Jana Vyrastekova (Radboud University)

“Professional norms as incentives: experiments with purchasing professionals and students”

Abstract

Professional norms are social norms associated with a group identity of a particular profession. We hypothesize that professional norms generate incentives for professionals to behave more pro-socially in the absence of monetary incentives or explicit enforcement. To test our hypothesis, we collect data in experiments with purchasing professionals and with student subjects. Across treatments, we vary the framing of the decision problem, and compare subjects’ decisions in a neutral frame to those in a frame referring specifically to a purchasing problem, and describing consequences of the decisions in terms of the tradeoffs that the professionals must make. We find a significant treatment effect and observe that the length of the exposure to the profession explains the impact of the framing. This is consistent with the idea that internalization of professional norms is a long-term process.