National High School Ethics Bowl
Regional Cases 2018-2019

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1. Company Woman

Ravi and Amaia work as data analysts for a large tech company. Although the two met at work, they've since become close friends and frequently spend time together outside of the workplace. Recently their work trajectories have diverged: Amaia is quite good at her job and has moved up the corporate ladder quickly, while Ravi finds his work unsatisfying and tedious. In addition, it's become clear that their boss, Ed, clearly prefers Amaia. Ed consistently selects her for high prestige projects while leaving Ravi to do essential but menial work. Worst of all, as different people in the department have left the company, Ravi has had to pick up their work without getting a raise—he is currently the only one doing a job that used to be handled by three people. Both Amaia and Ravi find this to be unfair.

Given his dissatisfaction with the job, Ravi has decided to quit and go back to school. He has been accepted to a great program and will start in a few months. In the meantime, however, he has decided that if he's going to have a few more months at a job he hates, he's going to ask for a raise. As he reasons, he's in a good position to do so. On the one hand, if he doesn't get the raise, he doesn't have anything to lose since he already plans to leave—any tension between him and Ed that might arise from asking for more pay will only last a short time. On the other hand, if he does get the raise, the extra money he'll receive will help him greatly in starting his new life and will cost the company very little since they would only pay him at an increased rate for a short time. Besides, Ravi feels that the money he'd be receiving is money that he deserves for being made to do the work of others without getting a raise.

After reasoning in this way, Ravi tells Amaia of his plan and asks her not to tell Ed that he's going back to school. After all, if Ed knows that Ravi is planning on leaving the company, he won't feel compelled to give him a raise, and will immediately begin looking for a replacement—all of Ravi's leverage will be gone. Amaia agrees not to bring it up with Ed but tells Ravi that she feels uncomfortable lying for him or purposefully hiding information that would be relevant for Ed to make the best decision for the company as a whole; she will tell the truth if Ed asks her directly whether she knows anything that would help him make his decision.

A few days later Ravi puts his plan into action and asks Ed for a raise. The two don't come to an immediate agreement. It's obvious that Ed doesn't want to give Ravi the raise. Ed calls Amaia into his office and asks whether she has any pertinent information regarding Ravi's request for a raise. In response, Amaia tells Ed that she thinks Ravi deserves to make more money for the additional responsibilities that he has been given, but also that he is planning to go back to school in a few months. Consequently, Ravi doesn't get a raise and spends his remaining time at the company doing the same work at the same pay. Ravi and Amaia's friendship also suffers since Ravi feels betrayed and considers Amaia's commitment to telling the truth as a sign of her loyalty to the company over their friendship.

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. Has Ravi acted unethically? Why or why not?
2. Was Amaia right to tell Ed of Ravi's decision to go back to school? Why or why not?
3. In general terms, what does it mean to be loyal to someone or something? To what extent is loyalty morally valuable?

2. Private Money in Academia

Universities are increasingly accepting private money to fund academic centers, programs, and faculty. Often, this money comes from sources that have clear political agendas. For example, the Charles Koch Foundation has donated money to George Mason University and several of its affiliated centers, including the Mercatus Center and the Institute for Humane Studies, both of which promote market-based and classical liberal ideas.[1] Similarly, Michael Bloomberg has donated to the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research, which produces research on the public health effects of widespread gun availability that is then used for gun policy advocacy purposes.[2] In light of these developments, academics have begun debating the moral permissibility of accepting private money from sources such as these.

Critics claim that money from these sources introduces political agendas into academic research, which should be carried out in a free and unbiased way. Similarly, critics worry that, even when these donors get no official say over faculty hires, their political goals inevitably influence who is hired because the continued availability of the funds may depend on donor approval. Apart from hiring decisions, this process threatens to give powerful, politically-motivated individuals or groups additional power, by influencing which topics academics explore in their research and teaching, and, ultimately, which ideas are made more visible to policymakers and the broader public. Finally, critics worry that, at least in the case of public universities, legislators would feel less incentive to continue funding public universities at high levels as more and more private money becomes available to them.

Proponents of private funding in academia argue that as long as the supported research and teaching meet the standards of acceptable scholarship, it doesn't matter how it is funded. Some funding clearly has biased hiring, research, or teaching, but by no means all; and when the unacceptable influence is absent the funding often plays a crucial role in making intellectually and academically valuable programs possible. As long as the supported programs actively meet high standards of academic quality and intellectual freedom, and as long as worries about unacceptable influence are carefully addressed, seeking and accepting such support is morally permissible and may well be morally important. Private money might make possible important research and teaching that otherwise would not happen (or would happen much less than would be good). Finally, proponents note that academics, university administrators, and, for public colleges and universities, state legislators, like everyone else, have their own political views that can influence hiring, research, teaching, etc., so private donors are hardly the first or only sources of possible partisanship.

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. To what extent is it appropriate or inappropriate for private donors to have an influence over faculty hires, assuming that the faculty meet the relevant academic standards?
2. Is there any morally significant difference between ideologically-driven private funding for empirically-based research (such as in the sciences and social sciences) and non-empirically-based research (such as in the humanities)?
3. What value, if any, is there in political diversity in academia? How, if at all, should universities promote this type of diversity?

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[1] http://polluterwatch.org/charles-koch-university-funding-database
[2] https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/aug/26/george-soros-tom-steyer-michael-bloomberg-koch-bro/

3. Liver Allocation

  In the United States, organ transplants, including liver transplants, are coordinated by a non-profit called the United Network for Organ Sharing. Given that donated organs have a limited time frame for their viability, the U.S. is divided into 11 geographic areas for liver-donation purposes.[1] Within these regions, patients receive donated livers in order of need. However, there is a wide disparity in donated livers across these 11 regions. For example, in Region 9, which includes New York, 327 livers were donated in 2016, whereas in Region 3, which includes the Deep South and Puerto Rico, 1336 livers were donated. This disparity is due to many factors, including prevalent causes of death; some causes of death, like heart attack, usually leave livers intact, whereas others, like liver disease, do not. In Region 3, for instance, strokes are a frequent cause of death, leading to many more viable livers for donation.[2]

  A new policy change will work to mitigate this geographic disparity. Regardless of membership in a transplant Region, someone in need will be eligible for any livers that become available within 150 nautical miles of the hospital where the transplant would occur. Approved by the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, this policy "will make more livers available in some places—including cities such as New York and Chicago—where the shortage is more severe than it is in regions such as the southeastern United States."[3] Many view this change as an acceptable improvement in addressing disparities, but not totally satisfying—partly because this would not entirely eliminate those disparities, but also because it does not address one of its key causes, which is the difference in rates of organ donation in different communities.

  Additionally, these changes will leave in place another feature of the current system which has received some criticism: it will still be possible for people to join multiple regional liver registries if they can afford it. Such people need to be able to pay for travel and accommodations in the new Region, in addition to covering the costs of a second testing. These patients also need to be able to cover the cost of returning to this Region should a liver become available for them. This clearly is prohibitively expensive for many. However, those who support maintaining the possibility of patients joining multiple registries emphasize the autonomy of patients: "When it's come up for a vote, patient advocacy groups have argued that while things like test results and blood types are out of the patients' control, determining whether to obtain a second listing and where to do it allows the patient to be proactive."[4]

  Despite the change to regional allocation, discussion continues about how to make liver transplants—and organ transplants in general—more equitably accessible to those who need them. In 2016 more than 7,000 candidates died while on an organ transplant wait list, or within 30 days of leaving the list for personal or medical reasons, without receiving an organ transplant.[5]

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. Is it fair to distribute organs by geographic availability?
2. What should we use as the primary criteria for determining how to distribute livers and other vital organs?
3. Should joining multiple regional registries for liver transplants be allowed?

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[1] https://optn.transplant.hrsa.gov/learn/about-transplantation/how-organ-allocation-works/
[2] https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/liver-transplant-distribution-changed-after-years-of-debate/2017/12/04/fedefc0e-d92c-11e7-b859-fb0995360725_story.html?utm_term=.f88be9266d31
[3] https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/09/26/549224583/searching-for-a-fairer-way-to-distribute-donor-livers
[4] https://news.vice.com/article/good-luck-getting-an-organ-transplant-if-youre-poor-in-america
[5] https://unos.org/data/

4. China's Social Credit System

On June 14, 2014, China's State Council announced a plan to establish a social credit system, which would assign "social credit scores" to citizens based on their behavior.[1] A citizen's social credit score goes up based on socially desirable actions, like paying taxes or purchasing Chinese products; it declines if a person engages in behaviors that the State Council deems dishonest or otherwise problematic, such as committing crimes or making negative statements about the government. Access to social benefits, like receiving a home loan or travelling on an airplane, would be partly determined by one's social credit score. With this social credit system, the Chinese government aims to create a more honest and harmonious society.

The Chinese State Council postulates that if citizens are rewarded for good behavior and punished for bad behavior, then people will want to act better. Citizens in China are already seeing the positive effects of this system. As one Chinese citizen explained, "I feel like in the past six months, people's behavior has gotten better and better . . . For example, when we drive, now we always stop in front of crosswalks. If you don't stop, you will lose your points. At first, we just worried about losing points, but now we got used to it."[2] When there are negative consequences, people may think twice about engaging in bad or illegal activities. Over time, when citizens of a society are following laws and acting honestly, the society as a whole becomes just, fair, and peaceful.[3]

Critics, however, regard it as an invasion of privacy and personal freedom. One concern is that the ability for the government to assign these ratings is dependent on China's increasingly dense network of surveillance cameras and the advancement of artificial intelligence technology.[4] Additionally, some critics argue that the system has flaws and may be subject to error or even abuse by the government. For example, the social credit score of Liu Hu, a Chinese journalist, placed him on the untrustworthy list, and as a result, he was prohibited from flying, buying a home, and sending his child to private school. His low score was due to a series of tweets that the government did not approve of. According to Liu, "You feel you're being controlled by the list all the time."[5] Critics on the international stage worry that policies like China's will spread. For example, Tyler Grant has argued that "[t]he free world is not far behind if we don't protect privacy, deny our policymakers' desire to expand the reach of government, and resist the urge to commercially or socially punish those who don't share our political ideology. Privacy and liberty are never more than one generation away from extinction."[6] Finally, some people might be concerned that by generating external incentives to engage in pro-social behaviors, programs like this actually undermine intrinsic moral motivation, making people less likely to do the right thing for the right reason.

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. What are the moral advantages and disadvantages of a social credit system like China's?
2. To what extent is China's social credit system a framework for moral behavior?
3. How can a community balance its interest in encouraging its members to engage in socially desirable behaviors with community members' interests in individual privacy and liberty?

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[1] https://chinacopyrightandmedia.wordpress.com/2014/06/14/planning-outline-for-the-construction-of-a-social-credit-system-2014-2020/
[2] http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/03/life-inside-chinas-social-credit-laboratory/
[3] https://chinacopyrightandmedia.wordpress.com/2014/06/14/planning-outline-for-the-construction-of-a-social-credit-system-2014-2020/
[4] https://www.cbsnews.com/amp/news/china-social-credit-system-surveillance-cameras/
[5] https://www.cbsnews.com/amp/news/china-social-credit-system-surveillance-cameras/
[6] http://thehill.com/opinion/technology/386524-the-west-could-be-closer-to-chinas-system-of-social-credit-scoring-than

5. Dear Diary

Genevieve remembers when her sister Nico first got together with Tomas, one of Genevieve's best friends. It was a little strange at first, but it was also pretty great. Genevieve was gratified to see two of her favorite people so happy together, and she got to spend even more time with them now that they were a couple. Still, in addition to enjoying them as a couple, Genevieve maintained strong, independent relationships with them both. Nico and Tomas built a life together that Genevieve admired and hoped to find for herself one day, and she treasured her friendships with each of them.

One weekend, when Genevieve was house-sitting for Nico and Tomas, she noticed a notebook in an open drawer in Nico's desk. She couldn't resist pulling it out and opening to a random page, though she could tell it was a diary. She was shaken when a quick glance revealed writing by Nico about her strong attraction to one of her co-workers. Nico expressed regret and shame, but also acknowledged that she was genuinely drawn to this colleague, and she described her struggle to figure out what to do about it. Genevieve slammed the diary shut and returned it to the open drawer. She was aghast, but she also felt extremely guilty. She was overwhelmed by mixed emotions.

She wondered why she didn't notice anything different in Nico's behavior. She was also hurt that Nico didn't think of her as a trustworthy confidante about something so serious—despite the ways their lives intertwined, Nico had always trusted Genevieve in the past. At the same time, she was angry on behalf of Tomas. Did he have any idea what was going on? Tomas would be devastated. How could Nico feel this way?

Finally, Genevieve continued to feel guilty. She should never have opened the diary. Nico deserved her privacy. Maybe this was a fleeting moment in time and things had changed, maybe Nico didn't *really* feel that way… Genevieve was heartbroken and confused. She wondered to herself if there was anything she could do that would make her feel better about this situation. How should she face the pair when they returned?

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. What should Genevieve do? Would it matter if Genevieve had noticed the date of the entry was the day before? A month earlier? A year earlier?
2. Is reading someone's diary without their knowledge morally wrong? Why or why not?
3. How, if at all, should this diary entry affect what Genevieve thinks about Nico or her character?

6. Fake Followers

Think of some of the athletes, musicians, actors, political figures, or businesses you most admire. Chances are, at least some of them have paid companies to generate followers, "likes," and comments for their social media accounts. So claims Dan Leal, who, in a recent *New York Times* exposé on "follower factories," readily admitted to having purchased over 150,000 followers for his Twitter account, @PornoDan, from Devumi, one of the many companies that sells social media followers in bulk. Leal bragged that his investment in fake followers had more than paid for itself, and that he was confident that he would not be penalized by Twitter, despite the fact that buying followers is against Twitter's terms of service. Why? "Countless public figures, companies, music acts, etc. purchase followers," Leal told the *Times*. "If Twitter was to purge everyone who did so there would be hardly any of them on it." Some of Devumi's corporate records obtained by the *Times* lent credence to Leal's claims: among Devumi's clients were a number of celebrities and corporations, including former Baltimore Ravens linebacker Ray Lewis, singer Clay Aiken, and celebrity baker Paul Hollywood. So were the political campaign of Ecuador's current president, Lenín Moreno, and China's state-run news agency, Xinhua. Even a member of Twitter's board of directors and a travel writer for the *New York Times* were customers.[1]

Followers and other forms of social media engagement are generated by follower factories in a variety of ways. In some cases, likes, retweets, and follows come from real people in "click farms," who make as little as $120 per year to sit at computers and click "like" for hours on end.[2] In other cases, automated fake accounts (often called "bots") are created. Higher quality (and more expensive) bots look "authentic," often by closely imitating the accounts of real users. For example, a Minnesota teenager named Jessica Rychly was dismayed to discover that a Twitter account using her name and likeness, along with a username nearly identical to hers, was being used to promote cryptocurrency, Canadian real estate, and more. If it hadn't been for the *Times* investigation, she would never have known.

In an "influencer economy" in which billions of advertising dollars are spent every year promoting goods and services through influential social media accounts, it's difficult to know where to lay the blame. Are the companies who promise to generate followers for a price to blame, or are the people and organizations who pay them? Is the primary obligation on social media platforms to better enforce their own terms of service? Critics point out that, just as "influencers" get higher advertising revenues for having more followers, Facebook and Twitter garner higher stock prices by having more users, and so have a disincentive to crack down too hard on bots. Some influencers admit that buying followers is wrong, while others regard it as merely a tool of the trade. Some corporations who advertise through influencers have vowed to take responsibility by cracking down on influencers who buy followers. "This is a deep and systematic issue, an issue of trust that fundamentally threatens to undermine the relationship between consumers and brands," declared Unilever's Chief Marketing Officer, Keith Weed. "Brands have to play their role in resolving it . . . As one of the largest advertisers in the world, we cannot have an environment where our consumers don't trust what they see online."[3]

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. Is it wrong to buy followers and likes on social media? Does it matter if they are real people, such as those employed by click farms?
2. Who bears the primary moral responsibility for widespread use of fake followers?
3. Unilever vowed not to do business with influencers and platforms who pay for followers and users, because they say they don't want "an environment where our consumers don't trust what they see online." Yet Unilever pays "influencers" to use their social media accounts to promote Unilever products to their friends and followers. Is Unilever's advertising strategy different in any morally relevant way from the influencers who buy followers to make themselves look more influential? Why or why not?

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[1] https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/01/27/technology/social-media-bots.html
[2] http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/aug/02/click-farms-appearance-online-popularity
[3] https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/unilever-to-crack-down-on-influencers-who-buy-fake-followers-and-use-bots/

7. Love Drugs

Romantic love has long been considered an emotional experience that arises in mysterious and unpredictable ways between people who are attracted to one another naturally. It can be overwhelming, fleeting, star-crossed, or long-lasting—but we typically think of it as outside of our control. What if we could control it?

In the United States, approximately 40% to 50% of marriages end in divorce.[1] With new scientific interventions, we may be able to reduce this number by increasing or prolonging feelings of love. "We treat depression, anxiety and other emotion-based responses with drugs. If love isn't working for us, why not add a chemical?" asks Rich Wordsworth.[2] Current research shows that oxytocin is key to the experience of love. MDMA, various psychedelics, and some pharmaceutical drugs all prompt release of oxytocin and so also have an influence on the initiation and persistence of feelings of attraction and love.[3] There is anecdotal evidence suggesting that these substances are linked with increased bonding that happens more quickly than usual and lasts beyond the chemicals, thereby potentially deepening and strengthening romantic relationships. However, in other cases, the use of such substances gives a false sense of love so that when a person is not taking it anymore, the feelings of love disappear, which can lead to unexpected emotional separation and pain.[4]

Other substances have been linked with deadening the experience of love. SSRIs are commonly used to treat depression and anxiety, but some of them have side effects that include blunting a person's ability to connect with others emotionally as well as sexual dysfunction. If this line of research were extended, we could imagine using substances to manipulate who and how people love, either willingly or unwillingly.[5]

So-called love drugs could help strengthen or stabilize long-term relationships; they could help people get over difficult break-ups; or they could help individuals to leave abusive relationships.[6] As scientists continue to study the effects of chemicals on love, significant ethical concerns arise. Under ordinary circumstances, we use emotion as our guide. But if we can change our emotions, then how do we know when we should? Is there anything wrong with using an artificial or external stimulation for love if participants are willing? Would the resulting relationship be in some way less real or authentic as a result?

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. What, if anything, makes loving relationships (including romantic relationships) valuable or important? How, if at all, would "love drugs" add to or detract from that value or importance?
2. What does it mean for a feeling or relationship to be authentic? Would love drugs make the resulting feelings or relationships less authentic? Why or why not?
3. What are the morally relevant similarities and differences between using some chemical help to end the pain of romantic heartbreak and using chemical help to strengthen one's romantic feelings toward another?

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[1] http://www.apa.org/topics/divorce/
[2] http://www.wired.co.uk/article/love-drugs-how-to-control-love-with-drugs
[3] https://qz.com/953217/love-drugs-will-soon-be-a-reality-but-should-we-take-them/
[4] http://www.wired.co.uk/article/love-drugs-how-to-control-love-with-drugs
[5] http://www.wired.co.uk/article/love-drugs-how-to-control-love-with-drugs
[6] http://www.wired.co.uk/article/love-drugs-how-to-control-love-with-drugs and https://qz.com/953217/love-drugs-will-soon-be-a-reality-but-should-we-take-them/

8. De-extinction

The possibility of reviving extinct species is often explored in science fiction, perhaps most famously in *Jurassic Park*. Although there is still a long way to go before humans can bring back dinosaurs, scientists have had a considerable amount of success bringing back more recently extinct species. In 2003, a team of Spanish and French scientists brought the bucardo, or Pyrenean ibex, back from the dead, only to see it go extinct once again minutes after being revived due to organ deformities. The bucardo was brought back by injecting nuclei from preserved bucardo cells into goat eggs emptied of their own DNA and implanting them into surrogate mothers.[1] Since then, there have been promising projects that aim to bring back other extinct species such as the passenger pigeon and the gastric brooding frog.

Proponents of de-extinction argue that humans have an obligation to bring back species that were driven to extinction by human activities, such as the dodo bird. In addition, they argue that bringing back extinct species would significantly benefit ecosystems by increasing biodiversity and, in some cases, restoring important environmental balances. Bringing back extinct species, and the process of learning how to do so, might also yield new scientific insights. The "wonder" factor of bringing back extinct species might itself be enough justification to put more funding into the cause—or so some proponents argue.[2]

Opponents of de-extinction point out that de-extinction will draw away resources and attention from other scientific efforts to preserve biodiversity. Why devote money and scientific effort to bring back lost species when there are so many endangered species on the brink of extinction? Additionally, some critics point out that if brought back, previously extinct species could pose unknown threats to the livelihood of existing habitats and species.[3] Furthermore, if many factors brought about the extinction of a given species, why should we intervene to artificially reverse the process?

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. What, if anything, is problematic about the loss of a given species? Are species valuable for their own sake? Or are they valuable for some other reason?
2. Should humans prioritize species on the brink of extinction over species that are already extinct if de-extinction is undertaken?
3. What is the most morally significant criteria in deciding whether to revive an extinct species?

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[1] https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2013/04/species-revival-bringing-back-extinct-animals/
[2] https://news.stanford.edu/news/2013/april/greely-species-deextinction-040413.html
[3] http://e360.yale.edu/features/the_case_against_de-extinction_its_a_fascinating_but_dumb_idea

9. Picnic Nit-Pick?

Randy is enjoying a community picnic. Close by, some neighborhood kids are crowded around Lisa, age seven, who is easily beating one second-grader after another in chess. As she continues to quickly dispatch her opponents, and as her victims run to tell the adults how good she is, Randy begins to watch. Immediately, he sees that Lisa is cheating, subtly moving pieces when the others aren't looking, and making up rules that suit her as the games progress ("you have to say 'check' when you're about to take my queen, too").

After a while, adults begin to take notice of Lisa's dominance, stopping by to compliment her, and remarking to each other about her impressive skills. Soon, the picnic is abuzz with talk of the neighborhood's little chess prodigy. Randy, who, as far as he can tell, is the only adult who can see *how* Lisa is winning, can barely stand to watch her soak up the applause. As parents line up to praise her, Lisa puts on a totally unconvincing show of modesty and makes remarks such as "well my dad *does* teach me Latin phrases…," which the adults eagerly lap up.

Tempted as he is to expose Lisa's cheating, Randy wonders if doing so is a good idea. He doesn't have kids himself, and something about the idea of a grumpy neighbor intervening in a board game played by seven-year-olds doesn't sit right with him. If he had a relationship with Lisa's parents, he might feel comfortable telling them what he witnessed, but he doesn't know them or their daughter, and they don't seem to be present at the picnic, anyway.

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. What should Randy do, if anything, about Lisa's cheating?
2. To what extent should adults care about the bad deeds of others' children?
3. If Randy gently confronts Lisa and she denies wrongdoing, how should he respond?

10. Drawing the Line on Gerrymandering

Throughout most of the U.S., maps for federal and state legislative districts are drawn by state lawmakers. A longstanding complaint about this procedure is that the politicians in office during the redistricting process frequently engage in "gerrymandering," or drawing maps that help themselves and their political allies retain seats or gain additional power. Given that different areas of a state can have very different demographic and political makeups, drawing district lines in different ways can lead to large variations in who is ultimately elected to office.[1] In particular, partisan mapmakers can use two strategies to benefit their party. One is "packing," where partisans try to put as many supporters of an opposing party as possible into a small number of districts in order to reduce that party's influence in surrounding districts. The second, "cracking," occurs when mapmakers divide supporters of an opposing party across as many districts as possible, in an attempt to prevent them from having a sufficiently large foothold in any one of these districts.

While both strategies have been commonly used in the past, the rise of big data and sophisticated electoral models have made them powerful tools for establishing a large political advantage. For example, in 2016 Republican congressional candidates in North Carolina received only 54% of the votes statewide but won 10 out of 13 House seats (77%).[2] That same year, Republican candidates in Maryland received 37% of the statewide vote but won only 1 of 8 seats (13%),[3] and Democratic candidates in Pennsylvania won only 5 of 18 districts (28%) while receiving about as many votes statewide as Republican candidates.[4]

The primary criticism of partisan gerrymandering is that it is undemocratic. If one party has an electoral advantage that far outstrips its popular support, this diminishes the power of the populace as a whole to enact its political preferences. Moreover, critics argue, intentionally diluting the political influence of some voters seems to violate the democratic ideal that all citizens should have equal voice. Relatedly, partisan gerrymandering might make citizens less politically engaged by making them feel like their votes won't make any difference. Finally, critics often point out that partisan gerrymandering increases political polarization and undermines political cooperation; districts that are drawn to be "safe" wins for one party or another are more likely to elect extreme candidates than are highly competitive districts, which may favor more moderate candidates.

Yet not everyone views these maps as morally problematic. For instance, some argue that critics underestimate the force of larger cultural and demographic trends in driving politically lopsided districts—for example, that Democratic-leaning populations have been increasingly concentrating themselves in small, densely populated geographic areas. Even though intentional partisan gerrymandering does occur, it is far less significant than it is often portrayed. Additionally, it might be argued, politicians are not doing anything wrong in using political considerations when drawing legislative maps. This is just a normal part of electoral politics. After all, if these lawmakers were rightfully elected, then it is within their rights to draw districts as they see fit. In fact, some elected officials defend this practice as necessary for faithfully representing their constituents—if an elected representative's job is to promote the interests of their constituents, it is their responsibility to draw legislative maps that also promote those interests.

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. What is the point of representative democracy? To what extent is partisan gerrymandering consistent or inconsistent with that point?
2. What interests do citizens have in fair electoral maps? Does it matter whether one is a member of the majority or the minority? Are there any interests that all citizens have in maintaining fair electoral maps?
3. What, if anything, should be done to prevent or limit partisan gerrymandering?

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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerrymandering
[2] https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2018/08/27/us/politics/27reuters-north-carolina-districts-court.html
[3] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2018/03/28/how-maryland-democrats-pulled-off-their-aggressive-gerrymander/?utm_term=.415e4e1e9da5
[4] https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/22/us/pennsylvania-maps-congress.html

11. Unauthorized Dumping

Jessica's boyfriend, Amit, had been a bad partner. Despite his charm, he'd been inconsiderate, selfish, and moody. Still, Jessica loved him anyway, and remained a caring and committed girlfriend for two years. A month ago, though, Jessica heard a rumor that Amit cheated on her with one of her friends. Devastated, she confronted him and he admitted that it was true. In the aftermath of the revelation, Amit begged Jessica not to break up with him, apologized, and vowed to become a better person and boyfriend. Even though Jessica's friends and family encouraged her to end the relationship, Jessica was determined to make it work.

For the next few weeks, it seemed as though things were going well: Amit was attentive and kind, and Jessica, though still deeply wounded, felt as though things were on the right track. But then, out of nowhere, Amit sat Jessica down and told her that *he* was ending the relationship. He loved her, he said, but couldn't be the boyfriend she needed him to be. Jessica was furious: "You have no right to break up with me and humiliate me like this after all I've done for you! I've stuck by you time and again, and now you have the nerve to dump *me*?" she said, "After all I've invested in the relationship, and after all the faith I've put in you, how could you do this?"

For his part, though, Amit feels he did nothing wrong. While he still had feelings for Jessica, trying so hard to be a good partner felt stressful and unsustainable. From Amit's point of view, if he truly wasn't capable of being a good partner, it wouldn't have done Jessica any favors for him to continue to be with her only to keep letting her down.

Nevertheless, to Jessica, it still felt like there was something especially unsavory about his begging her not to end the relationship, only to end it himself just weeks later. In many ways, it felt like one final act of betrayal.

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. Can one wrong a partner by breaking up with them? If so, under what circumstances?
2. Was Amit justified in breaking up with Jessica for the reasons that he gave? Why or why not?
3. Is there anything morally praiseworthy about someone who attempts to mitigate the harms caused by their future bad behavior, when they are not willing to do what they can to not behave badly in the first place?

12. Data Violence

As more of human life is controlled or guided by computer algorithms, there is growing concern about various biases that these algorithms encode, and the real-world implications of such biases. For example, in 2015 a black developer realized Google's photo recognition software tagged pictures of him and his friends as gorillas.[1] Similarly, it was found that facial recognition software struggled to read black faces.[2] Other problems have arisen, including Facebook automatically suspending the accounts of Native Americans for having seemingly "fake" names,[3] Google Translate replacing gender-neutral pronouns with gendered pronouns in English according to sexist stereotypes,[4] and airport body scanners flagging transgender bodies as threats.[5] Some have labelled this phenomenon "data violence", noting that coding choices can "implicitly and explicitly lead to harmful or even fatal outcomes."[6]

Some software developers and commentators have claimed that complaints about data violence are overhyped. For instance, some have claimed that these problematic results are simply unfortunate side effects of data analyses and statistical models that are, in other respects, highly accurate and useful. Software developers are not necessarily doing anything wrong when they create algorithms that, for the most part, work very well—even if that software has unintended biases. It may be conceded that in some cases, an algorithm might end up reflecting some broader social injustice, leading to biased results—such as when racial disparities in arrest rates affect the results of software used to predict criminal behaviors.[7] But even then, developers sometimes argue, the problem is not with the software itself, but with the broader injustices for which the developers themselves are not responsible. Relatedly, some argue that there is a division of labor in software development that makes it the responsibility of the architect of the larger project to pay attention to the broader social implications of the software, and not necessarily the individual engineers who work on them. Or, perhaps, they need an "in-house philosopher" to consider these messy ethical concerns for them.[8]

However, others find this response to be little more than an attempt to avoid responsibility for the way in which their own actions help to reinforce and reproduce biases and injustices. Many instances of racist and sexist errors are due to developers' biases, stereotypes, and interests. Software engineers carry with them assumptions about what should be considered "normal" or what range of cases they must account for; these assumptions can affect how software is programmed and the types of testing it undergoes. Furthermore, engineers may often overlook important "edge cases"[9] or the problematic implications of their doing so, because of the fact that the tech industry is overwhelmingly white and male.[10] Given that these software problems disproportionately harm members of historically marginalized groups, there seems to be a further concern that leaving developer diversity unaddressed or viewing these failures as merely instances of poor engineering will not fix the underlying problem.

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. Who is responsible for the kinds of "data violence" described in the case? Are individual engineers morally responsible, or does the responsibility lie with software architects or software companies?
2. What does it mean for something to be sexist or racist? Can we consider software sexist or racist, even though it doesn't itself have intentions or attitudes?
3. What, if anything, should software companies do to address data violence?

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[1] https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2015/07/01/google-apologizes-after-photos-identify-black-people-as-gorillas/29567465/
[2] https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/heres-why-facial-recognition-tech-cant-figure-out-black-people_us_56d5c2b1e4b0bf0dab3371eb
[3] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/feb/16/facebook-real-name-policy-suspends-native-americans
[4] https://qz.com/1141122/google-translates-gender-bias-pairs-he-with-hardworking-and-she-with-lazy-and-other-examples/
[5] http://time.com/4044914/transgender-tsa-body-scan/
[6] https://medium.com/s/story/data-violence-and-how-bad-engineering-choices-can-damage-society-39e44150e1d4
[7] https://www.propublica.org/article/machine-bias-risk-assessments-in-criminal-sentencing
[8] https://venturebeat.com/2011/05/14/damon-horowitz-moral-operating-system/
[9] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edge_case
[10] https://www.wired.com/story/computer-science-graduates-diversity/

13. Tsk Tsk, Tusk Tusk[1]

The World Wide Fund for Nature estimates that poachers kill 100,000 elephants each year for their tusks. International criminal syndicates carry out much of this poaching using sophisticated military equipment, which makes the problem nearly impossible to solve. One approach to preventing poaching for ivory is to dry up the demand.

In 1990, the government of Kenya tried to persuade the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to add elephants to its list of protected species. To illustrate the issue, Kenya set twelve tons of confiscated ivory on fire. Whereas a single large tusk can burn for a week, a pyre of tusks burns longer and can billow black smoke throughout. The dramatic blaze succeeded in its purpose: CITES added elephants to the list of protected species, thereby prohibiting trade in ivory except under special circumstances. Further, officials claimed that the blaze significantly reduced the level of poaching in Kenya by sending the message that the only real and significant value of elephant tusks is to the elephant.

Other countries followed Kenya's strategy of attacking the market by destroying ivory. In 2012, Gabon burned its entire stockpile. In 2013, the Philippines became the first non-African country to burn its stockpile, thereby ensuring that their ivory couldn't re-enter the market through governmental corruption or lax oversight. American conservation groups joined suit in 2015 when they organized a public burning of one ton of ivory items in Times Square, donated by people who no longer felt comfortable owning ivory.

Kenya followed up its first burning with other such displays and, in April 2016, it conducted its fourth and largest public burning of ivory. It stacked 105 tons of ivory in mounds ten feet high and twenty feet wide. This ivory was worth more than $100 million on the black market, which is more than Kenya spends in a year on its entire environmental and natural resources agency.

The Kenyan strategy has met with some criticism. Destroying so much ivory only makes it scarcer, which threatens to increase both its value and the motivation for further poaching. The fires themselves consume fuel and produce much pollution, which leads some to say that simply crushing the ivory would be better, though less spectacular. Some critics say that tracking down the traders would be wiser, perhaps by introducing into the market artificial but realistic tusks containing implanted GPS chips. After all, it makes little sense to destroy something as beautiful as ivory when not all of it comes from poaching; some comes from elephants that die naturally.

Other African countries have adopted very different strategies to protect their elephants. In 2008, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Botswana together raised $15 million by auctioning off 102 tons of ivory. They then used the money for elephant conservation. Instead of following Kenya's approach of denying any economic value to the ivory, these countries focus on the high economic value of the living animals. The government of Botswana, in particular, launched a campaign to convince its citizens that elephants are more valuable alive than dead. A single elephant is worth approximately $1.6 million in tourism over its lifetime, which is seventy-six times more than the tusks would fetch on the black market.

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. Is there anything morally objectionable about buying or selling ivory that has come from elephants that have died naturally?
2. What are the morally relevant similarities and differences between ivory and exotic furs and leathers as consumer goods? Should they be treated differently?
3. What, ethically speaking, are the relevant advantages and disadvantages of ivory destruction, compared to other strategies for addressing elephant poaching?

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[1] This case is adapted from the 2017 Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl Nationals Case Set. Many thanks to the IEB for allowing us to use it! For more information, visit them here: http://appe-ethics.org/ethics-bowl/

14. Shhhh!

Teddy is a nurse who works at a small hospital. One of his patients, Carol, is a terminally ill woman on life support. Over the past week, Carol's health has rapidly declined; even with the aid of life support she is expected to live no more than a week. Since Carol does not have an advanced directive specifying what to do in these circumstances, the decision of whether to take her off life support now or to keep her on life support is left up to her remaining family—her two children. Her daughter thinks that it would be best to remove her from life support rather than prolong any suffering that she might be experiencing. Her son disagrees. He thinks that Carol's grandchildren—both his and his sister's kids—should have the opportunity to spend as much time with their grandmother as possible before she passes away.

On this particular day, Carol's daughter and son get into an argument about what they ought to do. As the argument gets more heated, their voices are raised and can be heard by the other people in the unit, including other critically ill patients and their loved ones. Teddy, the only nurse in the area, asks Carol's children to lower their voices, telling them that if they do not keep their noise down, they will be forced to leave the hospital until the next day. Despite his warning they continue to argue, disturbing several patients and families nearby. Teddy must now decide whether he should kick them out of the hospital as he suggested that he would. On the one hand, their arguing is clearly disruptive to the other patients and their families as well as to the hospital staff. Yet, on the other hand, the choice that Carol's children are faced with is understandably extremely difficult and emotional. To make matters worse, given Carol's condition, if Teddy kicks them out, there is a chance that this may be the last opportunity that they have to see their mother.

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. What should Teddy do in this situation? What moral considerations are relevant to his decision?
2. Are Carol's children doing anything wrong in having this argument in public? Under what conditions, if any, is it unethical for two people to have a loud argument in a public space?
3. Suppose that there are no nurses or other hospital staff around to address the situation. Would it be appropriate for others in the immediate area to get involved? If so, how? If not, why not?

15. Gun Control

In the wake of many recent mass shootings, gun control has taken center stage in public debate in the United States. The shooting in Las Vegas in October of 2017 was the deadliest in American history, killing 58 people and injuring 851.[1] According to data from Gun Violence Archive—which defines a mass shooting as any incident in which at least four people are shot or killed (not counting the shooter)—as of the end of August, there have already been 237 mass shootings in 2018. In these incidents, 235 people have been killed and nearly 1,000 people have been injured.[2] Mass shootings, however, are a relatively small part of the full picture of gun violence and death in the U.S., which includes other homicides, accidents, and, most of all, suicide (which contributes to more than 20,000 gun deaths annually).[3] Moreover, these numbers don't accurately reflect the broader psychological effects of widescale gun violence. But even in light of these tragedies, gun control remains controversial.

Those who advocate much stricter gun control point to the bad effects of the continued availability of so many guns in the U.S. A 2012 estimate from the Congressional Research Service put the number of guns in the U.S. at 310 million, more than the population of the country at the time.[4] The rate of gun homicides in the U.S. (in 2010) was 25.2 times higher than the rate in a sample of 23 other OECD countries, all of which have much stricter gun laws than the U.S.[5] Advocates claim that this data shows that the continued availability of so many guns is a threat to public safety and so a violation of our rights to personal security.[6] The government is therefore morally required to put significant limits on the availability of guns in the U.S.

Opponents of gun control often appeal to the right to self-defense to argue for their position. On their view, if the government were to act to put significant limits on the availability of guns, they would be depriving private citizens of one of the most effective means of self-defense. Because the right to self-defense is so important, it would require an enormous gain in personal security in order to justify any government action limiting our ability to defend ourselves with guns. But, opponents argue, the statistics do not justify harsher gun control measures. In 2016, the gun death rate in the U.S. was 11.96 per 100,000 people or 0.01196%. Canada, by contrast, had a gun death rate (in 2011) of 2.05 per 100,000 people or 0.00205%. Even in countries with very strict gun laws, such as the U.K., the gun death rate (in 2013) was 0.22 per 100,000 or 0.00022%. Opponents argue that because the chance of being killed by a firearm is so low overall, the comparisons with other countries are not convincing enough to constrain the right to self-defense.

Beyond questions about the total number of guns in the U.S., there are also important debates about the types of firearms that people are allowed to possess. Proponents of stricter gun control measures point out, for instance, that assault weapons, high capacity magazines, and bump stocks, among other things, are not necessary for self-protection, and thus can be legitimately prohibited. In response to this argument, gun advocates point out that even if these weapons and accessories get a lot of public attention because of their use in some high-profile cases, they are used in only a small percentage of incidents of gun violence. As a result, prohibiting these weapons is not likely to make a meaningful dent in the overall number of gun deaths.

STUDY QUESTIONS:
1. Does the right to self-defense justify gun ownership? Why or why not?
2. How should a society balance the individual rights of its members to protect themselves with its responsibility to promote public safety, more generally? When, if ever, it justifiable to restrict an individual's right to self-defense?
3. To what extent does the rate of gun violence in the U.S. justify passing laws to restrict gun ownership?

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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2017_Las_Vegas_shooting
[2] http://www.gunviolencearchive.org/
[3] https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/mass-shootings-are-a-bad-way-to-understand-gun-violence/
[4] https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL32842.pdf
[5] https://www.amjmed.com/article/S0002-9343(15)01030-X/fulltext
[6] https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/12/19/why-gun-control-is-not-enough/