

Authors

Lee Crawford

Hipsters without Borders?

The [latest episode of Freakonomics radio](#) discusses a fascinating RCT conducted in China by Paul Glewwe and Albert Park, offering free eyeglasses to children who need them (and of course not to the children who need them in the control group, at least not in the first round). The results, perhaps unsurprisingly, show a positive impact on test scores. A little more surprisingly, many of the poor schoolchildren did not accept the offer of free eyeglasses. Meanwhile in America, an estimated four million people buy nonprescription glasses for fashion.

I don't think the fashion aspect of eye wear in China has taken place like it has in America. Famous Chinese icons probably are not wearing their glasses like they are in America. In America, eyeglasses are the coolest thing you can put on your face right now. From any hip-hop star to any idol of a sports star that wears them when they're not playing their sports influences children's perception of eyeglasses.

The policy implications are clear. Send Kanye West to China immediately.

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