

Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Student:	Tomáš Suchomel
Advisor:	PhDr. Radek Janhuba, M.A., Ph.D.
Title of the thesis:	The Relationship between Success in North American Sports and Birth Rates

OVERALL ASSESSMENT (provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):

The thesis examines the relationship between success in North American professional sports leagues and follow-up birth rates in teams' regions. I have consulted the study extensively before and during its writing and most of the substantial comments were addressed before the thesis was finalized. However, it needs to be noted that the student faced a significant time management crisis which led to the thesis being finalized in an imperfect shape.

Short summary

The notion that sports victories influence births is a popular phenomenon among journalists. For example, in the context of the NFL, the incremental births in the area of the winning team are denoted as *Super Bowl babies*. However, there is not much statistical evidence that such phenomenon actually exists. This thesis looks at the winners of the major four professional sports competitions in the US and analyses whether their victories lead to incremental births in the appropriate Metropolitan Statistical Areas. Overall, the results do not find any solid statistical evidence for this being the case.

Contribution

There are several novel aspects of the thesis which are worth mentioning and, if executed completely, could have presented significant contribution to the research question:

- Instead of simply taking the month corresponding to 9 months since the championship game, the thesis takes into account the actual gestational age of specific births, which allows for a much more precise measurement of conceptions in the researched time frame. The fact that the R-squared measures are substantially higher for this rather than the "9-month" method clearly indicates that this should be a preferred method.
- The analysis is performed using a panel data method and includes exogenous explanatory variables.
- The thesis looks at multiple professional leagues at the same time.

However, while potentially very high, the realized contribution is pulled down by the inefficient execution of the analysis.

Methods

The econometric methods are chosen appropriately and the baseline regressions are interpreted correctly, with the appropriate sets of fixed effects being applied and a sensible application of standard errors being clustered at the MSA level. However, some interpretations of the results could have been performed in a more extensive manner. The methodology also suffers from two non-negligible pitfalls:

- While equations from Section 4.3 suggest that each of the heterogeneities will be looked at separately (and the results are interpreted this way), the actual regressions are performed with all of the heterogeneity coefficients entering one common equation. This would not be an issue if e.g. unexpectedness of the result would be independent of drama, but this is obviously not what happens in sports (how often does an underdog convincingly beat a favourite?).
- The models include only two exogenous explanatory variables, which harms their validity and credibility. I believe some extra variables could have been available given that there would be enough time to clean and process them into a form that could have been included in the model.

Literature

The literature review is carefully executed and reviews previous academic literature which is relevant in the context of the research question.

Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Student:	Tomáš Suchomel
Advisor:	PhDr. Radek Janhuba, M.A., Ph.D.
Title of the thesis:	The Relationship between Success in North American Sports and Birth Rates

Manuscript form

The manuscript is well structured and satisfies the formatting needed in a bachelor thesis. The thesis is typeset using LaTeX, which results in a professional appearance. The English of the thesis is of quite a high level, both grammatically as well as stylistically. However, the thesis would benefit greatly from further proofreading and editing, as there are typos and minor formatting issues left in the final proof (including an unfortunate rendering of the Czech letter “ů” as “?” in the abstract).

Overall evaluation and suggested questions for the discussion during the defense

This could have been an exceptionally good thesis which, however, ended up suffering from an exceptionally bad time management of the author. However, in my opinion, it is still visible that the author spent extensive time working on the thesis. Overall, I believe the thesis satisfies the conditions to pass the defense as a bachelor thesis. I recommend the thesis for a defense with a C grade.

I would suggest the following questions for the defense:

- How does your interpretation of the heterogeneity results change when you look at all regression coefficients together in one equation rather than each separately?
- Which other variables would you like to include in your models?

The results of the Urkund analysis do not indicate significant text similarity with other available sources.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Contribution (max. 30 points)</i>	18
<i>Methods (max. 30 points)</i>	18
<i>Literature (max. 20 points)</i>	20
<i>Manuscript Form (max. 20 points)</i>	15
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	71
GRADE (A – B – C – D – E – F)	C

NAME OF THE REFEREE: Radek Janhuba

DATE OF EVALUATION: 25. 8. 2021

Digitálně podepsáno (25. 8. 2021):
Radek Janhuba

Referee Signature