

Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

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

Student:	Václav Toman
Advisor:	Michal Bauer
Title of the thesis:	Voluntary restrictions and self-commitment

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

The thesis studies two questions that are motivated by insights from behavioral economics and recent models of limited self-control. Do people want to self-commit and restrict their behavior to achieve long-term goals? What individual characteristics predict such behavior? To do so, the author builds on existing methods, designs a questionnaire and collects responses on a convenience subject pool (mostly students but also other groups). The most interesting finding, in my view, is that women are more willing to pre-commit and people with higher cognitive skills are less willing to pre-commit.

Václav has worked systematically on the thesis and there are several noteworthy positive features: the author asks a clear research questions, mastered a lot of existing literature, invested a lot of energy in studying how to measure psychological constructs that are in fact hard to measure, designed his own questionnaire and collected original data. The results are interesting. First, the fact that women are observed to be more willing than men to tie their hands to achieve long-term goals seems to be a repeated pattern. Using different methods, Ashraf et al (2006) in Phillipiness and some of my work in India show that women are more keen to discipline their financial choices, and results from this study shows this is a robust phenomena. Second, Dohmen et al (2010) find that people with better cognitive abilities are more patient. Vaclav's findings are consistent with it and suggest people with higher cognitive abilities face smaller problems with self-control. This strengthens the case for studying links between cognitive and non-cognitive abilities, an agenda emphasized by some of the primer figures in our profession (Heckman 2006).

A possible question for defence is the following:

- Willingness to commit has been documented separately for various domains (eating habits, having cash at hand, etc). Are these behaviors domain specific or does it correlate across domains, suggesting it is a behavioral trait.

Nevertheless, sometimes the thesis is bit hard to follow and I think Václav could have invested more energy in guiding the reader through the results, variables and highlighting perhaps more the important findings.

In sum, despite the untidy outlook at some places, the thesis is an original analysis arriving at interesting results, an applaudable outcome for a bachelor thesis. Therefore I recommend grade A.

Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

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

Student:	Václav Toman
Advisor:	Michal Bauer
Title of the thesis:	Voluntary restrictions and self-commitment

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

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Literature</i> (max. 20 points)	20
<i>Methods</i> (max. 30 points)	25
<i>Contribution</i> (max. 30 points)	30
<i>Manuscript Form</i> (max. 20 points)	10
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	85
GRADE (1 – 2 – 3 – 4)	1

NAME OF THE REFEREE: *Michal Bauer*

DATE OF EVALUATION: 11.6.2012

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