How Relative Age Effect Contributes to Becoming an Honors Student

Shelly Schenewerk: Medical Laboratory Science, College of Arts and Sciences, and Honors College Faculty Mentor: Susan Eve, Department of Sociology, College of Public Affairs and Community Service, and Honors College

What is Relative Age Effect and Why Does it Matter?

- Relative age refers to a person's age in comparison to someone else's age or in comparison to a set date, like an annual cutoff date (Bedard and Dhuuey 2006; Gladwell 2008; Kawaguchi 2011).

- The Relative Age Effect is the concept that people who are born within the first three months after a cutoff date are more likely to succeed in that given area or field, versus other people who are born in the three months right before that specific cutoff date.

- This effect continues into adulthood because of the advantages older children are given when they begin their academic careers.

Relative Age Effect in Sports

- It is easier to measure the differences in relative age in sports because a child's physical maturity, coordination, and dexterity are proportionate to a child's age.

- Gladwell (2008) states that about 40 percent of professional Canadian hockey players are born within the first quarter of the year and only about 10 percent are born in the last three months of the year.

- Being born in the first quarter of the year gives certain players additional months to physically mature.

- This advantage makes them more likely to be selected for the major junior leagues, which contain the best players of that age range.

- Once in the major junior leagues, players practice more than those who are not in their league, further widening the gap in their abilities initially caused by their relative age and slight maturity.

Relative Age Effect in Education

- International studies show that students born in the last relative quarter of the academic year score about two to nine percent lower on standardized tests in the eighth grade than those students born in the first relative quarter of the year (Bedard and Dhuuey 2006).

- This is a result of the early advantages that children in the first quarter have over the younger children in their grade. This early placement means that children who are a few months older are more likely to be placed in a special program because of their relative age.

- Once a year cutoff date causes students who are born in the first quarter of a academic year to have almost a one year maturity advantage over the children born in fourth quarter of the previous academic year (Bedard and Dhuuey 2006; Kawaguchi 2011). This maturity advantage later translates into more years of education for both genders and higher incomes for males (Kawaguchi 2011).

- These studies show that relative age effect can have long lasting implications on your level of education and can affect your salary later in life (Bedard and Dhuuey 2006; Kawaguchi 2011). Both studies also discovered that students born in the first quarter are more likely to attend a four year college then their younger counterparts.

Conclusion

- Honor colleges tend to choose students who they believe are the most academically inclined. Therefore, the students who are part of the Honors program would have had high grades while in high school.

- Both studies prove that the students born in the first quarter are more likely to score high on tests and to do better in academics than those who are younger in their school year.

- This is supported by studies by Kawaguchi (2011) and Bedard and Dhuuey (2006) which show that relative age has a long term effect on a person’s educational achievements.

- Both studies also show that younger students, those who are born in the last quarter before the cutoff date, are less likely to attend a four year college.

- In conclusion, the data maintains the concept that Honors Colleges have a higher percentage of students born into the first quarter of the academic year compared to regular colleges.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Are the majority of students from the Honors College born in the first three months of the academic year after the cutoff date?

LITERATURE REVIEW


REFERENCES

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