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Introduction

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Introduction

Welcome to Volume 12 of *Major Themes in Economics*. All papers in *Major Themes* are written by senior economics majors at the University of Northern Iowa. Complete funding for this edition was provided by a generous contribution from Ron Rolighed, '89, a past author whose article appeared in 1989.

Are women with children paid less than women without children? If so, can the difference be explained by differences in education, experience, or other observable characteristics? Jennifer Boden examines the literature and creates a linear regression model to investigate these questions. Using data from the American Community Survey she discovers that there is a pay gap, and it does not appear to be explained by measurable characteristics.

Animal agriculture has become increasingly industrial. Most animal food products are raised in "Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations." Steven Mischel details the large number of negative externalities associated with these operations. He also shows that government policies are making the problem worse. Mischel proposes four reforms that could improve the situation.

Obesity has become an epidemic in America. Carl Bakker examines the problem and looks at a variety of taxes and subsidies that have been proposed to reduce obesity. It turns out that a "fat tax" that would produce the desired result is not easy to design.

In 2000, Major League Baseball commissioned a Blue Ribbon Panel to study competitive balance. It concluded that baseball no longer had competitive balance and that something must be done to regain it. Tyler Veach points out that the Blue Ribbon Panel reached its conclusion on the basis of only 5 observations. Veach updates the Blue Ribbon Panel's study using more recent data and finds that competitive balance is much better than the Panel thought

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