

Question 1

A.

i. What is the definition Oscar gives for "ethics" during the training session, and what does he argue is specifically not ethics? What is Andy's "ethics bomb"?

Oscar says that "Ethics is a real discussion of competing conceptions of the good", arguing that what is being discussed (stealing others' pens/pencils at the office) isn't ethics but instead just "The corporate anti-shoplifting rule". Andy's ethics bomb is "Would you steal bread to feed your family?"

ii. How would you say Oscar's viewpoint relates to the following analysis by philosopher Deni Elliott: "The people who inhabit case studies are the scientists who fabricate data. Other cases focus on engineers and managers who decide that the number of lawsuits that will result from avoidable fatal car crashes costs the company less than replacing a problematic part or issuing a recall... As long as case studies are morality tales that end with the recognition of the villains, their evil motives, and their harmful actions, there is little to recommend the study of practical ethics, except perhaps as a remedial course for the bad guys. Practical ethics education needs to change its focus from fraud and fabrication to fluency and facilitation. The most interesting ethical problems occur when good people are trying hard to do the right thing."

Oscar's claim that discussions around behaviors like stealing office supplies are not actually ethics implies that ethics is more about emphasizing what it means to be good, instead of how compliant one is with societal norms. Elliott expands on Oscar's view, proposing that ethics should concern not only the wrongdoers, but also with people contending with grey areas of the world. She argues that, without focusing on real ethical questions like how good people navigate hard/tough situations, ethics has little to no meaning. Her push for practical ethics education aligns with Oscar's view, calling out surface level and borderline meaningless 'ethical' questions like the one posed about stealing office supplies.

B.

i. Does Holly follow a consequentialist or deontological approach in dealing with Meredith's ethical issue? Explain your reasoning.

Meredith's ethical issue is that she has been sleeping with a company rep (named Bruce) for the past 6 six years in exchange for discounts on supplies and for outback steakhouse gift certificates. Holly responds by saying that it is a serious issue, being both a conflict of interest

and an exchange of goods. Holly takes a deontological approach to this issue, as she is more concerned with the actions themselves than the outcome of said actions. If she were to take the consequentialist approach, then she would not be as appalled as the consequences of Meredith's actions result in both discounts on supplies (cheaper for the office) and steak certificates (cheaper, good food). Holly's deontological approach is why she is so upset, as a deontologist would be more concerned with the right vs. wrong concerning the action itself.

ii. Did Kendall follow a consequentialist or deontological approach in resolving Meredith's ethical issue (Kendall was on a phone call)? Explain your reasoning.

Kendall said that Meredith's actions don't seem to require any action and are a grey area. This is because the company is getting a discount as a result which is nice as the company is going through a rough patch. This is the clear consequentialist approach, examining the consequences of the actions rather than the actions themselves. He supports the actions due to the positive consequences/effect it has on the company, even if the actions themselves are questionable.

iii. Do Phyllis and Stanley follow a consequentialist or deontological approach in addressing Meredith's ethical issue (near end of show)? Explain your reasoning.

They both take the stance that they don't care where the steak is coming from just that it's there. This is the same as Kendall, where they are both taking the consequentialist approach. This is because they are caring more about the consequences (free steak) than they are how it is getting there. Stanley and Phyllis both agree that "they don't care where it's coming from... just keep it coming".

C.

What were the students' ideas about Andy's "ethics bomb"?

The two male students being interviewed both agree that it is wrong. One of their arguments is that the benefits of stealing do not outweigh the wrongdoing of stealing/violating someone's well-established 'property rights'. The woman being interviewed says that she is okay with it (even from a libertarian standpoint). She says that it's okay to take from those who have a lot in order to benefit those who have very little/nothing at all.

Question 2

A.

i. In the first iteration of the "real-life" trolley car experiment, what decision did Chidi make? What decision would you have made?

If the first iteration refers to the very first time he rode the trolley, Chidi killed 5 people instead of 1. I would not have done this as I place an inherent value in a human life and $1 < 5$. If the first iteration is when Michael says 'lets try this again', Chidi now has enough time to make a choice, deciding to kill only one person. This is what I would do as well, as I place more value in 5 peoples lives than 1. Even though I must make the effort to switch tracks, I would still make this choice as I wouldn't be able to pretend to be ignorant of the choice to switch the direction of the car.

ii. In the second iteration of the "real life" trolley car experiment, there was a different scenario. What would you make in this scenario, and why would it be the same or different than the choice in part i.

What is referred to as the first and second iteration is unclear. If the second iteration refers to having the one person be your best friend, I would not pull the lever as I would place more value in someone I've known all my life than three strangers. I wouldn't be able to contend with my actions if I deliberately killed my best friend to save 5 random people. If the scenario is instead what Michael refers to as "the 7th iteration", then Chidi chose to kill 5 William Shakespeares instead of one Santa Clause. I would kill the one Santa clause, as neither of the groups presented here have any more value to me than the other, so I would revert to my answer in A.

iii. In the "real life" conflicted doctor experiment, does Chidi make the consequentialist or deontological choice (and how do you know this)? What is the extra factor added to this experiment that made Chidi feel somewhat badly about his choice?

Chidi makes the deontological choice to not kill his healthy patient to save 5 dying people. This is deontological because he makes his decision based on the action itself, going back to his hippocratic oath as a doctor. The consequentialist approach would be to kill the person to save the 5, as this results in the best consequences, but Chidi values the moral code/oath he accepted which is a sign of deontology. The twist is that Chidi now must now tell the families about what choice he made, with one of them being someone Chidi ran over in the trolley. This man's daughter says that the person driving the trolley was a really bad man, making Chidi feel bad about his choice.

B.

i. What was the goal of the research study? Describe the experiment. What did the control group do?

The goal of this study was to determine whether subjects' hypothetical moral judgements are predictive of the actual behavior that they would display in the same real-life situation. A first group of students completed a real life version of the mouse dilemma, while a second group completed a hypothetical version of the same dilemma. This second group was the reference/control group. The mouse dilemma is similar to the trolley problem, where a group of 5 mice will be struck by a very painful but nonlethal shock at the end of a timer, but the subject can divert this shock to a cage containing one mouse to receive that same shock.

ii. What was their result about consequential vs deontological decisions in real life vs. hypotheticals? Give your answer quantitatively, along with the statistical significance (the statistical significance is given by the p value; it is usually taken to be that $p < 0.1$ means a result is statistically significant, and the smaller the p is the stronger the statistical significance).

The researchers concluded that participants were more than twice as likely to make a deontological decision when faced with a hypothetical situation (34% of decisions were deontological) than they were when presented with a real-life version (16% of decisions were deontological). The reported p -value was $p=0.017$, which is statistically significant.

iii. Before the experiment, all subjects completed a questionnaire that assessed whether they were "consequentialist-inclined" or "deontological-inclined". In the actual experiment, who acted more quickly and seemed more sure of themselves, the "consequentialist-inclined" or "deontological-inclined" subjects? What are the relevant p values?

They found that those that were "consequentialist-inclined" made their decision significantly quicker ($p=0.015$) when compared to others. These people were also found to have less self-doubt when it came to their decision, showing more conviction in their choice ($p=0.001$). They also found that those who are "deontological-inclined" had reasoning unrelated to reaction time ($p=0.341$). These people were found to have more self-doubt, showing a slight trend that they're less confident, even though the p -value does not indicate as much significance ($p=0.98$).

Question 3

A.

i. Consider the main idea from the article by Langdon Winner "Do Artifacts Have Politics?", which was discussed in lecture. How do the ideas from the Winner article relate to the central story in this episode? I.e., what is the "artifact" and what is the "politics"?

The artifacts in this case are the new “state-of-the-art” motion sensors that detect light reflecting off the skin. The politics of said object are the inherent racism they carry which prevents them from seeing black people. The company who produces them says it's the opposite of racist as it isn't targeting black people. They also praise their product for seeing “Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Jews”. This specific targeting of a group by technology (or any artifact) connects to the article by bringing the question, is it the products fault or the designers.?

ii. In lecture, it was discussed that ethical issues can be considered to have factual, conceptual and moral components. In this episode, Ted and Veronica differ on a conceptual component, specifically about whether a certain circumstance is "racist". How do Ted and Veronica each interpret whether the circumstance is "racist".

The issue is regarding the new sensors that turn on based on skin reflectiveness which Veronica knows doesn't see black people. Veronica says that it's just weird, while Ted says that it's racist. Veronica takes the stance of the company saying that it's not racist because it's not targeting black people but instead just ignoring them. She says the worst people can call it is indifferent. Ted ultimately says it is racist because it is ignoring black people, while Veronica says it cannot be because it isn't targeting black people. She uses this fact as a shield, highlighting societal issues that have specifically targeted black people in the past. Ted is emphasizing the factual component of the technology, while Veronica emphasizes the conceptual component. As discussed in lecture, it is difficult to get the conceptual component right if the factual component is false.

iii. The issue is ultimately resolved by Veridian's board of directors. Do they use a consequentialist or deontological approach in deciding how the company will deal with the issue? Explain your answer.

Veridian places a drinking fountain next to the new one that says “for blacks” underneath it. This was complained about, so then the company decided to have white people to follow around all of the black employees to have things work for them. This is a consequential solution, as they want to result in the best consequence which is allowing everyone to use the drinking fountains. They do not care about the action itself, which is inherently racist and follows patterns of racial segregation. Their second solution follows the idea of a ‘white savior’, where there is a white person going around with all the black people to make doing their job possible. The

deontological approach would be to fix the problem itself, without segregating the office. At the end of the episode, they revert to the old system. They do this not because of the morality of the old system, but instead because of the financial outcome if they were to stay with the new system. This still highlights the consequential approach, focusing on the consequences of the action rather than the ethics of the actions themselves.

B.

i. Read the American Lung Association webpage on pulse oximeters. What does a pulse oximeter measure, what is a "good value" for the saturation number, and how long does it take to get a measurement?

A pulse oximeter gathers information about the oxygen saturation level in your body without needing to use a needle or take a blood sample. When working correctly, this measurement takes place over just a few seconds. The saturation number is considered good if it is between 90 and 92%.

ii. Read Racial bias in pulse oximetry measurement. Note that "occult hypoxemia" basically means "the pulse oximeter is saying the saturation number is okay when really it isn't". What is the finding of this article, and what is the scientific evidence in support of this?

They found that 11.7% of the black patients from the University of Michigan study had reported occult hypoxemia, while only 3.6% of the white patients from the University of Michigan study reported this issue. In the Multicenter group, 17.0% of the black patients and 6.2% of the white patients exhibited occult hypoxemia. They ultimately found that across the two large cohorts, black patients had nearly 3 times the frequency of occult hypoxemia than white patients.

C.

Read the abstract and Introduction (including the footnote) of Novel Electrodes for Reliable EEG Recordings on Coarse and Curly Hair.

i. Where is the problem that the article is addressing, and how did the authors say they discovered the problem? How does this lead to accidentally-biased scientific studies?

They are addressing the issue that EEG machines are not as effective on people with coarse and curly hair, specifically those of African descent. The authors say they discover the problem with the help of EEG technicians, neurologists, and their own 'extensive experience' on recording individuals with coarse and curly hair. They cite the current paper as well as two previous works of theirs. Due to the difficulty of performing EEG studies on curly and coarse hair due to its tendency to push up against the cap, bad data (too noisy) was recorded in the study and that data

had to be thrown out. The throwing out of this data during preprocessing resulted in inherently biased data and as a result leads to a biased study.

ii. What is this solution to this problem put forth by the authors (you just need to get your answer from the abstract; note that higher impedance leads to worse data)?

The authors state that they can combine braiding the patients hair into cornrows with novel electrodes that better harness this braided hair to fix the problem. They claim that these two solutions in conjunction lower impedance by up to 10x, resulting in better data for patients, less uncomfortable visits, and fewer misdiagnoses.

D.

In 100 words, describe whether or not you think the issues with the technologies in parts B and C support Langdon Winner's main idea in the article "Do Artifacts Have Politics?"

The artifact's in Winner's article are political due to their intended function being designed in such a way to be discriminatory. I do not think that the topics discussed in parts B and C align with this main idea as the intended use of the pulse oximeter and EEG machine is not to impede on the treatment of black individuals. While there could be some underlying motive behind the products' original inventors, I think the 'racism' is just an unintentional consequence of the device's function. If the companies manufacturing and designing them knew of the issue and deliberately chose to not address it, then they would be political.