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Rodney Fort[1]

Abstract

This paper provides an introduction to the special edition as well as my contribution on the topics covered in this special edition—observation, replication, and measurement issues relevant to sports economists. The papers cover issues related to the professional conveyance of first-hand experience, interaction with related sports analysis communities not governed by peer review or our usual citation requirements, data integrity, data and result replication, and second-hand measurement relevant to particular economic questions. My contribution is in brief descriptions concerning how these issues have intruded on some of my own work.

Keywords

observation, replication, measurement, scientific approach

Introduction

This special issue is the result of the law of unintended consequences. After reviewing one of the articles in this special issue that was submitted to the *JSE* separately, I made a casual remark to Editor Leo Kahane. I was always going to write a paper on my experiences with sports data ambiguities from the perspective of doing "good science," just as a heads up to my sports economics colleagues that things are not always as they seem. The result of this seemingly innocuous observation is the flattering distinction of guest editor and the collection of articles in this special issue.

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Some aspects of the sports business are truly unique (cooperation is required to make league or conference play happen, for example) and so are some of the issues of doing good science faced by sports economists. One place where this is true is in observations from firsthand experience. This is part and parcel to the highly enlightening piece in this special edition by Andrew Zimbalist. The related issue of interacting with related communities of sports investigators not bound by peer review is covered in the contribution by David Berri and J. C. Bradbury.

However, sports are just another business generally, and so another set of interesting problems is commonplace to all economists. There are issues of data integrity, comparing data sets that ostensibly should be measuring the same phenomenon, and replication of empirical work. These components of good science are the topic of Jason Winfree's contribution. As always, there also are issues of elusive definition and the design of measures capable of capturing economic activity, direct participation, and consumption through electronic sources. These truly frustrating data issues, confronted by many of us, are covered by Brad Humphreys and Jane Ruseski.

A more detailed overview is in the next section. Unlike most introductions, in the section after, I actually try to earn my keep by conveying my experiences and observations along the lines offered by all of these authors (that is why I ended up as the guest editor in the first place). Conclusions round out this introduction where I offer a few implications that seem to me to follow from the contributions. My thanks go to my colleague-contributors for taking the time to share with us all and to *JSE* Editor Leo Kahane for encouragement and patience.

The Contributions

In "Reflections on Salary Shares and Salary Caps," Zimbalist offers definitions of revenues and player costs, used to establish player shares of revenues, from a firsthand perspective. Knowledge and proper application of these principles is a prerequisite to (a) assessing the actual shares to owners and players and (b) addressing the policy issue of payroll caps in any meaningful way. Indeed, Andy shows that the typical media reports, often picked up in academic work, can be rather misleading, absent this firsthand understanding.

Berri and Bradbury relate to us their extensive experience with the SABR-metric and APBR-metric communities, named after the Society for American Baseball Research and the Association for Professional Basketball Research, respectively. The main issues are (a) the interplay between these informal communities and the rest of us and (b) that the rest of us live according to the formal peer-review process. The authors provide both encouragements for interaction as well as warnings about the pitfalls of this type of interaction. There are tensions and jealousies aroused over the issue of proper credential and peer review. There is the issue of proper assignation of credit; when incorporating a technique or measurement developed outside the peer-review process, what to do? Finally, there is the issue of

dealing online with these fellow travelers who often adopt the anonymity of pseudonyms. Dave and J. C. offer an array of examples to make their point, a solid discussion of how to evaluate different measures from the economic perspective, and a nice history lesson on the evolution of some important measurement devices commonly used in sports economics.

Winfree gets down to the brass tacks of good science—data and replication. Problem areas include (a) finding the same data for replication, (b) the evolution of computing over time, and (c) replication sensitivity to changes in software. Through three examples, one historical (Scully's original American Economic Review paper, 1974) and two current (the statistical distribution of home runs and umpire bias), Jason demonstrates that data and technique can change not just statistical significance but economic significance as well.

Humphreys and Ruseski relate to us the difficulties in defining and actually measuring "the sports economy." Most of us will recognize these as issues in research design. The main issues are defining sport for the purposes of eventual measurement and then actually measuring economic activity, sports participation, and sports viewing and listening. Definition is question-specific and secondhand data are seldom defined and collected according to a particular researcher's definitions. Brad and Jane take us on a guided tour of the data sources and the problems that arise under each of these headings. The upshot is that dramatically different assessments of sports output can result and vary from a researcher's original purpose.

Personal Experience

From my own firsthand experience (a la Zimbalist), I can relate that minor league baseball teams really do make money but sometimes it is because of the disproportionate economic spillover from just a single team in the league. It also is the case that one major network sports division typically did not break even as a standalone operation. To find the value of that division, careful forensic accounting practices are required to detect the impact of sports on the bottom lines of other network divisions. On another broadcasting issue, particular college sports team broadcasts are denied to their fans as a matter of reputation building by media provider executives. I have also observed daily attendance sheets (required for league revenue sharing purposes) and there is substantial daily price discrimination for live attendance for at least one Major League Baseball (MLB) team.

If any of this rouses your curiosity and makes you wish for more details, my response is summarized by a line popularized in the movie *Top Gun*. In a debriefing session, a combat fighter pilot is asked how he happens to know about the maneuverability of an enemy plane. He replies, "It's classified. I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you." In my case, court orders and disclosure agreements preclude my sharing anything further. This does not make the observations any less true but I

understand completely that good science may require more than just my word on these issues.

My experience with the "metricians" (a la Berri and Bradbury) is limited. I have had a couple of informative interactions at sabermetricresearch.blogspot.com (Phil Birnbaum's *Sabermetric Research* page). Recently, Birnbaum attempted to decompose team valuations from *Forbes* into cash flow value and "Picasso Value." The posts that followed were all of a mind on improving Birnbaum's estimation approach. I posted a suggestion that his approach did not include other monetary values of ownership (documented in some of my work). Thus, he ran the danger of "inflating" Picasso Value. Birnbaum acknowledged the input but the flow of discussion did not change.

Interestingly, some of the "metricians" are peer-reviewed, which helps to hone some of the issues raised by Berri and Bradbury. I was invited to a special session on sports at the American Statistical Association meetings in Dallas, years ago. The lunch presentation concerned the statistical determination of the greatest slugger in history. Various measures were compared and the presenter's favorite metric singled out Mark McGwire. The primary issue for nearly all in the room had to do with holding all else constant (dead ball era, end of the spitball, changes in rules that alter relationships between hitters and pitchers, and so on), not at all unfamiliar to economists. I interrupted the back-and-forth question and answer session and offered a normalized pay measure; the highest paid slugger must surely be the best. The rest of the discussion held fast to its previous course, ignoring what is inherently an economically driven set of data observations in the first place.

My experience with the issues in Winfree's piece, as I noted at the outset, was the source of my original interest in this area. Data in sports are its beauty and its bane. On one hand, the beauty is well known and claimed by many to be what drew them to sports economics in the first place. Nowhere in my experience is there more data on an industry. We now know minute-by-minute performance in some instances. The bane is that the data are almost all secondhand and not designed explicitly for the experiments where we put them to use. The following example serves to emphasize the issue.

Table 1 shows 13 different sources for average player salary, 1952-2009, in nominal terms. Table 2 adjusts the data to 2009 dollars using the Consumer Price Index. If you take the longest running contiguous pair (Columns 2 and 3 in Table 2), they are the same from 1969 to 1975 but then diverge from 1976 to 1998. For use in statistical analysis, it appears little harm would be done by a researcher choosing one over the other; from 1976 onward, the correlation between the two series is 1.00 and their means and standard deviations differ by 0.9% and 2.1%, respectively. However, if we move through shorter periods of duration, so that more series become contiguous, favoring one series over another (or choosing blindly without knowledge of the variety of reports) is no longer innocuous.

More importantly, there are five series contiguous over 1986-1998 (Columns 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7). Again, their correlation coefficients are essentially 1.00. However, the

Table 1. MLB Average Salaries

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1952	$13,389											
1953	$13,879											
1954	$19,321											
1955	$14,201											
1956	$14,681											
1967		$19,000										
1968												
1969		$24,909	$24,909									
1970		$29,303	$29,303									
1971		$31,543	$31,543									
1972		$34,092	$34,092									
1973		$36,566	$36,566									
1974		$40,839	$40,839									
1975		$44,676	$44,676									
1976		$52,300	$51,501	$54,680								
1977		$74,000	$76,066	$77,624	$75,007							
1978		$97,800	$99,876		$100,357							
1979		$121,900	$113,558		$113,612							
1980		$146,500	$143,756		$142,747							
1981		$196,500	$185,651		$187,167							

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1982		$245,000	$241,497		$240,366							
1983		$289,000	$289,194		$292,820							
1984		$325,900	$329,408		$328,060							
1985		$368,998	$371,571		$372,650							
1986		$410,517	$412,520		$415,154	$406,628	$432,306					
1987		$402,579	$412,454		$411,625	$403,161	$413,508					
1988		$430,688	$438,729		$439,889	$433,689	$438,130	$453,566				
1989		$489,539	$497,254		$505,572	$492,422	$516,172	$539,870	$512,804			
1990		$589,483	$597,537		$592,153	$582,914	$580,720	$698,805	$578,930			
1991		$845,383	$851,492		$857,746	$830,311	$896,203	$969,244	$891,188			
1992		$1,012,424	$1,028,667		$1,026,288	$1,007,164	$1,052,662	$1,205,991	$1,084,408	$1,010,380		
1993		$1,062,780	$1,076,089		$1,083,965	$1,074,097	$1,087,781	$1,256,073	$1,120,254	$1,070,358		
1994		$1,154,486	$1,168,263		$1,179,281	$1,068,157	$1,189,794	$1,263,745	$1,188,679			
1995		$1,094,440	$1,110,766		$1,126,958	$1,138,205	$1,110,399	$1,260,105	$1,071,029			
1996		$1,101,455	$1,119,981		$1,116,040	$1,099,804	$1,174,281	$1,279,598	$1,176,967			
1997		$1,314,420	$1,336,609		$1,347,876	$1,325,541	$1,383,744	$1,520,473	$1,383,578			
1998		$1,384,530	$1,398,831		$1,438,629	$1,381,927	$1,444,771	$1,613,743	$1,441,406		$1,399,829	
1999		$1,567,873			$1,604,972	$1,569,000	$1,733,557	$1,926,565	$1,720,050		$1,609,418	

(continued)

2000	$1,895,630	$1,888,825	$1,995,025	$2,234,374	$1,998,034	$1,888,825	
2001		$2,142,196	$2,249,755	$2,617,122	$2,264,403	$2,142,196	
2002		$2,301,469	$2,384,236	$2,699,570	$2,383,235	$2,301,469	$2,384,236
2003				$2,837,550	$2,555,476	$2,376,577	$2,555,110
2004				$2,761,688	$2,486,609		$2,484,291
2005				$2,956,283	$2,632,655		$2,654,452
2006				$3,122,157	$2,866,544		$2,882,077
2007				$3,367,785			
2008				$3,629,617			
2009				$3,579,403			

Column	Source
1	Congress documents, 1952-1956
2	Source: BaseballStats.net
3	Tuesday, April 6, 1999; SLAM! Sports Web page. From the Assoc. Press, NY. Compiled by MLBPA
4	R. Hill, data collected directly from MLBPA for his own research
5	D. Pappas, listed as MLBPA reports on September 1, from various sources (1977-1985 TSN; 1986 NYT; 1987 Toronto Star; 1988-2002 AP)
6	D. Pappas, listed as PRESS REPORTS; all are USAToday in October–December of same year, except 1989 NYT December of that year
7	D. Pappas, listed as OPENING DAY; 1986, 1988, 1992-1995, 1998-1999 USAToday; 1987, 1989 NYT; 1990-1991, 1997, 2000-2002 AP; 1996 BBW
8	Various sources all report the same; April 21, 2005; cbs.sportsline.com. The average baseball salary on opening day, based on salary studies by The Associated Press and the percentage increase or decrease. Figures were obtained by The Associated Press from management and player sources and include salaries and prorated shares of signing bonuses. In some cases, parts of salaries deferred without interest are discounted to reflect present-day values; ESPN.com, gleaned July 30, 2004; Opening day average salaries. SBN.com, daily dose, April 7, 2006. They cite the AP
9	D. Pappas, listed as MLB REPORTS on September 1; AP
10	contractbud.com; Average baseball salaries by club in 2003, 2002, 2001, 2000, 1999, and 1998 as compiled by the MLBPA
11	Various sources all report the same; 2002 ESPN.com opening day; ESPN.com gleaned July 30, 2004; sportsillustrated.cnn.com April 20, 2005. Figures were obtained by The Associated Press from management and player sources and include salaries and prorated shares of signing bonuses. In some cases, parts of salaries deferred without interest are discounted to reflect present-day values. Cash transactions among the clubs are not included (For example, New York Yankees are reduced to $199.77 million after cash transactions). SBN.com April 7, 2006. They cite the AP

Note: MLB = Major League Baseball; MLBPA = Major League Baseball Players Association; NYT = New York Times; AP = Associated Press; BBW = Baseball World.

Table 2. Major League Baseball (MLB) Average Salaries ($2009)

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1952	$107,779										
1953	$110,891										
1954	$153,213										
1955	$113,042										
1956	$115,101										
1967		$121,220									
1969		$144,721	$144,721								
1970		$160,873	$160,873								
1971		$165,916	$165,916								
1972		$173,869	$173,869								
1973		$175,517	$175,517								
1974		$176,424	$176,424								
1975		$176,917	$176,917								
1976		$196,125	$193,129	$205,051							
1977		$260,480	$267,752	$273,236	$264,025						
1978		$319,806	$326,595		$328,167						
1979		$358,386	$333,861		$334,018						
1980		$379,435	$372,328		$369,713						
1981		$461,775	$436,280		$439,843						
1982		$541,450	$533,708		$531,209						
1983		$618,460	$618,875		$626,635						
1984		$668,095	$675,286		$672,523						
1985		$730,616	$735,711		$737,847						
1986		$800,508	$804,414		$809,550	$792,925	$842,996				
1987		$756,849	$775,414		$773,856	$757,943	$777,396				
1988		$775,238	$789,712		$791,801	$780,640	$788,634				
1989		$842,007	$855,277		$869,584	$846,966	$887,816	$882,023			
1990		$960,857	$973,985		$965,210	$950,150	$946,574	$943,656			
1991		$1,327,251	$1,336,842		$1,346,661	$1,303,587	$1,407,039	$1,399,165			
1992		$1,538,884	$1,563,574		$1,559,958	$1,530,890	$1,600,046	$1,648,300	$1,535,778		
1993		$1,572,914	$1,592,612		$1,604,269	$1,589,663	$1,609,916	$1,657,976	$1,584,129		

(continued)

1994		$1,662,460	$1,682,299	$1,698,165	$1,538,146	$1,713,304	$1,711,698			
1995		$1,532,216	$1,555,072	$1,577,742	$1,593,487	$1,554,559	$1,499,441			
1996		$1,497,979	$1,523,174	$1,517,814	$1,495,733	$1,597,022	$1,600,675			
1997		$1,748,179	$1,777,690	$1,792,676	$1,762,969	$1,840,380	$1,840,159			
1998		$1,813,734	$1,832,469	$1,884,603	$1,810,324	$1,892,649	$1,888,242		$1,833,776	
1999		$2,006,877		$2,054,364	$2,008,320	$2,218,952	$2,201,664		$2,060,055	
2000		$2,350,581		$2,342,143		$2,473,831	$2,477,562		$2,342,143	
2001				$2,570,635		$2,699,706	$2,717,284		$2,570,635	
2002				$2,738,748		$2,837,241	$2,836,050		$2,738,748	$2,837,241
2003							$2,964,352		$2,756,829	$2,963,927
2004							$2,809,868			$2,807,249
2005							$2,869,594			$2,893,353
2006							$3,038,537			$3,055,002
2007										
2008										
2009										
Growth	1.7%	9.4%	9.1%	9.8%	7.4%	7.9%	7.5%	3.1%	8.5%	1.9%

Sources: Inflation adjustment of the entries in Table 1.

difference in the means can be as large as 4.2% and the standard deviation could differ by as much as 6.0%. The worst problem in this regard is a set of four series contiguous from 1986 to 1999 (Columns 2, 5, 6, and 7) where, despite correlation at essentially 1.00, the means and standard deviations can differ by 4.9% and 9.3%, respectively. Indeed, in any given year, the differences can be as large as 11.4% (Columns 6 and 7 in 1994). The source of this variation is probably the time of year at which the data were collected; usually a difference between opening day and end of season. Nonetheless, caution my friends! There is a chance for variation in point estimates depending on your choice.

One particular comparison in Table 2 is insightful. The two entries in Column 4 were calculated by me from a salary set collected by Rich Hill, then and now at Central Michigan University, through a survey of players in the 1976 season. These data formed the basis of his early and informative work on the impacts of free agency, beginning with Hill and Spellman (1983). Years ago, Rich was gracious enough to share those data with me. According to my calculation of the average, the contiguous other measures in 1976 are off by as much as 6.2% and in 1977 by as much as 4.9%. Interestingly, the ultimate source of the other comparison values in Table 2 is the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA), itself (see source references in Table 1). Of course, this raises the question why two different print sources vary on the same MLBPA report and, perhaps more importantly, why Hill's survey of players produces a different result than that of the MLBPA itself reported to the press.

Finally, in the face of short or missing data, it is tempting to create a series based on seemingly reasonable assumptions. Table 3 shows just such a creation by me, compared to all of its contiguous counterparts in Table 2 that ran 10 years or longer. The construction is straightforward. The *USAToday.com* Salary Data Base offers the most consistent recent set of payroll and salary data I have been able to locate, for each of the major leagues. One way to get an average salary is to take the total of all team payrolls and divide by the number of players in the league. The original Web page source simply says that "USA TODAY's baseball salaries database contains year-by-year listings of salaries for Major League Baseball players on opening day rosters and disabled lists, 1988 through the current season." The first column of Table 3 assumes this to mean the 25-man major league roster, also adjusted for inflation. In only contiguous comparisons (e.g., the averages, standard deviations, and percentage differences for Column 2, only compare 1988-2000), the differences that could be imparted by this seemingly innocuous creation can really be quite large: as high as 16.3% at the average and 25.4% for the standard deviation (both for Column 6).

Checking back with the actual individual player salaries at *USAToday.com*, the choice of the 25-man roster is part of the culprit. For 2009, if one actually just counts the number of individual player reports, there are as few as 22 (Seattle Mariners) and as many as 30 (Boston Red Sox); a total of 812 player reports as opposed to the 750 used in Table 3. If one uses the full 812 players actually reported

Table 3. A Created Average Comparison

Year	Created	2	3	5	6	7	8
1988	$816,419	$775,238	$789,712	$791,801	$780,640	$788,634	
1989	$928,576	$842,007	$855,277	$869,584	$846,966	$887,816	$882,023
1990	$1,139,051	$960,857	$973,985	$965,210	$950,150	$946,574	$943,656
1991	$1,521,713	$1,327,251	$1,336,842	$1,346,661	$1,303,587	$1,407,039	$1,399,165
1992	$1,833,106	$1,538,884	$1,563,574	$1,559,958	$1,530,890	$1,600,046	$1,648,300
1993	$1,858,988	$1,572,914	$1,592,612	$1,604,269	$1,589,663	$1,609,916	$1,657,976
1994	$1,819,792	$1,662,460	$1,682,299	$1,698,165	$1,538,146	$1,713,304	$1,711,698
1995	$1,764,147	$1,532,216	$1,555,072	$1,577,742	$1,593,487	$1,554,559	$1,499,441
1996	$1,740,254	$1,497,979	$1,523,174	$1,517,814	$1,495,733	$1,597,022	$1,600,675
1997	$2,022,230	$1,748,179	$1,777,690	$1,792,676	$1,762,969	$1,840,380	$1,840,159
1998	$2,114,003	$1,813,734	$1,832,469	$1,884,603	$1,810,324	$1,892,649	$1,888,242
1999	$2,466,003	$2,006,877		$2,054,364	$2,008,320	$2,218,952	$2,201,664
2000	$2,770,623	$2,350,581		$2,342,143		$2,473,831	$2,477,562
2001	$3,140,547			$2,570,635		$2,699,706	$2,717,284
2002	$3,212,488			$2,738,748		$2,837,241	$2,836,050
2003	$3,291,557						$2,964,352
2004	$3,120,707						$2,809,868
2005	$3,222,349						$2,869,594
2006	$3,309,486						$3,038,537
2007	$3,468,819						
2008	$3,593,321						
2009	$3,579,403						
AVEs	$2,396,981	$1,509,937	$1,407,519	$1,687,625	$1,434,240	$1,737,845	$2,054,791
Contiguous created AVE		$1,753,454	$1,596,207	$1,943,196	$1,668,690	$1,943,196	$2,293,090
% difference		16.1%	13.4%	15.1%	16.3%	11.8%	11.6%
*SD*s	$904,332	$452,048	$369,659	$577,643	$390338	$620,480	$700,730
Contiguous created *SD*		$559,495	$440,689	$720,575	$489,487	$720,575	$786036
% difference		23.8%	19.2%	24.7%	25.4%	16.1%	12.2%

Sources: First column calculated by me from *USAToday.com* Baseball Salary Data Base as described in the text; http://content.usatoday.com/sports/baseball/salaries/default.aspx. The rest of the entries are from Table 2.

in the *USAToday.com* database, the average falls from $2,396,981 to $2,213,960, about 7.6%. This would reduce the differences shown in Table 3 but not completely. By the way, the annual real rate of growth for the created series in Table 3 is about 7.3%, the same as for Columns 6, 7, and 9 but less than for Columns 2, 3, and 5 (see growth rates in Table 2).

I can relate one other replication episode involving my much-missed colleague Gerald Scully. When working for Roger Noll on *Selig v. U.S.* when I was in graduate school, I asked Jerry for the data he used in his seminal *AER* piece to enhance our comparisons to 1970 baseball salaries. He was genuinely chagrined to report it all lost during his various relocations. Remember, he worked on the data in the early 1970s and I was asking for the data some 10 years later. Sadly, the data literally once were hard copy sitting in boxes but lost forever.

Finally, I come to the "what we want versus what we get" issues raised by Humphreys and Ruseski. My experience is with the *Forbes* team valuation data. From the perspective of decisions made by owners, we seek the value of ownership. Generally, my view on the fundamental value of ownership (the full discounted present value of all net returns) includes profits from operations (if any), plus profit-taking on the expense side, plus earnings to related business, plus tax shelter value.

However, we are left with the stand-alone asset value in the *Forbes* data, essentially profits from operations. Personal correspondence with the creators at *Forbes* (previously with *Financial World* magazine) found this. They use a multiple of earnings approach, augmented by special considerations about a given owner's stadium situation (owned vs. leased and the flow of value from the lease that may not be related to operations). However, simply looking at only operating profits misses the mark, almost entirely. Essentially, the *Forbes* estimates are low relative to actual sale values and, upon more in-depth investigation, probably miss the mark by about 19% of actual sale prices (Fort, 2006). Small wonder then that the Ratner group, in trying to complete an investment group for their multibillion dollar Atlantic Yards development, was not even that worried about allowing access by Russian billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov through his purchase from them of the New Jersey Nets. The team just did not matter that much to them in the grand scheme of forming a capital investment group for the larger development.

Conclusions

There are a host of interesting issues suggested by the four other articles in this special issue as well (at least to this reader). Form Zimbalist: Not everything that somebody knows is known by everybody in general! Of course, the issue of just what the sports economics community should make of firsthand perspectives and how best to disseminate them remains. Thus, the Berri and Bradbury issue concerning those metricians not subject to peer review stares us square in the face as well.

On another Berri and Bradbury point, I cannot help but think that part of the tension with the metricians revolves around desires for immortality in the naming of a thing. This seems patently absurd to me and just part of our business. In sports, the authors point this out for the case of Dobson's creation of batting average in 1872. I do not ever remember seeing anybody cite Gauss (1821) and Karl Pearson (1894) on the origins of the standard deviation or the subsequent coinage of the variance by Ronald Fisher (1918). And I doubt these authors took much umbrage over the fact that their inventions simply became household terms in record time. However perhaps, we are wrong in this; if someone grouses, perhaps we should respond.

And I cannot restrain myself from observations about "good science" and the peer-review process, possibly tying Winfree's issues to those in Berri and Bradbury. On recent occasions, work that has not passed peer review receives popular attention anyway. This is not good science and the Internet makes it just that much worse for its instantaneous availability.

Do not get me wrong. The Internet seems a place of great potential. Suppose the living Nobel prize winners start a blog. An idea occurs, they debate it, the courageous among us try to contribute, and the discipline moves forward on that issue. Few would doubt the value (and economists, still in the "publish or perish" world, all know why this has not happened yet). Instead, the best we get is editorials by Nobel Prize winners, occasionally scolding each other. And the worst we get is anonymous yelling at each other behind pseudonyms in blog discussion areas. This may be entertaining, as with talk radio and Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) yelling contests, but I wonder how it will all play out in the rigorous pursuit of answers to sports economics questions.

The lessons from Winfree or Humphreys and Ruseski are all good lessons in social science. I do not really have a lot to offer on this dimension in terms of conclusions other than keep doing that good science whenever you can. Added to my observations earlier, I hope this special edition provides both food for thought and has some impact on the way that we go about our research.

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Bio

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