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Do Self-Committers Mind Other-Imposed Commitment? An Experiment on Weak Paternalism*

Abstract:

This experiment investigates whether protégés judge paternalism by means of its consequences or on principled grounds. Subjects receive a payment for showing up early the next morning. The later they show up the less they get. Protégés can self-commit to a specific show-up time or maintain spontaneity. By making this binary choice, protégés express their preference for liberty. Simultaneously, their patron is either paternalistic or liberal by making this choice on their behalf. We investigate whether self-committers' willingness to restrict their own freedom predicts their attitudes toward paternalism.

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