

MPRA

Munich Personal RePEc Archive

Willful ignorance in social decisions: robust, yet contextually sensitive

Grossman, Zack and Hua, Tony

June 2025

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/124968/>
MPRA Paper No. 124968, posted 09 Jun 2025 13:24 UTC

Willful Ignorance in Social Decisions: Robust, Yet Contextually Sensitive*

Zachary Grossman¹ and Tony Hua²

^{1,2}University of California, Merced

June 2025

Abstract

Although humans exhibit many prosocial behaviors, when the social benefits of their options are uncertain, surprisingly many avoid learning them before choosing, using ignorance as an excuse to dodge moral obligations and revert to selfish behavior. This kind of willful ignorance is robust in the sense that researchers have documented it using a wide array of methods, across diverse settings, and a time period spanning nearly two decades. At the same time, however, the degree to which it manifests is inconsistent across and within studies. Some of these inconsistencies stem from obvious factors, while the moderators driving others have yet to be identified or are poorly understood. This study synthesizes and organizes these contextual factors, providing recommendations for future research.

*The authors would like to thank Jason Dana, Jo Thori Lind, Karine Nyborg, and Joel van der Weele for helpful discussions and feedback that contributed this review.

1 Introduction

Decades of research on cooperative and prosocial behavior have documented the persistent tension between self-interest and motivations that support social interests [1, 2, 3]. While humans often incur personal costs to benefit others, they also exploit excuses that allow them to behave more selfishly [4, 5, 6]. A key mechanism for doing so is willful ignorance [7], the deliberate avoidance of morally relevant information, which has been documented in many naturalistic settings, such as refugee aid, eco-conscious behavior, and other real-world moral dilemmas [8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13].¹

Dana, Weber, and Kuang [14] (henceforth, DWK) introduced a stylized decision instrument, now widely known as the moral-wiggle-room (MWR) game, for studying willful ignorance in controlled experimental environments. They used it to show that people avoid information about the social consequences of their actions in order to create a situational excuse, which they referred to as moral wiggle room, for selfish behavior. This game has since inspired a large experimental and theoretical literature—DWK has over 2000 citations on Google Scholar to date—and it has become a key tool for unpacking the social, cognitive, and contextual factors that shape willful ignorance² and for the broader study of social behavior and motivated cognition.³

Figure 1 provides an overview of the design of the MWR game, which elegantly isolates the role of moral information in prosocial decision-making. Participants choose between a higher personal payoff and an alternative with an uncertain social benefit. In the original DWK experiment, option A pays 6 to the decision-maker while option B pays 5, but the benefit to the recipient is uncertain. The decision-maker can learn whether their interests conflict with the recipient’s by clicking a button to reveal the payoff structure. In a separate, full-information baseline treatment, subjects chose knowing that their sacrifice would benefit the recipient.

¹Willful ignorance is alternately called information avoidance, deliberate ignorance, and strategic ignorance.

²DWK also introduced two other tools for studying diffusion of responsibility and plausible deniability, but the *Hidden Information* treatment has generated far more follow-up research on willful ignorance.

³For example, Bénabou and Tirole [15] and Gino, Norton, and Weber [16]. Also, Grossman and Van der Weele [17] use the MWR game to identify Bayesian self-signaling, which had previously been difficult to pin down empirically [18].

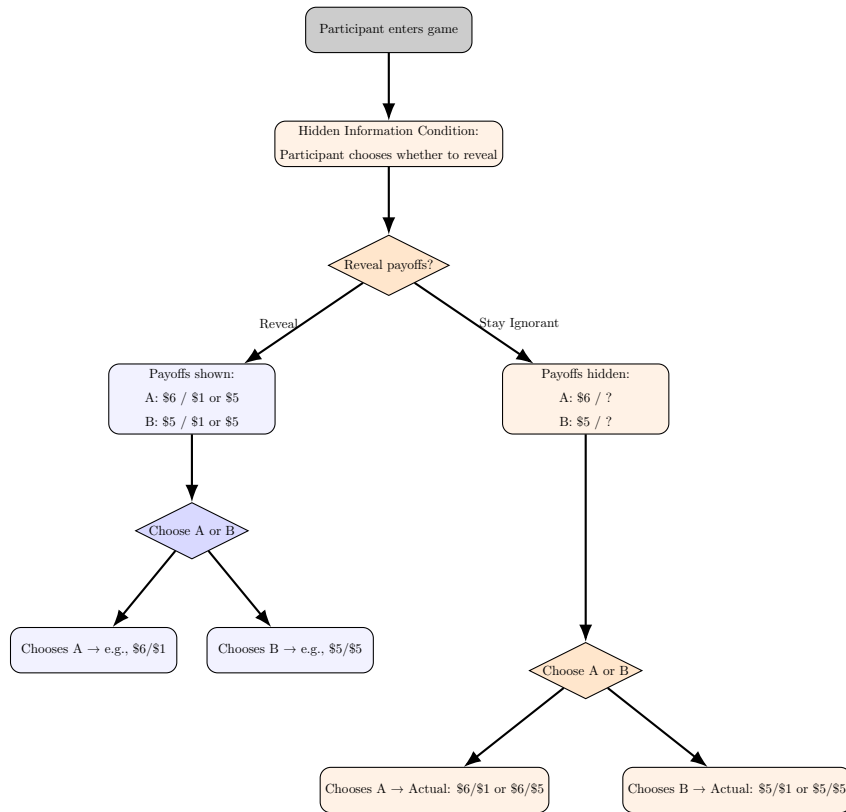


Figure 1: Schematic diagram of the MWR game as implemented by DWK in their *Hidden Information* treatment. Orange indicates hidden information; light blue marks revealed payoffs. As our focus is on the level of willful ignorance, as opposed to its impact on altruistic behavior, we do not show their full-information *Baseline* treatment.

DWK found that 44% of their subjects remained willfully ignorant, choosing an outcome without revealing the payoffs. This was surprising given the levels of prosociality observed in their full-information baseline. While prior work has examined how willful ignorance reduces altruism [19], this review focuses on the contextual factors that moderate information avoidance.

Since DWK’s initial findings, the robustness of willful ignorance in the MWR game has been well established. Replications span a wide range of designs and populations. Most studies use computer interfaces and university subject pools [17, 20, 21, 22], but the replications have included paper-and-pen interfaces [23] as well as samples from online labor platforms such as Amazon Mechanical Turk [24] and the online research platform Prolific [25, 26]. The result has been replicated with and without time-pressure [27], as well as under double-blind conditions and with active choice [23]. Some studies have found willful ignorance despite it being financially costly [17, 28], while other successful replications featured donations to charity as opposed to allocations to other subjects [24, 29].

A recent meta-analysis by Vu et al. [19] examined how willful ignorance decreases altruistic behavior. Their analysis included 15 published articles that used the MWR game, for 14 of which we obtained the ignorance rate and sample size.⁴ Across these studies, the ignorance rate ranged from 16% to 73%, with more than 1/3 of participants remaining ignorant in 11 out of 14 studies and a median ignorance rate of 44% across studies. Aggregating across these studies, 1492 out 3332 participants (45%) avoided learning the social consequences of their choice. Both the median and mean ignorance rates are within one percentage point of that found by DWK, establishing their finding as highly representative. Other studies not published at the time of their analysis further demonstrate the replicability of willful ignorance using variants of the MWR game [25, 26, 28, 30] and cross-cultural evidence establishes that willful ignorance is not confined to any one region or sample [31]. The consistency of this behavioral pattern suggests that willful ignorance is not merely a methodological artifact, but a psychologically robust phenomenon with broad behavioral implications.

Although willful ignorance is a robust phenomenon, it is not universal. The extent to which participant avoid information varies substantially across studies, often due to contextual or cog-

⁴One of the 16 studies listed in the MWR-task row of Table 1 from [19] does not appear to use the MWR game after all. We estimated the sample size for [24] as one half of the hidden-information sample for each study, representing the subjects in the self/other condition.

nitive factors that shape the perceived moral relevance of information. This review focuses on how decision environments, rather than individual traits, moderate this behavior. By synthesizing these contextual influences, we aim to advance understanding of the social and cognitive mechanisms underlying willful ignorance and contribute to broader efforts in behavioral science to explain heterogeneous responses across experimental settings [32, 33, 34]. We also hope to inform decision-making regarding experimental methods as well as discussions about reproducibility in social science.

We group the moderators of willful ignorance into three categories, shown in Figure 1, based on current theoretical understanding. Section 2 covers well-established factors; Section 3 addresses plausible but not fully understood moderators; and Section 4 explores unexplained variation. Section 5 outlines future research directions, including the roles of norms, choice architecture, and cues that promote self-reflection or perceived scrutiny.

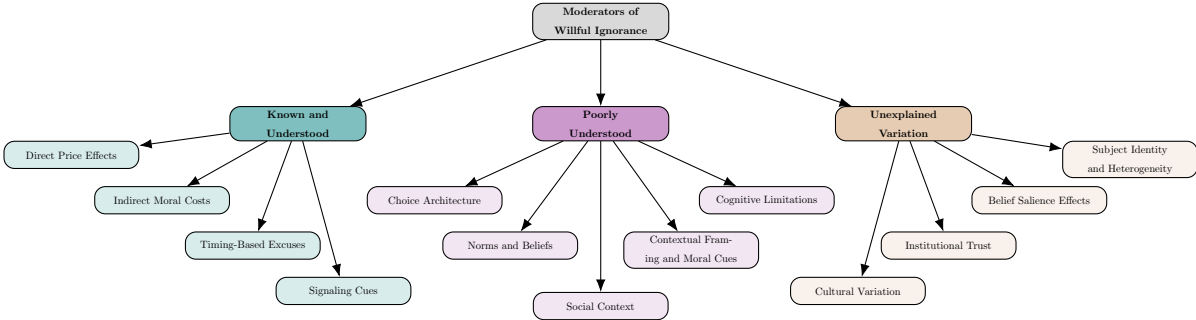


Figure 2: Conceptual taxonomy of moderators influencing willful ignorance. Color indicates the theoretical clarity: teal (well understood), violet (partially understood), and brown (unexplained).

2 Known and Understood Moderators

Several studies identify well-established moderators of willful ignorance, particularly related to the cost of ignorance and belief protection. Direct price effects show that people are less likely to avoid information when it is cheaper to acquire [17, 28] or when fairness is less costly [30]. Indirect price effects emerge when the selfish choice is unlikely to harm others, reducing the perceived moral cost of ignorance [21]. Time pressure increases the prevalence of willful ignorance, consistent with it increasing self-serving behavior and reverting to default choices [27]. Studies using instruments that differ from the basic MWR paradigm further establish how

information acquisition increases when it is less likely to reinforce a feeling of moral obligation [35]. Together, these findings show that willful ignorance is shaped by incentives and information in a predictable manner.

3 Poorly Understood Moderators

Even minor shifts in the decision environment can have a dramatic impact. Some moderators are easy to describe or identify, but with an underlying psychological mechanism that is less clear. We group them into five categories. More research is needed to understand the source of these effects.

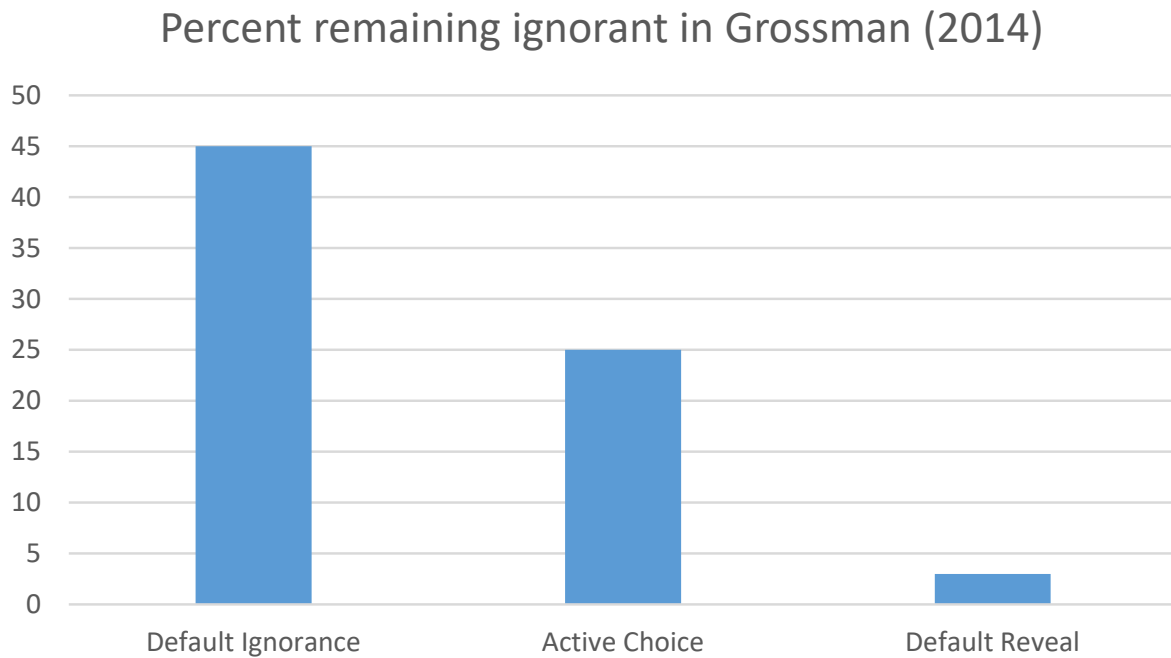


Figure 3: Ignorance rates in Grossman [22] declined sharply as the default shifted from ignorance, to active choice, to revealing. Source: Figure 1.

Choice Architecture: Defaults and Active vs. Passive choice

Defaults are known to affect choice [36], and Grossman [22] found striking defaults effects, shown in Figure 3, as did Moyal and Schurr [37]. However, subjects readily overcome default ignorance when it no longer serves as an excuse for selfish choices [17, 22]. Thus, ignorance appears to be strategic, but its value as an excuse is undermined under active choice. Despite

this, high levels of ignorance can persist even when it must be chosen actively [23].

Evaluating options separately, as opposed to jointly, can lead to preference reversals [38] and, indeed, Grossman et al. [26] found that having participants make their information and allocation choices on separate screens (while retaining ignorance as the default) substantially reduced ignorance, as shown in Figure 3. However, in Grossman [22], ignorance rates were nearly identical across two versions of the MWR game—one with integrated screens (unpublished) and one with separate screens (published)—despite differing implementations.

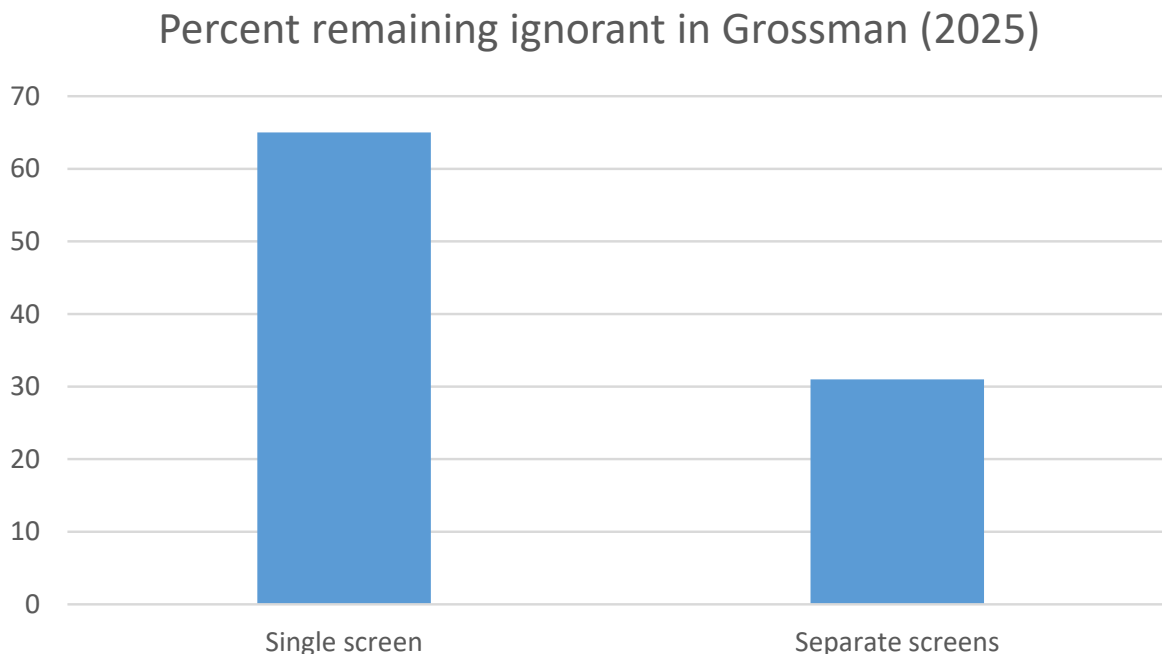


Figure 4: Average ignorance rates from Grossman et al. [26], comparing integrated (single screen) versus sequential (separate screens) information and outcome choices. Source: Figure 1b.

The precise mechanisms by which interface design shapes moral engagement—whether through effort costs, attentional dynamics, or salience—remain open questions.

Norms and Beliefs About Others

People adjust their information-seeking behavior based on what they expect others to do or consider acceptable. Soraperra et al. [29], Hua [39], and Spiekermann and Weiss [40] find that normative expectations and belief feedback can reduce ignorance. However, these effects are moderated by prior beliefs about transparency and social appropriateness, complicating efforts

to isolate the underlying psychological drivers—whether conformity, image concerns, or belief updating.

Social Context

Mol, Soraperra, and van der Weele [25] and Soraperra et al. [29] show that third-parties—whether through information provision or potential punishment—affect willful ignorance, even when exposure is uncertain or unverifiable. However, attempts to avoid information are not always deterred by the presence of third-party informers [26]. Bartling, Engl, and Weber [20] demonstrate that ignorance can still buffer against blame, highlighting how its utility may depend on how observers attribute responsibility. When and how the social context impacts willful ignorance and social outcomes remain ripe areas for future research.

Contextual Framing and Moral Cues

Moral and institutional framing can shape information avoidance when responsibility or consequences are made salient [41, 42, 43, 44]. While such cues can moderate willful ignorance, not all framings are effective: corruption labels [45] and empathic cues [46, 47] show no impact, suggesting that not all moral signals effectively reduce information avoidance. Furthermore, Robbett, Walsh, and Matthews [48] find that ignorance enables greater selfishness toward co-partisans, particularly among Republicans.

Cognitive Limitations

Not all ignorance is deliberate. Inattention, limited working memory, or myopic reasoning may explain a sizable portion of ignorance choices [24, 49, 50]. These factors are difficult to represent in standard economic models, leaving room for psychological approaches to provide insights.

4 Unexplained Variation

A final class of studies reveals substantial variation in willful ignorance across contexts, without a consistent set of explanatory moderators. Null effects are observed in Norwegian samples [51], in donation settings [52], and in trust-based environments [53, 54], suggesting that the use of moral wiggle room depends on social context and relational structure. Hua [39] finds that eliciting beliefs about others dramatically reduces ignorance, though the mechanism remains unclear. That study also reports that women were less responsive to norm cues under self-referential

framing, highlighting latent gender-framing interactions. Furthermore, researchers attempting to study willful ignorance have found in pilot studies that minor changes in the wording of elicitation prompts can have out-sized effects on information acquisition [26]. Together, these findings point to cultural, psychological, and institutional factors that remain poorly understood.

5 Looking Ahead

Although many moderators of willful ignorance have been identified, they often operate jointly. Norm sensitivity, social context, cognitive effort, and interface design may interact in ways that complicate clean attribution. The same setting might prompt motivated reasoning for some, and passive inattention for others. Identifying the conditions under which different channels operate is essential for advancing our understanding of willful ignorance. This can help clarify when it reflects motivated cognition, and when it arises from structural features or attentional limits—each with distinct implications for moral disengagement in real-world settings. While formal modeling has already yielded many insights, further progress will likely come from targeted psychological manipulations and factorial designs that disentangle these overlapping influences [55]. One approach of particular value would be to impose psychological manipulations of self-awareness or the feeling of social scrutiny to better identify the mechanism underlying the large default effects of [22].

The study of willful ignorance also reveals a more hopeful side of human behavior. People are not uniformly averse to information and often seek it out when it doesn't heighten moral obligation [17, 22, 35, 40, 56]. In some cases, willful ignorance appears to serve moral aims. Moradi [49] and Kandul and Ritov [57] show that some individuals avoid payoff information as a commitment device for prosocial action—a form of cooperating without looking [58]. Yet, such prosocial ignorance is rare and fragile, often vanishing with subtle shifts in framing or incentives. More research is needed to better understand the conditions under which this kind of ignorance is likely to arise and the mechanisms behind it.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

The authors used ChatGPT and the Writefull tool on Overleaf during preparation to revise the text for improved readability and flow. After using this service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

References and Recommended Reading

Papers of particular interest, published within the period of review, have been highlighted as:

* of special interest

** of outstanding interest

- [1] Andreoni, James. “Impure Altruism and Donations to Public Goods: A Theory of Warm-Glow Giving”. In: *The Economic Journal* 100.401 (1990), pages 464–477. ISSN: 00130133, 14680297. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2234133> (visited on 05/23/2025).
- [2] Fehr, Ernst and Schmidt, Klaus M. “A Theory of Fairness, Competition, and Cooperation”. In: *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 114.3 (1999), pages 817–868. ISSN: 00335533, 15314650. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2586885> (visited on 05/23/2025).
- [3] Charness, Gary and Rabin, Matthew. “Understanding Social Preferences with Simple Tests”. In: *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 117.3 (2002), pages 817–869. ISSN: 00335533, 15314650. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4132490> (visited on 05/23/2025).
- [4] Dana, Jason, Cain, Daylian M., and Dawes, Robyn M. “What you dont know wont hurt me: Costly (but quiet) exit in dictator games”. In: *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 100.2 (2006), pages 193–201.
- [5] Gneezy, Uri, Saccardo, Silvia, Serra-Garcia, Marta, and van Veldhuizen, Roel. “Bribing the Self”. In: *Games and Economic Behavior* 120 (2020), pages 311–324. ISSN: 0899-8256. DOI:

- <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geb.2019.12.010>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0899825619301939>.
- [6] Exley, Christine L. and Kessler, Judd B. “Motivated Errors”. In: *American Economic Review* 114.4 (Apr. 2024), pages 961–87. DOI: [10.1257/aer.20191849](https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20191849). URL: <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.20191849>.
**Carefully documents another manner in which people create situational excuses to justify selfish behavior. In this case it is by making self-serving mistakes in a broad variety of confusing decision environments.*
- [7] Golman, Russell, Hagmann, David, and Loewenstein, George. “Information Avoidance”. In: *Journal of Economic Literature* 55.1 (Mar. 2017), pages 96–135. DOI: [10.1257/jel.20151245](https://doi.org/10.1257/jel.20151245). URL: <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jel.20151245>.
- [8] Freddi, Eleonora. “Do People Avoid Morally Relevant Information? Evidence from the Refugee Crisis”. In: *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 103.4 (2021), pages 605–620. DOI: [10.1162/rest_a_00934](https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_00934). URL: https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_00934.
- [9] Knutsson, Mikael, Martinsson, Peter, and Wollbrant, Conny. “Do people avoid opportunities to donate?: A natural field experiment on recycling and charitable giving”. In: *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 93 (2013), pages 71–77. ISSN: 0167-2681. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2013.07.015>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167268113001819>.
- [10] D’Adda, Giovanna, Gao, Yu, Golman, Russell, and Tavoni, Massimo. *It’s So Hot in Here: Information Avoidance, Moral Wiggle Room, and High Air Conditioning Usage*. FEEM Working Paper 07.2018. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3149330>. Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM), Mar. 2018. DOI: [10.2139/ssrn.3149330](https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3149330). URL: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3149330>.
- [11] Epperson, Raphael and Gerster, Andreas. *Willful Ignorance and Moral Behavior*. Technical report. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3938994>. SSRN Working Paper, May 2024. DOI: [10.2139/ssrn.3938994](https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3938994). URL: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3938994>.

**Shows how willful ignorance impedes moral behavior in a field setting and highlights both the potential and the limitations of using information interventions to address willful ignorance.*

- [12] Droz, Bénédicte, Buechel, Berno, Capra, Mónica, Chen, Xi, Nassar, Anis, Park, Seong Gyu, Xu, Jin, Zhang, Shanshan, and Tasoff, Joshua. “Appetite for Ignorance: Does eating meat cause information avoidance about its harms?” In: *European Economic Review* 175 (2025), page 105013. ISSN: 0014-2921. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2025.105013>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0014292125000637>.

***Examines how meat-eating behavior is linked to avoidance of information about the social and ethical consequences of meat consumption. Finds mixed results and highlights how studies’ interpretations and conclusions can be sensitive to the details of the experimental design.*

- [13] Pace, Davide D., Imai, Taisuke, Schwardmann, Peter, and van der Weele, Joël J. “Uncertainty about carbon impact and the willingness to avoid CO2 emissions”. In: *Ecological Economics* 227 (2025), page 108401. ISSN: 0921-8009. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2024.108401>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0921800924002982>.

- [14] Dana, Jason, Weber, Roberto A., and Kuang, Xi Jason. “Exploiting moral wiggle room: experiments demonstrating an illusory preference for fairness”. In: *Economic Theory* 33.1 (2007), pages 67–80. ISSN: 09382259, 14320479. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27822583>.

- [15] Bénabou, Roland and Tirole, Jean. “Mindful Economics: The Production, Consumption, and Value of Beliefs”. In: *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30.3 (Sept. 2016), pages 141–64. DOI: [10.1257/jep.30.3.141](https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.30.3.141). URL: <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.30.3.141>.

- [16] Gino, Francesca, Norton, Michael I., and Weber, Roberto A. “Motivated Bayesians: Feeling Moral While Acting Egoistically”. In: *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30.3 (Sept. 2016), pages 189–212. DOI: [10.1257/jep.30.3.189](https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.30.3.189). URL: <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.30.3.189>.

- [17] Grossman, Zachary and Van der Weele, Joël J. “Self-image and willful ignorance in social decisions”. In: *Journal of the European Economic Association* 15.1 (Dec. 2017), pages 173–217. ISSN: 1542-4766. DOI: [10.1093/jeea/jvw001](https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvw001). eprint: <https://academic.oup.com/jeea/article-pdf/15/1/173/11079001/jvw001.pdf>. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvw001>.
- [18] Grossman, Zachary. “Self-signaling and social-signaling in giving”. In: *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 117 (2015), pages 26–39. ISSN: 0167-2681. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2015.05.008>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167268115001432>.
- [19] Vu, Linh, Soraperra, Ivan, Leib, Margarethe, Weele, Joel van der, and Shalvi, Shaul. “Ignorance by Choice: A Meta-Analytic Review of the Underlying Motives of Willful Ignorance and Its Consequences”. In: *Psychological Bulletin* 149.9-10 (2023), pages 611–635. DOI: [10.1037/bul0000398](https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000398). URL: <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000398>.
***The first meta analysis of willful ignorance. Carefully compile studies that examine willful ignorance, including many using the MWR game. Establishes that willful ignorance generally does reduce altruistic behavior and assesses the factors that contribute to this phenomenon.*
- [20] Bartling, Björn, Engl, Florian, and Weber, Roberto A. “Does willful ignorance deflect punishment? – An experimental study”. In: *European Economic Review* 70.C (2014), pages 512–524. DOI: [10.1016/j.eurocorev.2014.06.016](https://ideas.repec.org/a/eee/eecrev/v70y2014icp512-524.html). URL: <https://ideas.repec.org/a/eee/eecrev/v70y2014icp512-524.html>.
- [21] Feiler, Lauren. “Testing models of information avoidance with binary choice dictator games”. In: *Journal of Economic Psychology* 45 (2014), pages 253–267. ISSN: 0167-4870. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joep.2014.10.003>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167487014000804>.
- [22] Grossman, Zachary. “Strategic ignorance and the robustness of social preferences”. In: *Management Science* 60.11 (2014), pages 2659–2665. ISSN: 00251909, 15265501. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24550536>.

- [23] Larson, Tara and Capra, C. Monica. “Exploiting Moral Wiggle Room: Illusory Preference for Fairness? A Comment”. In: *Judgment and Decision Making* 4.6 (2009), pages 467–474. DOI: [10.1017/S1930297500004009](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1930297500004009).
- [24] Exley, Christine L. and Kessler, Judd B. “Information Avoidance and Image Concerns”. In: *The Economic Journal* 133.656 (Aug. 2023), pages 3153–3168. ISSN: 0013-0133. DOI: [10.1093/ej/uead058](https://doi.org/10.1093/ej/uead058). eprint: <https://academic.oup.com/ej/article-pdf/133/656/3153/51918010/uead058.pdf>. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ej/uead058>.
***Carefully examines the reasons why people avoid information by creating a control condition that eliminates the role of image concerns while otherwise keeping the decision environment constant. Finds that image concerns explain some information avoidance, but other factors such as inattention play a large role as well.*
- [25] Mol, Jantsje M., Soraperra, Ivan, and van der Weele, Joël J. “Spoiling the party: Experimental evidence on the willingness to transmit inconvenient ethical information”. In: *Experimental Economics* (2025), pages 1–19. DOI: [10.1017/eec.2025.6](https://doi.org/10.1017/eec.2025.6).
**Examines not just the demand for information, but also the supply of information from third parties. Finds that some third parties conform to dictators’ desires to avoid information, but most provide information according to their own preference.*
- [26] Grossman, Zachary, Hua, Tony, Lind, Jo Thori, and Nyborg, Karine. *Unwillingly informed: The prosocial impact of third-party informers*. Memorandum 02/2025. Oslo: University of Oslo, Department of Economics, 2025. URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/10419/311738>.
- [27] Jarke-Neuert, Johannes and Lohse, Johannes. “I’m in a Hurry, I Don’t Want to Know! Strategic Ignorance Under Time Pressure”. In: *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* (2020). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3699289> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3699289>. (Visited on 05/27/2025).
- [28] Cain, Daylian and Dana, Jason. “Paying People to Look at the Consequences of Their Actions”. Working paper. 2012. URL: <https://faculty.som.yale.edu/jasondana/papers/PayingPeopleToLook.pdf>.
- [29] Soraperra, Ivan, Van der Weele, Joël J., Villeval, Marie Claire, and Shalvi, Shaul. “The Social Construction of Ignorance: Experimental Evidence”. In: *Games and Economic Be-*

havior 138 (2023), pages 197–213. ISSN: 0899-8256. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geb.2022.12.002>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0899825622001737>.

**Constructs a competitive market in which advisers equipped with ethically relevant information offer their services to decision makers faced with an allocation choice. Finds that information-averse decision makers seek advisers that suppress information, so the presence of potential informers does not substantially affect ignorance and generosity levels in a competitive environment*

[30] Van der Weele, Joël J. “Inconvenient Truths: Determinants of Strategic Ignorance in Moral Dilemmas”. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2247288>. Apr. 2014. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2247288>.

[31] Molho, Catherine, Soraperra, Ivan, Schultz, Jonathan, and Shalvi, Shaul. “Guilt- and Shame-Driven Prosociality Across Societies”. In: *Nature Human Behavior* (2025).

***Reports results of a large-scale cross-cultural study of social behavior. Examines how different societies rely on internalized norms versus external social pressure to support prosocial behavior. Establishes that willful ignorance is not confined to any one region or sample but finds no effects from external shaming.*

[32] Kenny, David A. and Judd, Charles M. “The unappreciated heterogeneity of effect sizes: Implications for power, precision, planning of research, and replication”. In: *Psychological Methods* 24.5 (Oct. 2019). Epub 2019 Feb 11, pages 578–589. DOI: [10.1037/met0000209](https://doi.org/10.1037/met0000209).

[33] Brody, Ilana, Dai, Hengchen, Saccardo, Silvia, Milkman, Katherine, Duckworth, Angela L, Patel, Mitesh, and Gromet, Dena. *Targeting Behavioral Interventions Based on Past Behavior: Evidence from Vaccine Uptake*. Feb. 2023. DOI: [10.31234/osf.io/ywzja](https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/ywzja). URL: osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/ywzja_v1.

[34] Saccardo, Silvia, Li, Charis X., Samek, Anya, and Gneezy, Ayelet. “Nudging generosity in consumer elective pricing”. In: *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 163 (2021). Nudges and Choice Architecture in Organizations, pages 91–104. ISSN: 0749-5978. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2020.01.009>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0749597818306538>.

- [35] Gately, J. Braxton. “At Least I Tried: Partial Willful Ignorance, Information Acquisition, and Social Preferences”. In: *Review of Behavioral Economics* 10.3 (2023), pages 163–187. ISSN: 2326-6198. DOI: [10.1561/105.00000167](https://doi.org/10.1561/105.00000167). URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1561/105.00000167>.
- [36] Samuelson, William and Zeckhauser, Richard. “Status quo bias in decision making”. In: *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty* 1.1 (Mar. 1988), pages 7–59. ISSN: 1573-0476. DOI: [10.1007/BF00055564](https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00055564). URL: <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00055564>.
- [37] Moyal, Adiel and Schurr, Amos. “The effect of deliberate ignorance and choice procedure on pro-environmental decisions”. In: *Ecological Economics* 200 (2022), page 107512. ISSN: 0921-8009. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2022.107512>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0921800922001744>.
- [38] Hsee, Christopher K, Loewenstein, George F, Blount, Sally, and Bazerman, Max H. “Preference reversals between joint and separate evaluations of options: A review and theoretical analysis.” In: *Psychological bulletin* 125.5 (1999), page 576.
- [39] Hua, Tony. *I didn't know either: how beliefs about norms shape strategic ignorance*. MPRA Paper. University Library of Munich, Germany, 2025. URL: <https://EconPapers.repec.org/RePEc:pra:mprapa:124363>.
- [40] Spiekermann, Kai and Weiss, Arne. “Objective and subjective compliance: A norm-based explanation of ‘moral wiggle room’”. In: *Games and Economic Behavior* 96 (2016), pages 170–183. ISSN: 0899-8256. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geb.2015.11.007>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0899825615001554>.
- [41] Momsen, Katharina and Ohndorf, Markus. “When do people exploit moral wiggle room? An experimental analysis of information avoidance in a market setup”. In: *Ecological Economics* 169 (2020), page 106479. ISSN: 0921-8009. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2019.106479>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0921800919303738>.

- [42] Momsen, Katharina and Ohndorf, Markus. “Information avoidance, selective exposure, and fake (?) news: Theory and experimental evidence on green consumption”. In: *Journal of Economic Psychology* 88 (2022), page 102457. ISSN: 0167-4870. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joep.2021.102457>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167487021000878>.
- [43] Momsen, Katharina and Ohndorf, Markus. “Expressive voting versus information avoidance: experimental evidence in the context of climate change mitigation”. In: *Public Choice* 194 (2023), pages 45–74. DOI: [10.1007/s11127-022-01016-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-022-01016-x).
- [44] Momsen, Katharina and Ohndorf, Markus. “Information avoidance: Self-image concerns, inattention, and ideology”. In: *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 211 (2023), pages 386–400. ISSN: 0167-2681. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2023.04.032>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167268123001427>.
**Argues that inattention alone cannot explain willful ignorance. Correlates self-serving versus prosocial information avoidance with political attitudes.*
- [45] Balafoutas, Loukas, Sandakov, Andrei, and Zhuravleva, Tatiana. “No Moral Wiggle Room in an Experimental Corruption Game”. In: *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021), page 701294. DOI: [10.3389/fpsyg.2021.701294](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.701294).
- [46] Vu, Linh, Molho, Catherine, Soraperra, Ivan, Fiedler, Susann, and Shalvi, Shaul. “Giving (in) to help an identified person”. In: *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 110 (2024), page 104557. ISSN: 0022-1031. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2023.104557>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022103123001142>.
- [47] Yamamoto, Takuya and Hashimoto, Hidehiko. “Seemingly Altruistic Behavior and Strategic Ignorance in a Dictator Game with Potential Loss”. In: *Frontiers in Psychology* 15 (2025). DOI: [10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1473500](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1473500). URL: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1473500>.
- [48] Robbett, Andrea, Walsh, Randall, and Matthews, Peter Hans. “Moral Wiggle Room and Group Favoritism Among Political Partisans”. In: *Journal of Public Economics* 230 (2024),

- page 104065. DOI: [10.1016/j.jpubeco.2024.104065](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2024.104065). URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2024.104065>.
- [49] Moradi, Homayoon. *Selfless Ignorance: Too Good to Be True*. Discussion Paper. WZB Discussion Paper. WZB Berlin Social Science Center, 2018. URL: <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/183553>.
- [50] Moradi, Homayoon and Nesterov, Alexander. *Moral Wiggle Room Reverted: Information Avoidance is Myopic*. Research Paper WP BRP 189/EC/2018. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3168630>. Higher School of Economics, Dec. 2018. DOI: [10.2139/ssrn.3168630](https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3168630). URL: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3168630>.
- [51] Lind, Jo Thori, Nyborg, Karine, and Pauls, Anna. “Save the planet or close your eyes? Testing strategic ignorance in a charity context”. In: *Ecological Economics* 161 (2019), pages 9–19. ISSN: 0921-8009. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2019.02.010>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0921800918312667>.
- [52] She, Yuting and Sanfey, Alan G. “An Experimental Study of Information Transparency and Social Preferences on Donation Behaviors: The Self-Signaling Model”. In: *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (2023), page 1258808. DOI: [10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1258808](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1258808). URL: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1258808>.
- [53] Van der Weele, Joël J., Kulisa, Julija, Kosfeld, Michael, and Friebe, Guido. “Resisting moral wiggle room: how robust is reciprocal behavior?” In: *American Economic Journal: Microeconomics* 6.3 (Aug. 2014), pages 256–264. DOI: [10.1257/mic.6.3.256](https://doi.org/10.1257/mic.6.3.256). URL: <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/mic.6.3.256>.
- [54] Friedrichsen, Jana, Momsen, Katharina, and Piasenti, Stefano. “Ignorance, intention and stochastic outcomes”. In: *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics* 100 (2022), page 101913. ISSN: 2214-8043. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socec.2022.101913>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214804322000878>.
- [55] Dana, Jason and Weele, Joël J. van der. “Willful Ignorance: A Perspective from Economics”. Unpublished working paper. May 2025.

- [56] Chen, Yuyu and Zhong, Songfa. “People Are More Moral in Uncertain Environments”. In: *Econometrica* 93.2 (2025), pages 439–462. DOI: [10.3982/ECTA20574](https://doi.org/10.3982/ECTA20574). URL: <https://doi.org/10.3982/ECTA20574>.
- [57] Kandul, Serhiy and Ritov, Ilana. “Close your eyes and be nice: Deliberate ignorance behind pro-social choices”. In: *Economics Letters* 153 (2017), pages 54–56. ISSN: 0165-1765. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2017.02.010>. URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165176517300551>.
- [58] Hoffman, Moshe, Yoeli, Erez, and Nowak, Martin A. “Cooperate without looking: Why we care what people think and not just what they do”. In: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112.6 (2015), pages 1727–1732. DOI: [10.1073/pnas.1417904112](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1417904112). eprint: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/pdf/10.1073/pnas.1417904112>. URL: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/abs/10.1073/pnas.1417904112>.