The One Big Fact that Overawes All Doubts

How do I pick book topics? On reflection, I usually start with what appears to be a big blatant neglected fact. Then I try to discover whether anything in the universe is big enough to *explain this alleged fact away*. If a laborious search uncovers nothing sufficient, I am left with the seed of a book: One Big Fact that Overawes All Doubts.

Thus, my *Myth of the Rational Voter* starts with what appears to be a big blatant neglected fact: *the typical voter seems highly irrational*. He uses deeply flawed intellectual methods, and holds a wide range of absurd views. Twist and turn the issue as you please, and this big blatant neglected fact remains.

Selfish Reasons to Have More Kids, similarly, begins with a rather different big blatant neglected alleged fact: *Modern parenting is obsessed with "investing" in kids' long-run outcomes, yet twin and adoption researchers consistently conclude that the long-run effect of nurture is grossly overrated.* Yes, the latter fact is only "blatant" after you read the research, but once you read it, you can't unread it.

What's the One Big Fact that Overawes All Doubts in *The Case Against Education*? This: *education is highly lucrative even though the curriculum is highly irrelevant in the real world.* Yes, it takes a book to investigate the many efforts to explain this One Big Fact away ("learning how to learn," anyone?). But without One Big Fact, there'd be no book.

Finally, the big motivated fact behind *Open Borders* is that *simply letting a foreigner move to the First World vastly multiplies his labor earnings overnight.* A Haitian really can make twenty times as much money in Miami the week after he leaves Port-au-Prince – and the reason is clearly that the Haitian is vastly more *productive* in the U.S. Which really makes you wonder: Why would anyone want to stop another human being from escaping poverty by enriching the world? Giving this starting point, anti-immigration arguments are largely attempts to explain this big blatant neglected fact away. Given what restrictionist arguments are up against, it's hardly surprising that they don't measure up.

On reflection, my current book project, *Poverty: Who To Blame* doesn't seem to fit this formula. The book will rest on three or four big blatant neglected facts rather than one. Yet perhaps as I write, One Big Fact that Overawes All Doubts will come into focus…