

Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

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

Student:	Samuel Škoda
Advisor:	PhDr. Michal Bauer, Ph.D.
Title of the thesis:	Effort and cheating behavior: An experiment

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

The author Samuel Skoda reports in his thesis on a novel economic experiment he performed on the topic of Effort and Cheating behavior. He clearly formulates the topic, the importance of studying it and his contribution.

Manuscript form: From the formal requirements on the manuscript form, I have no objections – the thesis is written in relatively English with no important mistakes, formatting of text, tables and figures is correct, and citations are also appropriate.

Literature review: The literature review is pursued with care and the author shows a deep understanding of the topic. He cites most of the relevant literature and examines deeper only the very relevant papers so the thesis does not grow too much in volume, which I appreciate. I would maybe only add some work of Dan Ariely and John A. List, which is relatively well known in connection to cheating behavior.

Methodology: The experimental design is clearly described: first a variation of the Stroop test is used as an effort task (or, in the control treatment, there is no effort task), and the subjects are told they have to qualify with their number of points to the second round. In the second round, they first try out the dice to check it is fair and then have to report the first “real” throw which determines 50% of their payoff. The author clearly formulates his hypotheses and then the corresponding results with a following discussion and a connection to the literature, which make the thesis well comprehensible and in context of the today’s research.

Analysis & Results: The analysis of results is done on a very high level and I would not choose a different procedure. Author probably follows suggested procedure from the replicated paper, which I fully agree with. However, the sample size is relatively small so there is not much that could have been found in the data. The fact that the author did not perform the power calculation in order to estimate the required sample size makes it more difficult to persuade readers that the inability to find the treatment effect was actually because there was none.

Questions and remarks: The Stroop test is normally used for a cognitive depletion rather than effort, but if the author wanted just to make the subjects tired, it does not really matter to distinguish. What matters is that the subjects did not know the threshold for qualification to the second part in advance. This way of instructing subjects is on the edge of deception (but still does not qualify for it, fortunately). The stakes in the experiment are relatively low compared to other experiments, and so the cost of time to come to the experiment may have overcome the entitlement effect (I understand that the author was operating under a strict budget constraint, but anyway). Apart from this, it is not clear to me why the effort task was not connected to the throw of a die. If the number thrown was a coefficient for the amount of points earned in the previous task, the motive for cheating would multiply. Moreover, as I am familiar with the environment of the Laboratory of Experimental Economics, I know that the researcher cannot be far – he/she is usually in the next room and can enter the room with subjects anytime. Moreover, in the instructions just before the throw was included “If you have any questions, please raise your hand”, which makes the impression of being under supervision. Apart from that, there are two cameras on the walls. This makes clear that the experienced subjects who already knew the environment and did not expect the experimenter to come cheated more often. The conclusion that “... the almost unnoticeable effect of effort could be explained by insufficient motivation of subjects to behave in accordance with behavioral predictions,” is not persuasive since this could have been also caused by no entitlement effect on the cheating behavior.

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Apart from these, I do not find the reasoning for hypothesis 5, the gender differences, persuasive for testing – the author could have included some studies that

Summary: Samuel performed an interesting experiment on a novel topic and the null results do not harm the quality of the thesis. The topic itself is relatively new but very important and I am glad it is a research topic of a bachelor student at IES. From my own experience, running the first experiment is very difficult and this one seems to be carried out relatively well.

Suggested questions for defense: Why you decided not to explicitly connect the performance in the effort task to the cheating task? Assuming your result is true, what are the main policy implications?

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

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Literature</i> (max. 20 points)	18
<i>Methods</i> (max. 30 points)	28
<i>Contribution</i> (max. 30 points)	29
<i>Manuscript Form</i> (max. 20 points)	18
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	93
GRADE (1 – 2 – 3 – 4)	1

NAME OF THE REFEREE:

PhDr. Lubomír Cingl

DATE OF EVALUATION:

8.6.2013

Referee Signature

EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES AND SCALE:

LITERATURE REVIEW: *The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and command of recent literature. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way.*

Strong	Average	Weak
20	10	0

METHODS: *The tools used are relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the author's level of studies. The thesis topic is comprehensively analyzed.*

Strong	Average	Weak
30	15	0

CONTRIBUTION: *The author presents original ideas on the topic demonstrating critical thinking and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and empirics. There is a distinct value added of the thesis.*

Strong	Average	Weak
30	15	0

MANUSCRIPT FORM: *The thesis is well structured. The student uses appropriate language and style, including academic format for graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables and disposes with a complete bibliography.*

Strong	Average	Weak
20	10	0

Overall grading:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE		
81 – 100	1	= excellent	= výborně
61 – 80	2	= good	= velmi dobře
41 – 60	3	= satisfactory	= dobře
0 – 40	4	= fail	= nedoporučuji k obhajobě