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by

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Do Self-Committers Mind Commitment by Others?

An Experiment on Weak Paternalism*

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Abstract

Weak paternalism commits protégés to their own plans. This experiment addresses the question of whether protégés judge weakly paternalistic acts primarily by means of their consequences or on principle grounds. Subjects receive a reward for showing up to the laboratory early the next morning which decreases in time. Protégés can either self-commit to a planned time or self-liberate by preserving spontaneity. By making this binary choice protégés express their preference regarding liberty. Simultaneously, another subject is either paternalistic or liberal by making an analogous choice for them. We analyze protégés’ attitudes toward both policy styles via costly reward choices. If only consequences matter, self-committers should appreciate paternalism while self-liberators should condemn it. A deontological aversion against paternalism would negate a difference between both groups. Differing judgments constitute a consequentialist pattern. However, this pattern is driven by self-liberators’ clear judgments. For self-committers also a norm of non-interference into others’ liberty can be identified.

Keywords: Self-commitment, weak paternalism, freedom of choice, agency, moral judgments

JEL-Classification: D03, D63, I31

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1 Introduction

Personal experience as well as anecdotes (as can be found in Elster 2000) suggest that people, for instance, place their alarm clock beyond reach to get out of bed or self-restrict their liquidity to prevent excessive shopping. In strategies of rational self-management (see Schelling 1978, 1984) they are willing to commit their own future selves. If these people were pure consequentialists, it should not matter to them whether someone else would, for instance, put the alarm clock out of reach or restrict their liquidity temporarily. However, such forms of weak paternalism may be problematic not only from the external point of view of economists and philosophers but possibly from the point of view of those who would be perfectly willing to self-commit. This issue has been unduly neglected so far in the rather broad discussion on commitment on the one hand and paternalism on the other hand.

By means of an incentivized economic experiment this article addresses the question if it makes a difference whether commitments are self-imposed or other-imposed. To that effect, it is in particular scrutinized whether protégés' willingness to self-restrict their freedom of choice predicts their attitudes toward weak paternalism.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. In the next section we will give an overview over its background formed by theoretical considerations and the experimental literature concerning related issues. Section three describes the experimental design, hypotheses are derived in section four. Section five discusses the experimental results while the sixth section concludes.

2 Background

2.1 Theoretical Background

There are two strands of argument to be taken into account here: Firstly, the literature on self-commitment, and, secondly, the literature on paternalism. The first being chiefly from economics the second from philosophy.

In a seminal article Strotz (1955) discusses self-commitment as the method that a rational weak-willed decision-maker will use to stick to her plan and overcome her anticipated time-inconsistency.¹ Alternative formulations of the problem have

¹In "A Treatise of Human Nature" this time-inconsistency has been ingeniously described by Hume (2010): "In reflecting on any action, which I am to perform a twelve-month hence, I always resolve to prefer the greater good, whether at that time it will be more contiguous or remote; nor does any difference in that particular make a difference in my present intentions and resolutions. My distance from the final determination makes all those minute differences vanish, nor am I affected by any thing, but the general and more discernable qualities of good and evil. But on my nearer approach, those

been discussed (see, for instance, Thaler and Shefrin 1981, Laibson 1997, Gul and Pesendorfer 2001, Fudenberg and Levine 2006). If a decision-maker is expected either to lack this “sophistication” (Hammond 1976) or has no self-commitment devices at her disposal, others may decide to act on her behalf and interest. This infringes on her autonomy and leads to issues of paternalism (see, for instance, Thaler and Sunstein 1993, 2008, Glaeser 2006, Scoccia 2008).

Dworkin (2005) defines paternalism as follows: “[...] X acts paternalistically towards Y by doing (omitting) Z:

1. Z (or its omission) interferes with the liberty or autonomy of Y.
2. X does so without the consent of Y.
3. X does so just because Z will improve the welfare of Y (where this includes preventing his welfare from diminishing), or in some way promote the interests, values, or good of Y.”

He emphasizes that the second condition has to be read as distinct from acting *against* the consent of the protégé. She may in fact consent but this may not be known to the paternalist. Furthermore, we will focus on what Dworkin (2005) calls weak paternalism as opposed to strong paternalism:

“A weak paternalist believes that it is legitimate to interfere with the means that agents choose to achieve their ends, if those means are likely to defeat those ends. [...] A strong paternalist believes that people may be mistaken or confused about their ends and it is legitimate to interfere to prevent them from achieving those ends. [...] Another way of putting this: we may interfere with mistakes about the facts but not mistakes about values.”

According to the first criterion, paternalism is characterized by the interference of a patron with the liberty or autonomy of the protégé. A weak paternalist takes the protégé’s ends for granted and commits her to her self-determined plan. Technically, commitment restricts the protégé’s future choice set and therefore limits her spontaneity. A weak paternalist will assure that her protégé does not spoil her own plan by succumbing to temptations on the way. For one whose end it is to maximize her lifespan but who is too lazy to fasten the seatbelt, mandatory seatbelt wearing is only weakly paternalistic. One is committed to safety.

circumstances, which I at first over-look’d, begin to appear, and have an influence on my conduct and affections. A new inclination to the present good springs up, and makes it difficult for me to adhere inflexibly to my first purpose and resolution. This natural infirmity I may very much regret, and I may endeavour, by all possible means, to free my self from it. I may have recourse to study and reflexion within myself; to the advice of friends; to frequent meditation, and repeated resolution: And having experienc’d how ineffectual all these are, I may embrace with pleasure any other expedient, by which I may impose a restraint upon myself, and guard against this weakness.”

Thus, weak paternalism as we define it in line with the philosophical literature fulfills the same goal as self-commitment. It commits a decision-maker to a plan that she has chosen by herself at one point in time. A weak paternalist helps the decision-maker to pursue this plan, even though the former may not necessarily agree with the ends incorporated in this plan.

The question of agency that we raise should be isolated from the discussion on the intrinsic value of freedom of choice claiming that freedom has a value beyond being a means to achieve other ends (see, for instance, Arrow 1995).² Several attempts to measure this intrinsic value have been proposed (see Sen 1988, Sugden 1998, 2001, Bavetta and Guala 2003). Our investigation focuses on a different problem. A self-committer has already opted against freedom of choice at some future time despite its instrumental and intrinsic value and may still refute other-imposed commitment.

2.2 Experimental Background

Ariely and Wertenbroch (2002) conducted an artificial field experiment that gave students the opportunity to set binding deadlines for handing in three course works. The individually chosen deadlines were ambitious and actually enhanced grade-wise performance. However, the authors compare grades of these students with those of students in a control group who were set evenly spread deadlines by their lecturers. The students in the control group performed better than those with self-imposed deadlines which lets the authors conclude that self-commitment devices are used if available but used ineffectively.

Ashraf et al. (2006) designed a commitment savings product for a Philippine bank. The product restricted the bank customers access to their savings and was offered to a randomly chosen subset of present and former clients of the bank. Almost 30 % of clients actually chose to open the respective account.

A similar fraction of self-committers could be observed when a larger but later money reward was aspired in a laboratory experiment (Casari 2009). These subjects took the possibility to dilute or eliminate a smaller but sooner money reward which they feared to choose instead once it was within reach.

When analyzing consumer habits of U.S. health club members, DellaVigna and

²An example for the mere instrumental value of freedom of choice in economics is given in Amador et al. (2006). Here, for a sophisticated planner, uncertainty may outweigh the advantages of self-commitment. The authors model the trade-off a decision-maker faces when confronted with weak will and exogenous uncertainty at the same time. Tying Ulysses to the mast prevents him from giving in to the Sirens but necessarily leaves him incapable of reacting in a sudden storm. In an intrapersonal principal-agent problem, the principal's optimization is a maneuver between the Scylla of a weak-willed agent and the Charybdis of an externally endangered agent in restraint. For Sen (1988, p. 294) "[t]he foundational importance of freedom may well be the most far-reaching substantive problem neglected in standard economics."

Malmendier (2006) identify a widespread inclination to self-commit to work out. This expresses itself by choosing a flat-fee contract or by choosing a long-term membership. Again, self-commitment turns out to be often ineffective. Even though monthly members pay higher cancellation fees than one-year members, the former stay enrolled longer. Apart from that, flat-fee members pay higher prices per expected visit than pay-per-visit users given their actual average attendances. The authors establish that consumers mispredict their own future preferences.

Although the problem of paternalism is not addressed explicitly in the aforementioned experiments, Ariely and Wertenbroch (2002) as well as DellaVigna and Malmendier (2006) observe that subjects' inability to predict their own future behavior causes ineffective self-commitment. In Ariely and Wertenbroch (2002) superior performance of students with externally imposed deadlines is emphasized. Besides a naiveté of weak-willed decision-makers who blindly step into the inconsistency trap and the non-availability of self-commitment devices, ineffective self-commitment may be another reason for outside intervention. Students' attitudes towards the paternalistic intervention were however not elicited.

3 Experimental Design

3.1 Methodology

The real effort was designed to be as natural and familiar as possible to subjects. Furthermore, we aimed to maximize the likelihood of weakness of will whilst using an ethically justifiable procedure. In our design subjects received the more money the earlier they showed up to the laboratory. The design asked them to announce a show-up time in advance. The temptation which we expected them to anticipate was to procrastinate getting up at the cost of losing money.

The experiment consisted of two sessions that took place on two consecutive days. In the first session all relevant choices were collected, the second session was only needed to provide payments. Since we used the strategy vector method (Selten 1967) to elicit protégés' attitudes towards their patrons' policy style, each subject had to make a reward choice for both possible cases. In this way, we doubled observations and did not rely on patrons' actual choices as we got information also for the counterfactual case. The order of choices was the same for all subjects.

The upcoming task was not clear to subjects when they arrived to the first session. The invitation contained exact information about the date and the time of the first session. It said also that the second session would take place the morning after but that details could not be given until the first session. Students were therefore supposed to register for the experiment only if they had no important appointments before noon on the day of the second session.

When designing the experiment, special effort was made to fulfill Dworkin's criteria (see section 2): First, if a patron chooses to commit her protégé, she will actually interfere into her liberty or autonomy of decision-making. This is done by the commitment choice which eliminates alternative options from the protégé's choice set. Second, the patron makes her policy choice without knowing the protégé's preferences concerning liberty. In particular, no information about the self-commitment or self-liberation choice of the counterpart is provided. So, if the patron chooses commitment, she restricts the protégé's liberty without the latter's explicit or implicit consent. Third, protégés reciprocate to patrons' choices and this is common knowledge before the first choice is made. For each judging protégé, it is therefore clear that the patron is trying to meet her preferences in the first session in order to receive a reward. Common knowledge about this was important to overrule protégés' potential beliefs in patrons' malevolent intentions. Whatever protégés judge, they judge something that was done with good (although not completely altruistic) intentions.

Finally, the paternalist does not dictate a specific goal but commit the protégé to a planned time upon which she has decided by herself. Strong paternalism in our framework would have meant to correct the protégé's plan and commit her to an earlier time slot to make her earn more money. We assume that a patron could have been confident about the serious intention of her protégé to show up in the chosen time slot. The reason is that irrespective of her own preference for liberty the protégé knew that she could possibly get committed to this particular slot by her patron. By interfering, the patron would only prevent the protégé from spoiling her own plan by getting up too late which makes her a weak paternalist.

3.2 Before the First Choice

In the first session, before instructions were distributed, subjects were asked to answer six pre-experimental questions (see appendix 1). These questions were about their daily habits and student life. All questions had to be answered with "yes" or "no". The fifth question read "Are you often angry that you do not succeed to get up as early as planned?". It was "hidden" among others of heterogeneous kind to prevent strategic answers. Later on, subjects were informed that their counterpart would be provided with their answer to this question. This was done to make protégés aware that every patron was sensitized for the problem of weakness of will involved in the task. Then, instructions were distributed (see appendix 2) and subjects were asked to read the instructions carefully. Every upcoming choice was explained extensively to subjects before the first choice was made.

Subjects were first matched with a counterpart. Only at the very end of the experiment each subject was randomly assigned one of two roles, putting her coun-

terpart in the complementary role. Therefore, each subject made all five decisions before knowing her role. We will refer to these roles as patron and protégé in the following although they were called role A and role B in the instructions.³ Choices which were made in the counterfactual role were later irrelevant for subjects. Patrons could not show up to the second session and accordingly only receive a payment for the first session. Protégés could also show up to the second session and receive an additional payment. For the first session, all subjects got a show-up fee of 2.50 € and an initial endowment. Details about this endowment will follow soon.

3.3 The Five Choices

3.3.1 Choice 1: Time Slot

Subjects' first choice only applied in case of ending up as a protégé. They were asked to choose a time slot t_i , where $i = \{1, 2, \dots, 10\}$, in which they would like to show up for the second session to collect their payment. Relevant was the time when crossing the door sill to the computer lab measured by a radio-controlled clock. Rewards were linearly decreasing according to the time reward scheme in table 1.

time slot	earliest arrival (a.m.)	latest arrival (a.m.)	reward (€)
t_1	6.00	6.15	17.50
t_2	6.15	6.30	16.00
t_3	6.30	6.45	14.50
t_4	6.45	7.00	13.00
t_5	7.00	7.15	11.50
t_6	7.15	7.30	10.00
t_7	7.30	7.45	8.50
t_8	7.45	8.00	7.00
t_9	8.00	8.15	5.50
t_{10}	8.15	9.00	4.00

Table 1: Time Reward Scheme

Subjects chose a time slot under the consideration that they could not come at an earlier time slot than the one they had picked. More precisely, they could come earlier, but would then have to wait till their chosen time slot started and then only receive the reward corresponding to the chosen time slot.⁴

Simultaneously, each subject's counterpart chose her own time slot.

³While the labels we introduce here are descriptive, we used neutral ones in the instructions to avoid emotional connotations caused by mere names.

⁴As will become clear later, this was done to prevent that subjects in favor of liberty would simply choose the final time slot, thus keeping full flexibility whilst preventing paternalistic commitment.

3.3.2 Choice 2: Self-Liberation or Self-Commitment

Subjects' second choice also applied only in case of ending up as a protégé. Each one decided for herself between two alternatives. The two alternatives were liberty and commitment.

Liberty meant that the protégé could decide spontaneously tomorrow morning to come to the chosen time slot or to any later time slot which she would then prefer. If coming later, the protégé would of course only get the reward corresponding to the time slot in which she would actually show up.

Commitment meant that the protégé could only come to the chosen time slot. If showing up later she would not receive anything. This was the case for all but the final time slot since then coming later was not possible anyway. It was emphasized that apart from forgoing the reward not showing up to the second session would not have any negative consequences for a protégé as an exclusion from further experiments and the like.

Simultaneously, subjects' counterparts made an analogous choice for the case of ending up as a protégé. Since subjects choosing as protégé made their choices between the two alternatives for themselves we will refer to them as self-commitment and self-liberation.

3.3.3 Choice 3: Liberal or Paternalistic

The third choice was the only choice which would become relevant in case of being assigned the role of a patron in the end. Subjects decided between liberty and commitment for their counterpart.

Liberty again meant that the protégé could come spontaneously tomorrow morning to the chosen time slot or to any later time slot which she would then prefer. The protégé would once more only get the reward corresponding to the time slot in which she would actually show up.

Commitment again meant that the protégé would not get anything if she showed up in a later time slot than the one that she had chosen. If their counterpart had picked the latest time slot, the subject choosing as patron was informed, since then a choice between the two alternatives was redundant.

Simultaneously, subjects' counterparts made an analogous choice for the case of ending up as a patron. Since subjects choosing as patron made choices for their counterparts we will refer to them as liberal and paternalistic. Before making their choice, subjects were informed about their counterpart's answer to the pre-experimental question.

In case of ending up as a protégé, there were then two choices, which could but need not coincide. The first was the one that the protégé made for herself, the second was the one that the patron made for the protégé. For a protégé her

own choice was implemented with 25 % probability while her patron's choice was implemented with 75 % probability. Probabilities were asymmetric to render the patron's choice more important.

3.3.4 Choices 4 and 5: Attribution of Praise or Blame

The last two choices concerned our variable of interest and applied only in case of ending up as a protégé. Our aim was to investigate the attitudes of protégés towards their patrons' policy style via the attribution of praise or blame. Since the elicitation of attitudes is crucial to answer our research question, special emphasis was given on making the respective choices substantial. Therefore, protégés' choices had payoff consequences for their patrons as well as themselves.

Protégés were endowed with 0.50 € and patrons with 5.00 €. Protégés could vary their patron's endowment by increasing or reducing it. In either direction this could happen in steps of 0.50 €, up to a maximum variation of 2.50 €, by paying 0.10 € of their own endowment for each step. Of course, they could also leave it unchanged which did not cause any costs. The patron's payment did not depend on anything else but this choice of the protégé. All (positive and negative) policy reward possibilities can be seen in table 2.

patron initially (€)	variation (€)	patron new (€)	costs (€)
5.00	+ 2.50	7.50	0.50
5.00	+ 2.00	7.00	0.40
5.00	+ 1.50	6.50	0.30
5.00	+ 1.00	6.00	0.20
5.00	+ 0.50	5.50	0.10
5.00	+/- 0.00	5.00	0.00
5.00	- 0.50	4.50	0.10
5.00	- 1.00	4.00	0.20
5.00	- 1.50	3.50	0.30
5.00	- 2.00	3.00	0.40
5.00	- 2.50	2.50	0.50

Table 2: Policy Reward Scheme

Subjects had to make a choice for both possible cases: ending up as a protégé and facing a liberal patron and ending up as a protégé and facing a paternalistic patron.

3.4 After the Last Choice

After all choices were made, a random mechanism assigned half of the subjects the role of a protégé and the other half the role of a patron. For protégés a second ran-

dom draw determined whether their own or their patron's liberty-or-commitment choice was implemented. All subjects were then informed about their role. Patrons were informed about the reward choice of their protégé for the case that actually applied to them and about their final payment. Protégés were informed about their patrons choice and the result of the random draw which determined whether their patron's or their own choice was relevant. The program then stated when to show up to the second session and under which conditions. Finally, they were informed about their payment for the first session depending on their reward choice given the decision of their patron. Payments for the first session were then made in private.

In the second session protégés arrived to collect their payment. When protégés showed up it was checked whether they had been committed to an earlier time slot in which case they received no payment. If they were too early they had to wait till the beginning of their chosen time slot. Otherwise they received their payment.

4 Hypotheses

We classify subjects according to their liberty-or-commitment choice. Protégés are either self-committers or self-liberators. Furthermore, we call those patrons who chose commitment for their protégé paternalists, and those who chose liberty for their protégé liberals.

Table 3 shows the four matching constellations which are possible to occur. The rows specify the choice of the protégé for herself while the columns specify her patron's choice, i.e., her policy style. Self-committers could either face a paternalist (a) or a liberal (b), self-liberators could also either face a paternalist (c) or a liberal (d).

	paternalist	liberal
self-committer	a	c
self-liberator	b	d

Table 3: Possible Matching Constellations

Table 3 makes clear that we will have to investigate our research question in two dimensions. First, we can compare rewards for each policy style *between* the group of self-committers and the group of self-liberators. This takes a macroperspective since it seeks for a consequentialist pattern by looking at protégés as a whole. The question it answers is passive: "How are paternalists (liberals) judged?" This is addressed by Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Hypothesis 1: *Paternalists are rewarded more by self-committers than by self-liberators.*

Hypothesis 2: *Liberals are rewarded more by self-liberators than by self-committers.*

If paternalists are judged consequentially, they will be rewarded depending on the consequences of the commitment they executed. Whether protégés consider these consequences positively or negatively can be inferred from their choice concerning self-commitment or self-liberation. In terms of consequences, paternalists should be favored by self-committers relative to self-liberators. The reverse applies for liberals. This should reflect in higher rewards in cell a than cell b, and in higher rewards in cell d than cell c.

If, on the other hand, paternalists are judged deontologically, they will be rewarded independently of the consequences of the commitment they executed. Paternalism would be equally blamed while liberalism would be equally valued as the appropriate policy style. Any difference in judgments for one of the two policy styles would imply a consequentialist pattern. This means that we should observe equal rewards in cell a and cell b. The same holds for liberals implying equal rewards in cell c and cell d.

In addition to reward choices, we can perform a correlation check between choices made as protégés and as patrons. This is what Hypothesis 3 tests for.

Hypothesis 3: *Choices made as protégés are positively correlated with choices made as patrons.*

This is true if a consequentialist logic applies: Since positive consequences of commitment should be more salient for subjects who self-commit in the role of a protégé, they should be more likely to act paternalistically in the role of a patron. If subjects judge deontologically, self-committers should be no more likely to execute acts of paternalistic commitment than self-liberators which negates a positive correlation between choices.

We can now take a microperspective by comparing rewards towards the two policy styles *within* the two groups of protégés. However, self-liberators are not insightful here since the consequentialist as well as the deontological explanation lead to identical predictions. This is different for self-committers. The question answered here is active: “How do self-committers judge?” This is addressed by Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 4: *Self-committers reward paternalists more than they reward liberals.*

If protégés judge consequentially, they will reward depending on the consequences of the commitment imposed on them. In line with their own choice, self-committers would favor paternalists relative to liberals and pay a “paternalism premium”. This should reflect in higher rewards in cell a than cell c.

If, on the other hand, protégés judge deontologically, they will reward independently of the consequences of the commitment imposed on them. Thus, liberals are always favored compared to paternalists and a “liberalism premium” is paid. This means that we should observe higher rewards in cell c than cell a.

From a consequentialist perspective self-liberators should reward liberalism more than paternalism and pay a “liberalism premium”. Since the deontological explanation would predict as well that self-liberators pay a “liberalism premium” the corresponding hypothesis is omitted.

5 Results

The experiment was conducted in January and February 2010 with 190 students from all kinds of disciplines of the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena, Germany. It was programmed with z-Tree (Fischbacher 2007), and subjects were recruited with the ORSEE software (Greiner 2004).

Out of 190 subjects two chose the last time slot and were excluded from the analysis since they could not be classified as self-committers or self-liberators. Out of the remaining 188 subjects 55 (29.3 %) chose self-commitment while 133 (70.7 %) chose self-liberation as protégés. This is roughly the propensity that other experiments report (see section 2.2). As patrons 44 (23.7 %) chose to be paternalistic while 142 (76.3 %) chose to be liberal.⁵ A comparable propensity has not been elicited in previous experiments. An overview is given in table 4.

	as protégé	as patron
commitment	55 (29.3 %)	44 (23.7 %)
liberty	133 (70.7 %)	142 (76.3 %)
all	188 (100 %)	186 (100 %)

Table 4: Choices as Protégés and as Patrons

26 out of 55 (47.3 %) self-committers acted paternalistically as patron while 29 out of 55 (52.7 %) acted liberally. Compared with this, 18 out of 131 (13.7 %)

⁵This only sums up to 186 subjects, because from the 188 analyzed subjects two did not make a choice as patrons since their counterparts chose the last time slot.

self-liberators acted paternalistically as patron while 113 out of 131 (86.3 %) acted liberally.

One-sided Mann-Whitney U-tests confirm a significant positive difference in the rewarding of paternalists between self-committers and self-liberators ($U = 4524.0, p = 0.0025$) (see table 5). This means that paternalism is on average rewarded more by self-committers than by self-liberators. Hypothesis 1 is thereby supported.

	mean	median	sd	
self-committers	0.49	0.00	1.19	$U = 4524.0 \quad p = 0.003$
self-liberators	-0.06	0.00	1.29	

Table 5: Paternalists Rewarded by Self-Committers vs. Self-Liberators

Also, a significant positive difference in rewarding liberals between self-liberators and self-committers can be stated ($U = 2872.5, p = 0.007$) (see table 6). Liberalism is on average rewarded more by self-liberators than by self-committers. Therefore, also Hypothesis 2 finds support.

	mean	median	sd	
self-committers	0.64	0.00	1.24	$U = 2872.5 \quad p = 0.007$
self-liberators	1.12	1.00	1.25	

Table 6: Liberals Rewarded by Self-Committers vs. Self-Liberators

By using a phi correlation check, we observe a moderate positive correlation ($\phi = 0.36, p = 0.000$) between subjects' choices as protégés and as patrons. Subjects who commit themselves are more likely to also commit others. Hypothesis 3 is therewith supported.

Two-sided Wilcoxon signed rank tests do not find a significant difference in self-committers' rewards granted to paternalists and liberals ($W = 57.0, p = 0.367$) (see table 7). This indicates an indifference or indecisiveness of self-committers toward the patrons' policy style. Given this result, Hypothesis 4 has to be refuted.

	mean	median	sd	
paternalists	0.49	0.00	1.19	$W = 57.0 \quad p = 0.367$
liberals	0.64	0.00	1.24	

Table 7: Self-Committers Rewarding Paternalists vs. Liberals

6 Conclusion

If restriction of freedom is judged from a strictly consequentialist position, it should not matter by whom it is brought about if it brings about the same desired consequences. Consequentialists should agree to weak paternalism, i.e., commitment by a patron to their own plan, if they would self-commit anyway. If, however, paternalistic acts are considered to be intrusive and refutable per se, a preference for self-commitment does not mean that commitment by a patron need to be accepted as well. Individuals with in a wide sense “procedural” preferences of a deontological rather than consequentialist nature may even reject paternalism on principle grounds, i.e., regardless of the consequences of the paternalistic act. They consider it to be intrinsically wrong or as Kant (1991, p. 83) said, even the worst form of despotism.

Protégés’ inclination to commit to a chosen plan predicts their attitudes towards weak paternalism. They clearly value it more when willing to self-constrain their freedom of choice than when striving for liberty. Correspondingly, liberalism is valued more by protégés who self-liberate as compared to those who self-commit. From the bird’s eye view, it seems that weak paternalism is judged consequentially. In line with that result, subjects who self-commit in the role of a protégé are more likely to act paternalistically in the role of a patron.

However, the correlation of choices made as protégé and as patron is not strong. In this respect it is particularly interesting that roughly half of all self-committers chose to paternalize their counterpart as patron while the other half decided to act liberally. In comparison, almost nine out of ten self-liberators chose liberally. We argue that self-committers were torn between causing consequences with salient advantages and their adherence to a universal norm of non-interference into others’ liberty. Self-liberators were not facing a similar dilemma. The heterogeneity of policy styles applied by self-committers indicates that consequentialist and deontological attitudes towards weak paternalism coexist.

This conclusion finds support when looking at policy judgments within the group of self-committers. They reward paternalists clearly in absolute terms as opposed to self-liberators who slightly punish them. On the other hand, self-committers do not reward paternalists relative to liberals or, to put it differently, do not blame liberals relative to paternalists, i.e., neither do they pay a “liberalism premium” nor a “paternalism premium”. Hence, self-committers do not show a clear preference for either one of the two policy styles. We argue that the coexistence of their consequentialist appreciation of weak paternalism and their deontological adherence to a norm of non-interference neutralizes, i.e., reflects in an equality of rewards towards both policy styles.

Thus, it turns out that the consequentialist pattern that emerges on the macro-

level as the result of a comparison between self-committers and self-liberators is not founded on purely consequentialist norms on the microlevel. The pattern is driven by self-liberators' plain relative dismissal of weak paternalism and their payment of a considerable "liberalism premium".

After all, the agency dimension is less important than the consequence dimension of weak paternalism. Protégés do not exhibit a strong aversion against intrusiveness per se as the difference in judgments between self-liberators and self-committers suggests. The former condemn weak paternalism whereas the latter do not mind it. To that effect, it is important to stress that a substantial fraction of subjects restricted its own future freedom when self-commitment devices were saliently available and free. Still, also these subjects, who obviously welcome the consequences of constraint freedom, respect a universal norm of non-interference in that they do not explicitly reward weak paternalism. A policy-maker should consider these aspects when balancing the provision of self-commitment devices against outside intervention.

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Appendix 1: Pre-experimental Questionnaire (translated)

Please answer the following six questions truthfully with “Yes” or “No” by ticking the respective boxes. Your data will only be analyzed for scientific reasons and treated confidentially.

Do you use a notebook computer/laptop to create your lecture notes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you ever considered aborting your studies or changing your field of studies over frustration?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you read more than three books a year?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you live in a shared apartment?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you often angry that you do not manage to get up as early as planned?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you regularly attend football matches?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Appendix 2: Instructions (translated)

Welcome and thanks for your participation in this experiment! Please switch off your mobile phone and stow away any reading and writing materials. Please do not talk to other participants since this will lead to an abortion of this session without any payments.

This experiment consists of two sessions. This is the first session. The second session will take place tomorrow morning. In today's session you will be randomly matched with another participant. At the end of this session you will either be in role A and the participant matched with you will be in role B or you will be in role B and the participant matched with you will be in role A. In role A you will have the opportunity to show up to tomorrow's second session and earn additional money. In this case you will receive a note with your identification number at the end of this session, which you are kindly asked to bring to tomorrow's session by all means. In role B the experiment is already over for you after today's session. Your role will be determined by a random draw at the end of this session. For today's session you receive a compensation of € 2.50 as well as a role dependent initial endowment with money. Details about this initial endowment will follow soon.

You have to make all five choices of this session *before* you will be informed about your role. Eventually, the only choices of relevance are those that you have made for the role in which you actually end up.

FIRST CHOICE

You make your first choice for the case of ending up in role A. You have to select a time slot from a list of time slots during which you would like to show up to the computer lab tomorrow morning to collect your payment. The entrance "Schillerstraße" of the Goethe-Galerie (coming from the direction of the Löbdergraben) will be open from 5.30 a.m. on. The crossing of the door sill to this computer lab is decisive for the time measurement which will be carried out by us manually with a radio-controlled clock. A list of all time slots with their corresponding payments can be found in the following table:

When choosing your time slot please consider the following: After you have chosen a time slot you can not spontaneously show up to the lab at an earlier time slot tomorrow morning and collect the corresponding higher payment. If you choose, for instance, the time slot from 6.30 a.m. to 6.45 a.m., and show up earlier than 6.30 a.m., you will have to wait till 6.30 a.m. and only get the respective payment of 14.50 €. Furthermore, please consider that in the following it may happen that you are also not allowed to come later. A non-appearance to tomorrow's session

begin time slot (a.m.)	end time slot (a.m.)	reward (€)
6.00	6.15	17.50
6.15	6.30	16.00
6.30	6.45	14.50
6.45	7.00	13.00
7.00	7.15	11.50
7.15	7.30	10.00
7.30	7.45	8.50
7.45	8.00	7.00
8.00	8.15	5.50
8.15	9.00	4.00

will have no negative consequences for you, except for the fact of course that you will receive no additional payment.

SECOND CHOICE

You make your second choice also for the case of ending up in role A. It relates directly to the time slot you have just chosen. You have the choice between two alternatives. Alternative 1 means that you may show up in the chosen time slot or spontaneously in any later time slot. You always receive the amount of money which corresponds to the time slot in which you actually show up. Alternative 2 means that you may only show up tomorrow morning in the chosen time slot. If you show up in this time slot, you will receive the corresponding amount of money. But if you show up in a later time slot, you will not receive any payment. In case you choose the last time slot, you will not have to choose between the alternatives, of course, because a later appearance is not possible anyway. Simultaneously, the participant matched with you makes an analogous choice for himself, i.e., for the case that she will end up in role A.

THIRD CHOICE

You make your third choice for the case of ending up in role B. You also have to choose between the two alternatives for the participant matched with you, who will then be in role A. Alternative 1 means that the participant matched with you may show up in the chosen time slot or spontaneously in any later time slot. She always receives the amount of money which corresponds to the time slot in which she actually shows up. Alternative 2 means that she may only show up tomorrow morning in the time slot chosen by himself. If she shows up in a later time slot, she will not receive any payment. (If she has chosen the last time slot, you will be

informed about that, since then a choice between both alternatives is redundant.) Before making your choice, you will not know how the participant matched with you has chosen for himself. But you receive the information whether she has answered the pre-experimental question “Are you often angry that you do not manage to get up as early as planned?” with “yes” or with “no.” Informed with your answer to this question, the participant matched with you makes an analogous choice for you, i.e., for the case that she will end up in role B.

If you end up in role A later, there will be two choices between the alternatives at hand which could apply to you. These may but need not coincide. The one which you have made for yourself will be implemented with a 25 % probability and the one which the participant matched with you has made for you will be implemented with a 75 % probability. Accordingly, your choice applying to the participant matched with you will be implemented with a 75 % probability and his own choice will be implemented with a 25 % probability.

FOURTH AND FIFTH CHOICE

You make the final two choices again for the case of ending up in role A. You receive an initial endowment of 0.50 € and the participant matched with you, who will then end up in role B, receives an initial endowment of 5.00 €. You may now increase or decrease the initial endowment of the participant matched with you depending on how she has chosen for you between the two alternatives. If you would like to do that, you may higher or lower the initial endowment of the participant matched with you in (maximally five) steps of 0.50 € each by paying 0.10 € of your own initial endowment for each step. According to your choice his and your final endowment results. The payment of the participant matched with you, who will then be in role B, depends on nothing but this choice. If his initial endowment shall remain unchanged, this does not cost you anything, of course. The participant matched with you makes an analogous choice for you at the same time, i.e., for the case that she ends up in role A. All possibilities to alter the payment of the participant matched with you and their costs can be seen in the following two tables. The upper one applies if you choose to increase his initial endowment, the lower one applies if you choose to decrease his initial endowment.

Please notice that you have to make this decision *before* you know how the participant matched with you has chosen for you between both alternatives. Accordingly, you have to make two choices about a potential increase or decrease of the payment of the participant you are matched with: one for the case that she has chosen alternative 1 for you, and one for the case that she has chosen alternative 2 for you. (If you happen to choose the last time slot, you will not have to make these choices.) If you end up in role A, your choice about the increase or decrease that

initial endowment of other participant (€)	increase of other participant (€)	final endowment of other participant (€)	your costs (€)
5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
5.00	0.50	5.50	0.10
5.00	1.00	6.00	0.20
5.00	1.50	6.50	0.30
5.00	2.00	7.00	0.40
5.00	2.50	7.50	0.50

initial endowment of other participant (€)	decrease of other participant (€)	final endowment of other participant (€)	your costs (€)
5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
5.00	0.50	4.50	0.10
5.00	1.00	4.00	0.20
5.00	1.50	3.50	0.30
5.00	2.00	3.00	0.40
5.00	2.50	2.50	0.50

applies to the alternative that she actually chose will be implemented. This will happen irrespective of whose choice between the alternatives the random device eventually implements.

Please remain quiet till the experiment begins. If you have any questions, please raise your hand. If you have read the instructions completely and understood them, please click “OK”.