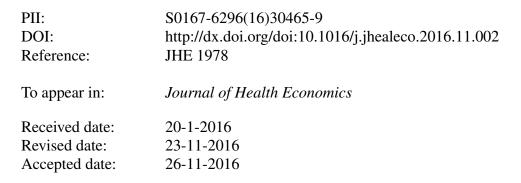
Accepted Manuscript

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Author: Davide Dragone Nicolas R. Ziebarth



Please cite this article as: Davide Dragone, Nicolas R. Ziebarth, Non-Separable Time Preferences, Novelty Consumption and Body Weight: Theory and Evidence from the East German Transition to Capitalism, *<![CDATA[Journal of Health Economics]]>* (2016), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jhealeco.2016.11.002

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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Non-Separable Time Preferences, Novelty Consumption and Body Weight: Theory and Evidence from the East German Transition to Capitalism [‡]

Davide Dragone University of Bologna * Nicolas R. Ziebarth Cornell University, DIW Berlin & IZA Bonn

November 29, 2016

forthcoming in the Journal of Health Economics

Abstract

This paper develops a dynamic model to illustrate how diet and body weight change when novel food products become available to consumers. We propose a microfounded test to empirically discriminate between habit and taste formation in intertemporal preferences. Moreover, we show that 'novelty consumption' and endogenous preferences can explain the persistent correlation between economic development and obesity. Empirically studying the German reunification, we find that East Germans consumed more novel western food and gained more weight than West Germans when they got access to a larger variety of food products after the fall of the Wall. The observed consumption patterns suggest that food consumption features habit formation.

Keywords: Endogenous preferences, food consumption, novel goods, habit formation, learning, obesity, economic development, German reunification,

JEL classification: D11, D12, D92, E21, I12, I15, L66, O10, O33, Q18, R22

*University of Bologna, Department of Economics, Office 52, Piazza Scaravilli 2, 40126, Bologna, Italy, phone: (+39)-(0)51-209-8880, e-mail: davide.dragone@unibo.it

[†]Corresponding author: Cornell University, Department of Policy Analysis and Management (PAM), 106 Martha Van Rensselaer Hall, Ithaca, NY 14850, USA, phone: +1-(607)255-1180, fax: +1-(607)255-4071, e-mail: nrz2@cornell.edu

[‡]We would like to thank John Cawley, Charles Courtemanche, Gabriella Conti, Monica Deza, Richard Dunn, Pilar Garcia-Gomez, Therese Bago d'Uva, David Frisvold, Anne Gielen, Lawrence Jin, Martin Karlsson, Paolo Masella, Christoph Moser, Stefan Pichler, Holger Strulik, Darjusch Tafreschi, Eddy van Doorslaer, and conference participants at the 2014 ASHEcon conference and the 2015 Essen Health Conference as well as seminar participants at the KOF Swiss Economic Institute at ETH Zurich, the Applied Economics seminar of the Erasmus School of Economics in Rotterdam, the Food Economics seminar at the University of Toulouse, the CEGE Research Colloquium at the University of Göttingen, the Department of Economics of the University of Bologna, the Hamburg Center for Health Economics (hche) and the Institute on Health Economics, Health Behaviors and Disparities at Cornell University. In particular we thank Frank Sloan, Therese Nilsson, and Katharina Walliczek for excellent discussions of this work. We take responsibility for all remaining errors in and shortcomings of the article. We would also like to thank Peter Eibich and Aline Paßlack for excellent research assistance and Philip Susser and Lawrence Jin for an excellent editing of this paper. The research reported in this paper is not the result of a for-pay consulting relationship. Our employers do not have a financial interest in the topic of the paper that might constitute a conflict of interest.

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