

Decision Processes Colloquium

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“Conscience Accounting”

with Alex Imas

We propose that one reason people donate to charity is to clear their conscience. In our experiments, people who lied were more likely than those who did not to donate to charity. We argue that this finding suggests some form of “conscience accounting” by which people try to balance out “bad” activities to protect their identity and self-image. This is contrasted with other deception-related behavior, and suggests an additional explanation to the altruistic type assumptions used in the literature to explain donation and volunteering behavior.