

Self-Control, Fatigue and Body Weight Evidence from Transitions to Night Shifts*

Rémi Yin[†], Fabrice Étilé[‡]

October 26, 2017

Abstract

In this article, we examine and reconsider the relationship between Body Mass Index (BMI) and night work, and we analyze specifically the moderating role of self-control in this relationship. Using a German panel data set of 13,146 individuals followed between 2007 and 2014, we find significant cross-sectional correlations between evening and night work and BMI. However, fixed-effect regressions show that transitioning from a regular working schedule to evening and night work has a significant impact on body mass index, only for those individuals who score high on an impulsiveness scale and are assigned to irregular evening and night work schedules. Transitions to regular evening and night shifts have no effect on BMI. Additional regressions reveal that the result may be explained by changes in the propensity to implement health-conscious diet but are unrelated to changes in physical exercises. Our results are line with predictions of self-control theory about the role of trait impulsiveness and environmental factors in self-control depletion and impulsive behaviors.

Keywords: health behaviors, self-control, atypical working hours, time preferences

JEL Classification: I12, J81

*We would like to thank Beatrice Boulu-Reshef, Andrew Clark, Nicolas Jacquemet, Daniel Martin, Claudia Senik and seminar participants at PSE and the IRDES HPLE Workshop for comments and suggestions. The German data used in this paper were made available by the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) at the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), Berlin: see Wagner et al. (2007). Neither the original collectors of the data nor the Archive bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here.

[†]Paris School of Economics: remi.yin@psemail.eu

[‡]Paris School of Economics - INRA: fabrice.etile@psemail.eu