrenia were caused by adverse environments – in particular, by withholding and cold mothers.”

This article is political by its nature, but it has no agenda. You might say that it is trying to get us to end the strawman argument of nature vs. nurture and recognize that it is nature **and** nurture – both of which come with what we apolitically term luck. From Aeon, [The genes we’re dealt](#) [3]

“Having left ecology, Turchin began similar research that attempted to formulate general laws for a different animal species: human beings. He’d long had a hobby-ist’s interest in history. But he also had a predator’s instinct to survey the savanna of human knowledge and pounce on the weakest prey. “All sciences go through this transition to mathematization,” Turchin told me. “When I had my midlife crisis, I was looking for a subject where I could help with this transition to a mathematized science. There was only one left, and that was history.”

Perhaps you remember Hari Seldon of The Foundation, able to prophecize the rise and fall of empires, or maybe you are a fan of the “big historians,” Jared Diamond and Yuval Noah. Here is an introduction to another historian, using big data to identify historical trends. From The Atlantic, [The Next Decade Could Be Even Worse](#) [4]

“This year, many of us won’t want the typical 20-pound turkey.

And that is the problem.”

Among the many COVID-19 related holiday concerns is what size turkey to get, and in many cases those decisions were made BC, before COVID. I will let Elaine Schwartz of EconLife do the heavy lifting here, [How the Pandemic Created a Turkey Problem](#) [5]

Finally, we can all use a moment's happiness

“He found that the happiest tunes are slightly faster than your average song (between 140 and 150 beats per minute on average), written in a major key, and either about happy events or complete nonsense. Jolij combined these factors into a formula for the happiest song possible and then went searching for existing hits that matched his template.”

Here are the top ten; give one or more a listen. From Inc, [Neuroscience Says These Are the 10 Happiest Songs Ever](#) [6]

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[1] <https://pixabay.com/photos/person-young-reading-magazine-home-2049788/>

[2] <https://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2020/11/platform-economics-in-modern-principles.html>

[3] <https://aeon.co/essays/social-genomics-can-combat-inequality-or-be-used-to-justify-it>

[4] <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/12/can-history-predict-future/616993/>

[5] <https://econlife.com/2020/11/thanksgiving-turkey-demand/>

[6]

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