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The annual meeting of the American Economic Association is a meat market for ideas large and small. Scholars presented hundreds of papers with conclusions that were intriguing, offbeat, counterintuitive, head-scratching and sometimes downright kooky.

Here is a sample of a few that got our attention:

[\(You can search the whole program, with links to these and most other papers at this website.\)](#)

COULD GLOBAL WARMING LEAD TO SMARTER, HEALTHIER HUMANS?

Joshua Wilde, a University of South Florida assistant professor, and **Bénédicte Apouey**, a researcher at the Paris School of Economics, studied 22 countries and found that children conceived during heat waves have higher literacy rates, more years of schooling, higher income later in life and lower rates of disability than children conceived during periods of normal temperatures. One reason: More educated and wealthier women are more likely to conceive during heat waves because individuals with higher incomes can more easily place themselves in comfortable places to copulate. “Sexual activity decreases in heat waves,” they say, and, “those decreases are disproportionately large for lower income individuals.” Another possible reason, the authors said, is that fetuses of the poor and uneducated might be less likely to survive in utero. Those fit enough to survive “are likely to be more educated and healthier in adulthood,” they said. The paper raises all kinds of difficult questions about natural selection which we won’t entertain here. But it is worth noting that the paper shows the dynamics of climate and the economy are very complex and can be counterintuitive. Beware economists and climate scientists who claim to have all the answers.