Should You Sacrifice Your Constituents? Moral Dilemmas and the Evaluation of Politicians

Enrique Hernández

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)

enrique.hernandez@uab.cat

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Abstract

Adhering to high ethical standards and being morally upright might sometimes be incompatible with governing effectively. In some situations, politicians must decide between adopting a utilitarian decision (a decision that, even if it contravenes moral principles, leads to the optimal outcome and the maximization of aggregate welfare) or a deontological decision (a decision guided by the idea that there are moral standards that should never be violated, even if violating them would lead to a maximization of aggregate welfare). In this paper I analyze if the way in which politicians react to this type of dilemmas is consequential for how citizens evaluate them. The empirical analyses draw on a survey experiment based on a sacrificial moral dilemma applied to a political crisis. The experiment was included in a survey with 1,000 respondents fielded in Spain. Through this survey experiment I examine participants' evaluations of a fictitious politician that in the context of a terrorist threat makes either a utilitarian judgement and decision (it is better to save 50 people, even if it involves sacrificing 10 innocent people) or a deontological judgement and decision (purposefully sacrificing 10 innocent people is just morally wrong, even if it saves 50 people). The results of the experiment indicate that politicians who adopt a deontological decision are more trusted and better evaluated, but the effect of adopting either a deontological or utilitarian decision on the evaluations of politicians is moderated by individuals' left-right ideology.

Introduction

Many citizens expect political representatives to be honest, moral, and compassionate, and they are likely to evaluate politicians according to these expectations (Allen et al., 2016; Pancer et al., 1999). However, adhering to high ethical standards and being morally upright might sometimes be incompatible with good (or the most effective) government (Walzer, 1973). Contravening well-established moral principles will be, under certain circumstances, the most effective way for politicians to handle crises and achieve an optimal outcome that maximizes aggregate welfare.

In some cases, politicians must decide between adopting a utilitarian decision—a decision that, even if it might contravene moral principles, leads to the maximization of aggregate welfare—, or a deontological decision—a decision guided by the idea that there are moral standards that should never be violated, even if violating them leads to a maximization of aggregate welfare—. Confronted with these situations politicians can either adopt a utilitarian decision and achieve the optimal outcome even if that implies "dirtying their hands", or they can adhere to moral and ethical principles even if that will lead to a suboptimal outcome. Since we expect that politicians should be morally upright and, at the same time, they should act for the public good and maximize aggregate welfare it is not clear how they should act in these situations. Should politicians get their "hands dirty" in order to achieve the optical outcome, or should they always adhere to the highest moral and ethical standards?

Political theorists have written countless pages about these problems or dilemmas (see e.g. Bellamy, 2010; Hollis, 1982; Lukes, 2006; Tillyris, 2015; Walzer, 1973; Yemini, 2013). Unsurprisingly, they have not reached a consensus about how politicians ought to act in these situations. This paper does not intend to provide an answer to this probably irresolvable dilemma, but to simply analyze how citizens evaluate politicians that adopt

either a deontological or utilitarian decision when facing this type of moral dilemmas. Combining insights from political theory, experimental psychology and the extensive literature on attitudes towards politicians, in this paper I assess whether utilitarian or deontological politicians are better evaluated and more trusted. These analyses provide further insights about the moral and ethical priorities of citizens, which complement recent findings about how citizens judge the ethical behavior of political leaders (Allen et al., 2016; Birch and Allen, 2015).

The empirical analyses of this paper are based on a survey experiment that confronts deontological and utilitarian political decisions following the classic trolley problem (see below). Specifically, I examine participants' perception of a politician that in the context of a hypothetical terrorist attack makes either a deontological judgement and decision or a utilitarian judgement and decision. Respondents read a vignette about an impending terrorist attack that would kill 50 innocent people. Respondents were told that the mayor of the city could stop the attack and prevent the death of 50 people, but doing so would require sacrificing 10 other innocent bystanders. Half of the respondents read about a mayor that refused to stop the attack (deontological treatment) and the other half read about a mayor that decided to stop the attack (utilitarian treatment).

The results of the experiment reveal that the way in which politicians react to moral dilemmas is consequential for how citizens evaluate them. Overall, the results indicate that politicians who adopt a deontological decision are more trusted and better evaluated, but the effect of adopting either a deontological or utilitarian decision on the evaluations of politicians is moderated by individuals' left-right ideology.

Theoretical framework

One of the fundamental pieces of advice that Machiavelli offers to politicians (or princes) is that they have to "learn how not to be good" and "know when it is and when it is not necessary to use this knowledge" (Machiavelli, 1995, p. 48). Since politics is a messy business, and in the real-world adversaries are not likely to adhere to high ethical standards, morality will be often difficult to reconcile with governing in an effective way. This reasoning implies that politicians are likely to be good and morally upright in the first place, but, at the same time, it also suggests that they need to learn how to set aside some of their moral principles to ensure that the greater good prevails (Walzer, 1973). Therefore, under certain circumstances, politicians might have to do (or order others to do) things that private citizens ought not to do, like for example lying, torturing, or killing (see Bellamy, 2010; Hollis, 1982).

This reasoning lies at the core of the "dirty hands" problem, which is generally based on scenarios in which the only way for politicians to achieve an optimal outcome requires them to defy and violate some well-established moral rules. One of the most common illustrations of the dirty hands problem is based on the "ticking bomb" scenario originally proposed by Walzer (1973). In this hypothetical scenario, a politician is asked whether a rebel leader, who knows the location of several bombs that are hidden in a city and are set to go off in the next 24 hours, should be tortured so that he reveals the location of the bombs. Some argue that in this sort of situations it is often right for politicians to dirty their hands, since politicians must, above all, serve the public interest, and doing so implies that sometimes they cannot avoid acting immorally or in a way that good citizens would not (see e.g. Bellamy, 2010; Hollis, 1982; Walzer, 2004, 1973). This classic formulation of the dirty hands problem implies that there is a "disharmony between ordinary morality—which is, as claimed, deontological—and the demands of successful

political action—which are thought to be consequentialist" (Tillyris, 2015, pp. 61–62; see also Yemini, 2013, p. 169).[1]

The alternatives available to a politician that faces a dirty hands type of situation are, therefore, to either adopt a deontological decision, or to adopt a utilitarian/consequentialist decision. Hence, these situations confront two well-known and opposing perspectives on morality and ethics: deontology and utilitarianism/consequentialism. Consequentialist and utilitarian theories of ethics, like those of Mill and Bentham, focus on the maximization of aggregate welfare, while deontologist theories, like those of Kant, emphasize the need to respect rights, duties and obligations (Everett et al., 2016). Therefore, the yardstick to evaluate the adequacy of a decision is different according to each of these two ethical traditions. For utilitarians a good decision is the one that produces the greater happiness (or good) for the maximum number of people, while for deontologists the adequacy of a decision is judged by the extent to which it respects rights, duties and moral obligations. While from a utilitarian point of view the end is likely to justify the means, from a deontological perspective there might be some means, like for example harming citizens, that should never be accepted as a legitimate form of political action. Therefore, for deontologists the main unit of analysis to assess the adequacy of a decision are the actions, and for utilitarians the unit of analysis are the outcomes the decision produces (Bartels, 2008, p. 385)

While the most commonly discussed dirty hands cases that pit deontological and utilitarian considerations against one another are hypothetical, this type of dilemmas are an inherent characteristic of contemporary political life (Lukes, 2006). For example, during World War II Churchill adopted the utilitarian decision of not warning and

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[1] Note that Tillyris (2015) criticizes this characterization of the dirty hands problem.

evacuating the inhabitants of an area of London that he knew would be bombed by the Luftwaffe because doing so would have revealed that the British could decipher German communications (Hollis, 1982). More recently, George W. Bush also adopted a utilitarian decision during 9/11, since he authorized the military to shoot down airliners that posed a threat for the safety of those on the ground (Kean and Hamilton, 2004). Similarly, in 2005 the German parliament passed a law that authorized the military to shoot down hijacked airliners. The law sparked great controversy among politicians and the public, and was finally struck down by Germany's Constitutional Court (Beltran de Felipe and Santiago, 2007). Echoing characteristically deontological arguments the Court ruled that deliberately sacrificing those on board and using innocent civilians as mere means for the salvation of others was incompatible with the right to human dignity and, therefore, it was not possible to weigh between the lives of the passengers on board and the lives of those on the ground (Beltran de Felipe and Santiago, 2007). The Court ruling, as well as the controversial character of the law, exemplifies the tensions between deontological and utilitarian arguments that dirty hand dilemmas might generate

What makes these situations interesting from a theoretical and empirical standpoint is that, like the German law controversy suggests, there is no clear-cut answer as to how politicians should react in these situations. Should politicians adopt a deontological or a utilitarian decision when facing a dirty hands type of dilemma? As I indicate in the introduction, this paper does not intend to provide an answer to this question. Instead, I analyze these dilemmas from the point of view of the citizens. Do citizens trust more a politician that adopts a deontological decision or one that adopts a utilitarian decision? Do they consider that any of these political decisions is better or more acceptable than the other? Does the type of decision that a politician adopts signal information about her character?

Citizens are likely to expect their politicians to be honest, morally upright, rational, able to deal with unexpected events, and able to maximize their welfare (Birch and Allen, 2015; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; Lawless, 2004; Mondak, 1995; Pancer et al., 1999). If these expectations are not fulfilled individuals will be less likely to trust their representatives and will be less satisfied with their performance and decisions. However, like the examples presented above indicate, there are situations in which politicians are unlikely to be able to fulfill all these expectations. They cannot maximize aggregate welfare and behave in a moral way at the same time. Recent studies suggest that, in these cases, citizens might have a preference for morally upright politicians (Allen et al., 2016; Allen and Birch, 2011; Birch and Allen, 2015). Allen et al., (2016) show that when asked to choose between the two characteristics, European citizens consistently prioritize politicians who are honest over politicians who are able to deliver the goods. It therefore appears that unethical behavior is something that should always be avoided in politics. However, other studies suggest that leadership evaluations are more likely to be based on the substantive outcome of acts rather than on their justification or morality, since corrupt politicians are not punished at the polls if their corrupt actions lead to a short-term increase in welfare (Fernández-Vázquez et al., 2016). Hence, the political science literature does not provide a univocal answer as to whether citizens will evaluate better a utilitarian or deontological politician.

Social psychologists have conducted a substantial number of experimental studies confronting deontological and utilitarian considerations in moral dilemmas that bear close resemblance to the dirty hand situations commonly discussed in political theory. While these studies do not focus on politicians or government administrators (c.f. Bartels, 2008), they can offer relevant clues about how individuals are likely to evaluate politicians that adopt a deontological or utilitarian decision. In general terms, this research

strand indicates that the moral intuitions of the participants in these experiments, which are usually based on the footbridge and trolley dilemmas, are more likely to align with the deontological side of the dilemma (Everett et al., 2016).[2] Usually individuals do not think that it is acceptable, adequate or necessary to sacrifice the life of one innocent bystander to save many others who will die if nothing is done (see Edmonds, 2014; Everett et al., 2016; Moore et al., 2008; Sheskin and Baumard, 2016).[3]

Independently of how individuals think one ought to react when facing this type of dilemmas, for the purposes of this paper it is crucial to consider what politicians' reactions might convey about their trustworthiness. Everett et al., (2016) suggest that individuals who make deontological judgments and decisions are likely to be considered more trustworthy. Upholding a moral principle (e.g. harming or sacrificing innocent people is wrong) and acting in line with it, even if it will lead to a suboptimal outcome, signals trustworthiness, because it provides a cue about the reliability of the moral behavior of the actor (Everett et al., 2016). If a politician conveys that she holds a certain moral principle and she acts in line with it, even when she has clear incentives not to do so, this is likely to signal that she is likely to act guided by her principles and values in many different situations. Hence, acting in a deontological way is likely to make a politician appear as a more authentic and sincere person. Recent studies support this presumption since those individuals who make deontological arguments are perceived to

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[2] In both dilemmas, a runaway trolley hurtles towards five unaware workmen. In the footbridge dilemma the only way to prevent the death of the five workmen is to push a large stranger that is standing in a footbridge onto the track, where he will die and stop the runaway trolley. In the trolley dilemma the only way to save the five workmen is to hit a switch that will divert the runaway trolley into an adjacent track where it will kill one person instead of five. See Edmonds (2014) for an illustration of these dilemmas and many of their variants.

[3] Note that while the deontological reaction is very common in the case of the footbridge dilemma, a great number of people (in some cases even the majority) favor a utilitarian reaction in the case of the trolley dilemma (Greene et al., 2001). In any case, as indicated by Everett et al., (2016) a substantial number of studies on this topic tend to favor the notion that the moral intuitions of individuals have a tendency to align with deontology, although the reasons why this is the case are still not clear.

have positive traits like, for example, being committed (Kreps and Monin, 2014). Conversely, utilitarian arguments are likely to be associated with negative features like, for example, being selfish, superficial and lacking empathy (Kreps and Monin, 2014; Uhlmann et al., 2013).

The arguments just summarized, as well as citizens' preference for politicians who are honest over politicians who are effective and can get the job done, lead me to the first two hypotheses:

H1: Individuals will be more likely to trust a politician who, in the context of a dirty hands dilemma, adopts a deontological decision.

H2: Compared to utilitarian decisions, individuals will be more likely to consider that deontological decisions are a better and more adequate political response to dirty hands dilemmas.

Besides providing cues about their trustworthiness, the way in which politicians react to dirty hands dilemmas is also likely to signal information about their moral character, ethical standards and rationality (see Uhlmann et al., 2013). Politicians should desire to be perceived both as rational and ethical actors, and citizens are likely to expect them to possess both traits. However, when facing a dirty hands dilemma, politicians might not be able to appear as rational and ethical actors at the same time. Depending on the decision she adopts a politician is more likely to be perceived as either a rational actor or as an actor who is morally upright and has high ethical standards. The cost benefit calculations performed by the pragmatic politician who adopts a utilitarian decision should signal that they she is a rational actor, but at the same time a utilitarian decision is also likely to be conducive to worse judgements about the moral character and ethical standards of the decision maker. Conversely, deontological decisions should signal that a

politician is person more likely to be guided by her moral and ethical principles. However, at the same time, a deontological decision could also increase the likelihood that a politician is considered somehow irrational, since her decision, although well intentioned or moral, will produce a negative (or worse) outcome. In fact, some authors precisely consider that deontological decisions are an example of "ethical irrationality" (Weber ([1919] 1994) pp. 310-11 in Bellamy, 2010). These theoretical arguments lead me to the third hypothesis:

H3: Compared to politicians who adopt a utilitarian decision, politicians adopting a deontological decision will be more likely to be considered ethical persons and less likely to be considered rational persons.

Individuals should trust more a politician who adopts a deontological decision (H1), and they should also consider that a deontological political decision is superior and more acceptable than a utilitarian decision (H2). However, some individual-level characteristics are likely to moderate the effects of adopting either a deontological or utilitarian decision in a dirty hands dilemma. As I indicate above, citizens in different European countries prioritize politicians who are morally upright over politicians who are able to deliver the goods. However, there are clear differences in these expectations about how politicians ought to behave depending on the left-right ideology of individuals. While some individuals are more likely to always demand morally upright politicians, others might tolerate immoral political actions if those lead to superior outcomes (Allen et al., 2016). Those with a left-wing ideology are more likely to adopt the former position, while those on the right are more likely to tolerate morality breaches if that is the best way for politicians to "get the job done" (Allen et al., 2016). These clear ideological differences with regard to the expectations about the ethical behavior of politicians should

be consequential for individuals' evaluations of the politicians and of their political decisions adopted to confront moral dilemmas.

The differences between left- and right-wing citizens with regards to the impact of utilitarian and deontological decisions on politicians' evaluations should be even more relevant in the specific case of dirty hands dilemmas. These dilemmas usually involve a decision as hard as hurting or sacrificing some citizens to save others (or promote a greater interest, like in the case of Churchill's decision). Hence, to get the job done politicians might have to hurt (or order others to hurt) someone. This is likely to be consequential for the moderating role of ideology because people with left- and right-wing ideology are likely to rely on a different set of moral foundations to evaluate if a decision is right or wrong (Graham et al., 2009). In order to judge whether a decision is right or wrong those on the left are more likely to consider whether someone was hurt or if the rights and liberties of an individual were violated as a result of the decision (Graham et al., 2009). That is, those on the left should be more averse to political decisions involving harm or that violate basic rights (like the right to human dignity). The greater opposition to torture—independently of its effectiveness—among those on the left exemplifies their greater aversion to political actions involving harm (Crandall et al., 2009).[4] Moreover, research on right-wing authoritarianism suggests that those on the right might be more likely to accept and morally justify harm towards others, as long as such harm is sanctioned by established authorities (Benjamin, Jr, 2016; Jackson and Gaertner, 2010)

These theoretical considerations lead me to the fourth and final hypothesis:

H4: Compared to those on the right, individuals with a left-wing ideology will be more likely to trust a politician who adopts a deontological decision and will be more likely to

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[4] According to Crandall et al., (2009) conservatives are more likely to support, justify and accept that authorities use torture.

consider that deontological decisions are a better and more adequate political response to dirty hands dilemmas

Data and methods

To test the hypotheses about individuals' evaluations of a politician who adopts either a deontological or utilitarian decision in a dirty hands type of dilemma the empirical analyses draw on a survey experiment. Following the extensive literature on social psychology that analyzes individuals' reactions to moral dilemmas the survey experiment adopts the basic structure of a trolley dilemma (see Edmonds, 2014). The trolley dilemma, and its multiple variants, is considered an ideal instrument to confront deontological and utilitarian considerations and study individuals' reactions (see e.g. Everett et al., 2016). Moreover, these dilemmas have the added advantage that they bear a close resemblance to the most common dirty hands problems analyzed in political theory.

The survey experiment was designed as a between-subjects design in which respondents read about a hypothetical mayor of a town that makes either a characteristically utilitarian judgement and decision (utilitarian treatment) or a characteristically deontological judgement and decisions (deontological treatment).[5] Specifically, participants read a vignette about an impending terrorist attack that would kill 50 innocent people that had gathered in a public square. Respondents were told that the mayor of the city could stop the attack, but doing so would require that 10 other innocent bystanders traveling in a tramcar near the square die.[6] Half of the respondents read about a mayor that refused to stop the attack (deontological treatment). The other

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[5] Besides the mayor's decision I also manipulated the gender of the mayor (male/female). The results indicate that the gender of the mayor does not interact with the deontological/utilitarian treatment for any of the outcomes analyzed. Therefore, in the remainder of the paper I do not distinguish the treatment conditions depending on the gender of the mayor.

[6] I choose a proportion of 5 to 1 following the most commonly used proportion of lives saved against lives sacrificed in trolley and footbridge dilemmas.

half read about a mayor that decided to stop the attack (utilitarian treatment). The wording of each of the treatment conditions is reproduced in table 1.[7] To facilitate the interpretation of the vignettes the text was accompanied by a picture sketching the situation.[8]

<Table 1 here>

After reading the vignette participants were asked: how much they trusted the mayor described in the vignette (0 = no trust at all, 3 = complete trust); whether the mayor acted correctly (0 = no, 1 = yes); and to evaluate the mayor's decision (0 = extremely bad, 10 = extremely good). Moreover, participants were presented with two additional questions that asked them to indicate whether the phrases "he/she is rational" and "he/she is ethical" described the mayor quite well (=1) or not too well (=0).[9]

The experiment was included in a survey fielded in Spain in February 2017, which was completed by 1,019 respondents and was administered by NETQUEST. The survey was administered online and it included four additional experiments unrelated to the one analyzed in this paper.[10] Before the experiments, participants were asked different sociodemographic questions as well as questions about political attitudes (e.g. ideology or political interest). Quotas for age, gender, region, and level of education were applied to ensure the representativeness of the sample. The average age in the sample is 44 years (minimum 18 years, maximum 85 years). The level of education in the sample is distributed as follows: 30.2 percent of respondents with some college education (or equivalent), 50.54 percent with secondary education, and 19.23 with primary education or less.

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[7] See the appendix for original treatments wording (in Spanish)

[8] See the appendix

[9] The wording of all the questions used in this study can be found in the appendix.

[10] Although the different experiments included in the survey were completely unrelated, the order of presentation of the experiments was randomized. The order in which the experiment analyzed in this paper was presented does not alter any of the results presented below.

After reading the vignettes and answering the questions about the evaluation of the mayor, respondents were asked about the decision the mayor described in the vignette had adopted. 70 percent of respondents answered correctly to this manipulation check, 15.9 percent admitted that they did not know which decision the mayor had adopted, and 14.1 chose the incorrect decision. In the analyses that follow the sample is restricted to the 709 respondents that passed this manipulation check.

Results

Table 2 summarizes the differences in the perceived trustworthiness of the mayor and in the acceptability and evaluation of her decision between the two treatment conditions. Beginning with the perceived trustworthiness of the mayor, the results indicate that mayors who make a characteristically deontological judgment and decision tend to be more trusted than mayors who adopt a utilitarian decision. While these differences between the deontological and utilitarian treatment groups are of reduced magnitude, they are statistically significant at conventional levels ($p<0.001$).[11] These results are in line with the findings of Everett et al., (2016), who asked citizens how much they trusted another fellow citizen who adopted a deontological or utilitarian decision in the classic trolley and footbridge problems. These results support the presumption that upholding a moral principle (believing that hurting innocent people is wrong) and acting in line with it—even if it will lead to a suboptimal outcome—signals trustworthiness. Hence, even in this type of dirty hands cases, for which some are likely to argue that politicians should adopt a utilitarian decision (see e.g. Bellamy, 2010), adopting such a decision is likely to reduce the trust in the politician who decides to get her hands dirty.

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[11] A Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test leads to the same conclusion as the two-sample t-test (p=0.00).

<Table 2 here>

When it comes to the assessment of the correctness of the mayor's behavior, however, there are no observable differences between the deontological and utilitarian treatment groups. It appears that in both treatment conditions about half of the participants think the mayor acted correctly and the other half think the mayor did not act correctly. As a consequence, the differences between the two groups are not statistically significant.[12]

In contrast with the results about the correctness of the mayor's behavior, when specifically asked to evaluate the decision adopted by the mayor, participants evaluate better the decision adopted by the mayor who makes a characteristically deontological judgment and decision. In line with the second hypothesis, individuals tend to think that when facing this type of dilemma deontological decisions are a better and more adequate political response. In this case, the difference between the deontological and utilitarian treatment conditions is statistically significant at conventional levels ($p<0.05$).[13] While the difference between the deontological and utilitarian treatments might appear to be small, it is important to note that this difference is almost equivalent to a one standard deviation change in the dependent variable (standard deviation = 0.49).

<Figure 1 here>

Turning now to the traits individuals associate with a mayor who adopts a utilitarian or deontological decision, figure 1 summarizes the proportion of respondents believing that the mayor is a rational and ethical person in each of the treatment conditions.[14] The results summarized in the figure indicate that politicians who act in a utilitarian way are more likely to be considered rational while those who adopt a

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[12] A Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test leads to the same conclusion as the two-sample t-test (p = 0.71).
[13] A Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test leads to the same conclusion as the two-sample t-test (p = 0.04).
[14] Marginal effects plots were generated with Stata *marhis* command (Hernández, 2016)

deontological decision tend to be considered more ethical. In both cases the differences between the two treatment conditions are statistically significant at p<0.001. However, the differences between the deontological and utilitarian treatment conditions are substantially larger regarding the ethical or moral character of the mayor. This difference between the two traits is related to the fact that a substantial number of respondents believe that a mayor who acts in a deontological way can still be considered a rational person, but much fewer respondents believe that a mayor who adopts a utilitarian decision is an ethical person.

Overall, the results just summarized indicate that individuals favor deontological solutions to dirty hand dilemmas. They tend to trust more a mayor who adopts a deontological decision and they consider that such a decision is a better political response to these dilemmas. However, these results might mask some heterogeneity, since depending on their ideology individuals are likely to expect a different behavior from politicians and they are likely to rely on a different set of moral foundations to evaluate a political decision. To test this hypothesis (H4) I fit a series of multivariate models in which I interact the treatment indicator (0 = utilitarian treatment, 1 = deontological treatment) with a variable measuring the ideological placement of respondents on the left-right scale (0 = extreme left, 10 = extreme right). These models also include a series of control variables that could be related to the dependent variables and to individuals' ideology such as their external political efficacy, their education, their age and their gender.[15]

Before analyzing the interaction between the treatment indicator and ideology I analyze how each of the three dependent variables included in table 1 are related to the

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[15] The question wording and operationalization can be found in the appendix.

treatment conditions in this multivariate analysis. Models 1, 3 and 5 of table 3 summarize, respectively, the results for trust in the mayor, whether the mayor acted correctly, and for the evaluation of the mayor's decision. Given the different nature of each of these dependent variables, model 1 is estimated through an ordered logistic regression, model 2 through a logistic regression, and model 3 through an OLS regression.[16] The results of the multivariate analysis are in line with the results obtained by comparing the means of the two treatment conditions for each of these three dependent variables. A deontological decision increases the perceived trustworthiness of the mayor (model 1), and it is considered a better decision than a utilitarian decision (model 5). In both cases the differences between the two treatment conditions are statistically significant at conventional levels. However, there are no statistically significant differences with regards to the correctness of the behavior of the mayor (model 3).

<Table 3 here>

Turning now to the analysis of the interaction between the responses to the moral dilemma and ideology, model 3 reveals that the positive impact of adopting a utilitarian decision on the perceived trustworthiness of the mayor weakens as one moves towards the right of the ideological dimension. Figure 2 summarizes the result of this interaction for each of the 4 possible outcomes of the variable measuring the trustworthiness of the mayor. In the two upper panes we can find the two categories that reflect a positive assessment of the trustworthiness of the mayor (trust completely and trust somewhat). The results indicate that the positive impact of a deontological treatment on the likelihood of completely trusting or somewhat trusting the mayor is restricted to those respondents who are located at the center or towards the left of the ideological scale. As indicated by

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[16] In the case of the ordered logistic regression (models 1 and 2) a Brant test of the parallel regression assumption indicates that this assumption is not violated.

the negative coefficient of the interaction the positive impact of adopting a deontological decision weakens as one becomes more right-wing. In fact, for those located at the most extreme right-wing positions (values 7 or higher) adopting a deontological decision has a negative impact on the likelihood of completely or somewhat trusting the mayor. However, in these cases the effect of the treatment indicator is not statistically significant at conventional levels. The lower panes, which summarize the impact of a deontological decision on the likelihood of not trusting the mayor very much or not trusting her at all, reflect the opposite pattern. Adopting a deontological decision reduces the likelihood of negatively assessing the trustworthiness of the mayor, but this negative effect weakens as one moves towards the right of the ideological spectrum, and it even becomes positive, albeit not statistically significant, for those located at the right-wing extreme of the ideological scale.

<Figure 2 here>

In the case of the assessment of whether the mayor acted in a correct way or not, model 4 also reveals some significant variation of the impact of the decision adopted by the mayor depending on the ideology of the respondent. The results of this interaction are summarized in figure 3. The figure indicates that ideology clearly moderates the impact of adopting a deontological decision on the likelihood of respondents considering that the mayor acted in a correct way. For those located on the extreme left of the ideological spectrum a deontological decision significantly increases the likelihood of considering that the mayor acted in a correct way. Conversely, for those located on the extreme right of the ideological spectrum a deontological decision decreases the likelihood of considering that the mayor acted in a correct way. For those citizens who adopt a more centrist position, though, a deontological decision does not have any statistically significant effect.

<Figure 3 here>

A very similar pattern is revealed for the evaluation of the decision adopted by the mayor. The interaction between the deontological treatment and ideology for this dependent variable can be found in model 6 and it is summarized in figure 4. The results again reveal that those on the left-hand side of the ideological spectrum are likely to evaluate better a deontological decision, while those on the right will provide a negative assessment of such a decision. However, in this case the effect of a deontological decision is barely statistically significant for those on the extreme right.

<Figure 4 here>

Conclusion

Dirty hands dilemmas are present in contemporary political life (Lukes, 2006). However, while these types of political dilemmas have been frequently discussed by political theorists, there is no clear answer as to how politicians ought to react in these situations. This paper has studied these dilemmas from the perspective of the citizens by analyzing how individuals evaluate politicians and their decisions when they either adopt a deontological or utilitarian decision to solve a dirty hands dilemma. These analyses were based on a survey experiment conducted in Spain, which presented participants with a hypothetical dirty hands case about a terrorist attack. The experiment manipulated whether the mayor of a city made a characteristically deontological judgement and decision or a characteristically utilitarian judgement and decision in order to solve the dirty hands problem.

Overall, the results indicate that the way in which politicians react to moral dilemmas is consequential for how citizens evaluate them, and citizens tend to favor deontological solutions to dirty hands problems. While, on average, participants did not

consider that a deontological or utilitarian decision was more acceptable than the other, they tended to trust more the politician that adopted a deontological decision and they also evaluated better her decision. These results provide further insights about the priorities of citizens with regard to the ethical and moral behavior of politicians. These results are in line with the public opinion data analyzed by Allen et al., (2016), who found that in different European countries individuals prioritize honesty and morality over effectiveness when asked to think about their ideal politician. The findings of this paper also complement recent studies on the field of social psychology which found that individuals are more likely to trust individuals who act in a deontological way (Everett et al., 2016). It seems that even actors like politicians, who sometimes might be supposed to set aside their moral principles to adopt a decision that maximizes aggregate welfare,[17] are not likely to be trusted if they adopt a utilitarian decision. Adopting such a decision might signal that a politician is more likely to disregard her moral principles in other type of situations and, therefore, her behavior is less predictable and she is less worth of trust. Moreover, in line with the findings of Uhlmann (2013) for other type of actors, politicians' decision to dirty hand dilemmas also appear to signal information about their character, since those who adopt a utilitarian decision are considered more rational and those who adopts a deontological decision are considered more ethical persons.

The results of this paper, however, also indicate that not all individuals react in the same way when asked to evaluate a politician who adopts either a deontological or utilitarian decision. Depending on their left-right ideology individuals appear to favor a different solution to dirty hands problems. Those on the left are aligned with the general trend since they consider that a politician who adopts a deontological decision is more

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[17] See Bellamy (2010) for an overview of this argument and see also Uhlmann et al. (2013) for a similar argument applied to other actors like, for example, hospital administrators.

trustworthy, and they consider that deontological decisions are a more acceptable and better solution to dirty hands problems. This is not the case for those on the right side of the ideological spectrum, since they are less likely to believe that politicians who adopt a deontological decision are acting correctly and they tend to think that, compared to utilitarian decisions, deontological decisions are a worse solution to dirty hands dilemmas. These results provide additional evidence in support of the argument that depending on their ideology individuals are likely to rely on different standards and moral foundations to evaluate the appropriateness of a political decision (see Graham et al., 2009).

While the findings about the moderating role of ideology are consistent across the different dependent variables used in this paper, they are also subject to certain limitations that should be addressed in future research (or next iterations of this paper). First of all, in the absence of any information about the ideological leaning of the hypothetical politicians described in the experiments, participants might be inferring that those who adopt a utilitarian decision are more likely to have a right-wing ideology and those who adopt a deontological decision are more likely to have a left-wing ideology. If this is the case, the moderating effect of ideology might not be driven by individuals with a certain ideology reacting differently to utilitarian and deontological decision, but by participants favorable evaluations of politicians who might be more aligned with their ideological preferences. To address this limitation future research should evaluate to what extent deontological and utilitarian decisions provide cues about the ideology of the decision maker. Moreover, to disentangle the mechanism through which ideology moderates the impact of utilitarian and deontological decisions, future research should evaluate whether these differences are related to the greater harm aversion of left-wing individuals or simply to their more general preferences regarding the ideal ethical behavior of

politicians. To address this question and disentangle the mechanism one could rely on less common dirty hand dilemmas that do not involve harm, or one could also measure individuals' preferences about the ideal ethical behavior of politicians beforehand.

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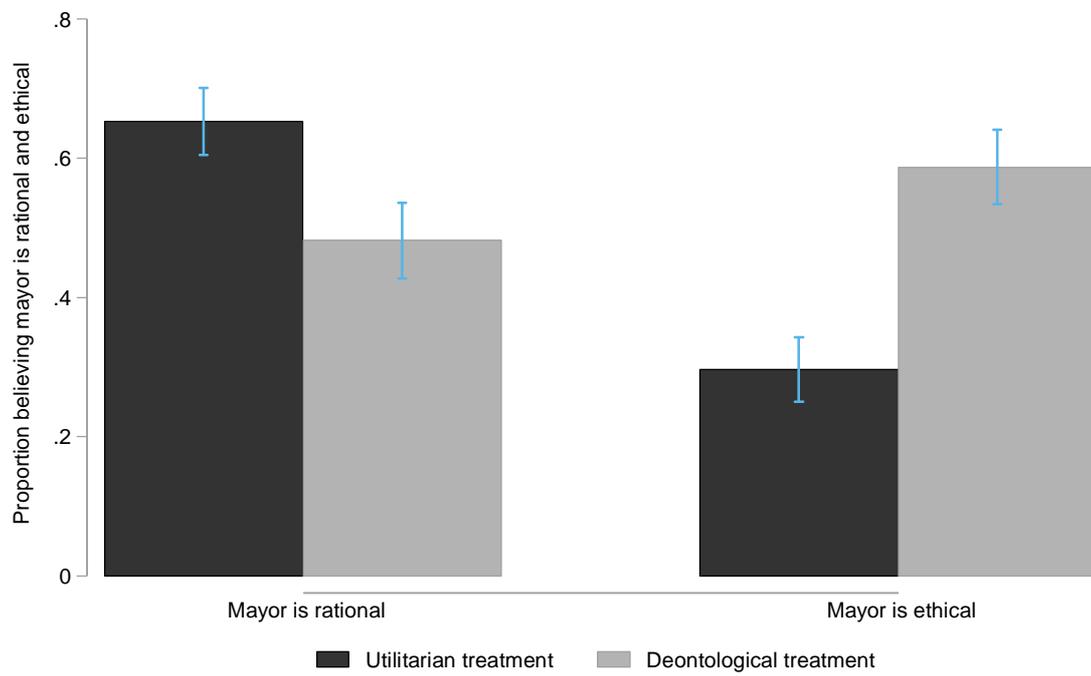
Table 1: Experiment vignettes

Deontological treatment	Utilitarian treatment
A car bomb is headed towards the square of a city. The car will explode when the it reaches the square and, as result, 50 people gathered there will die. The only way to prevent the attack is to block the street leading to the square with a tram. As shown in the image, the tram is stopped at an intersection between the street leading to the square and the tram-track. The mayor of the city can order the tram to cross the intersection just before the arrival of the car bomb. If he issues this order, the car bomb will crash with the tram and it will stop. However, as a result of the crash the 10 passengers of the tram will die. *The mayor refuses to order the tram to cross the intersection just before the arrival of the car bomb arguing that "sacrificing 10 innocent people is wrong, even if doing so saves 50 other innocent people"*	A car bomb is headed towards the square of a city. The car will explode when the it reaches the square and, as result, 50 people gathered there will die. The only way to prevent the attack is to block the street leading to the square with a tram. As shown in the image, the tram is stopped at an intersection between the street leading to the square and the tram-track. The mayor of the city can order the tram to cross the intersection just before the arrival of the car bomb. If he issues this order, the car bomb will crash with the tram and it will stop. However, as a result of the crash the 10 passengers of the tram will die. *The mayor orders the tram to cross the intersection just before the arrival of the car bomb arguing that "it is better to save 50 innocent people, even if doing so requires sacrificing 10 other innocent people"*

Table 2: Mayor evaluations

Variable	Range	Average deontological	Average utilitarian	Difference
Trust in mayor	Minimum (0): No trust at all Maximum (3): Complete trust	1.45	1.19	0.26***
Mayor acted correctly	Minimum (0): No Maximum (1): Yes	0.46	0.47	0.01
Evaluation mayor's decision	Minimum (0): Extremely bad Maximum (10): Extremely good	4.84	4.39	0.45*

Note: N = 709. Statistical significance of differences (t-tests, two tailed) *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Figure 1: Proportion of respondents who believe the mayor is rational and ethical by treatment
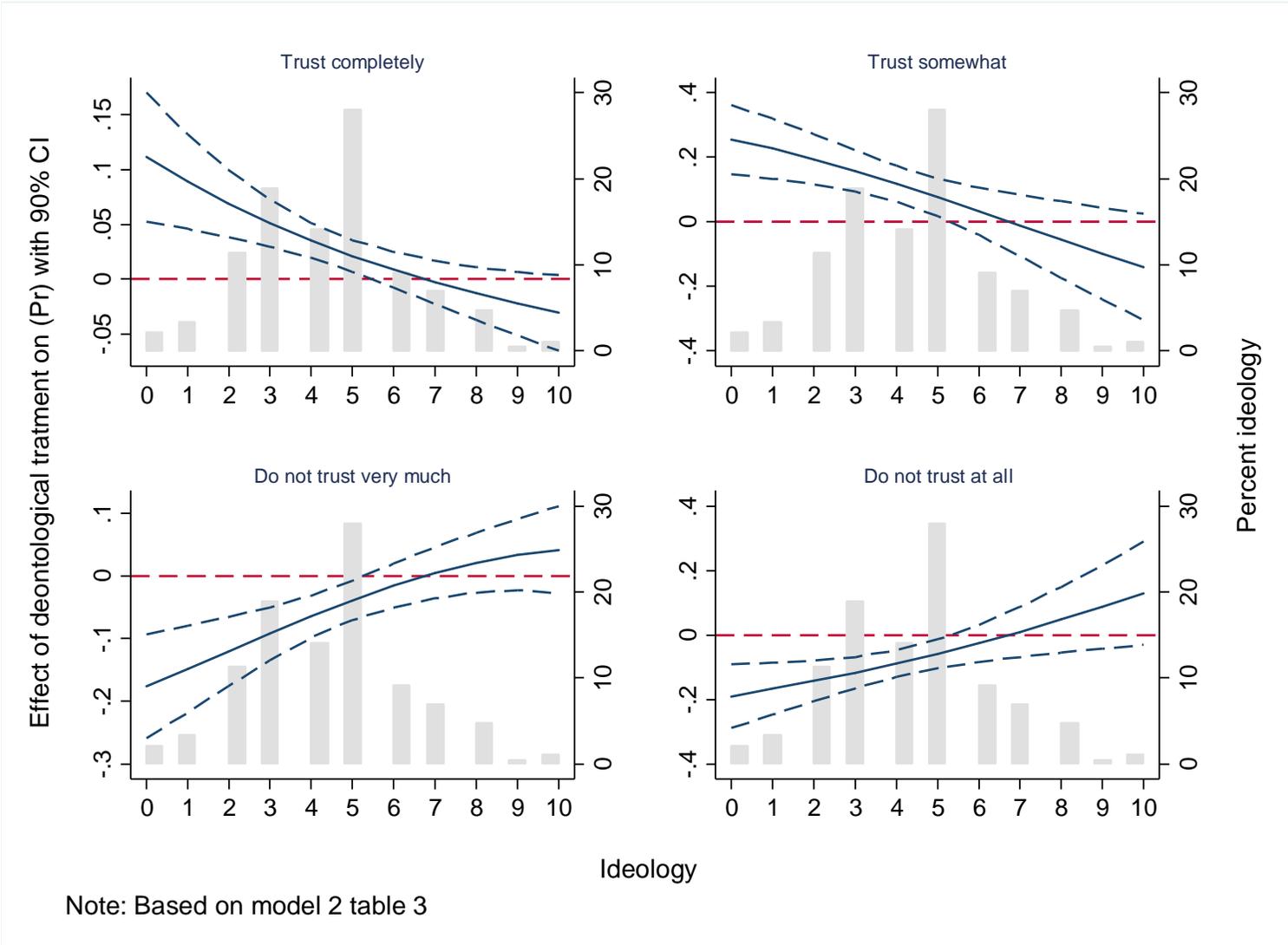

Note: 95% confidence intervals around the mean

Table 3: Multivariate analysis

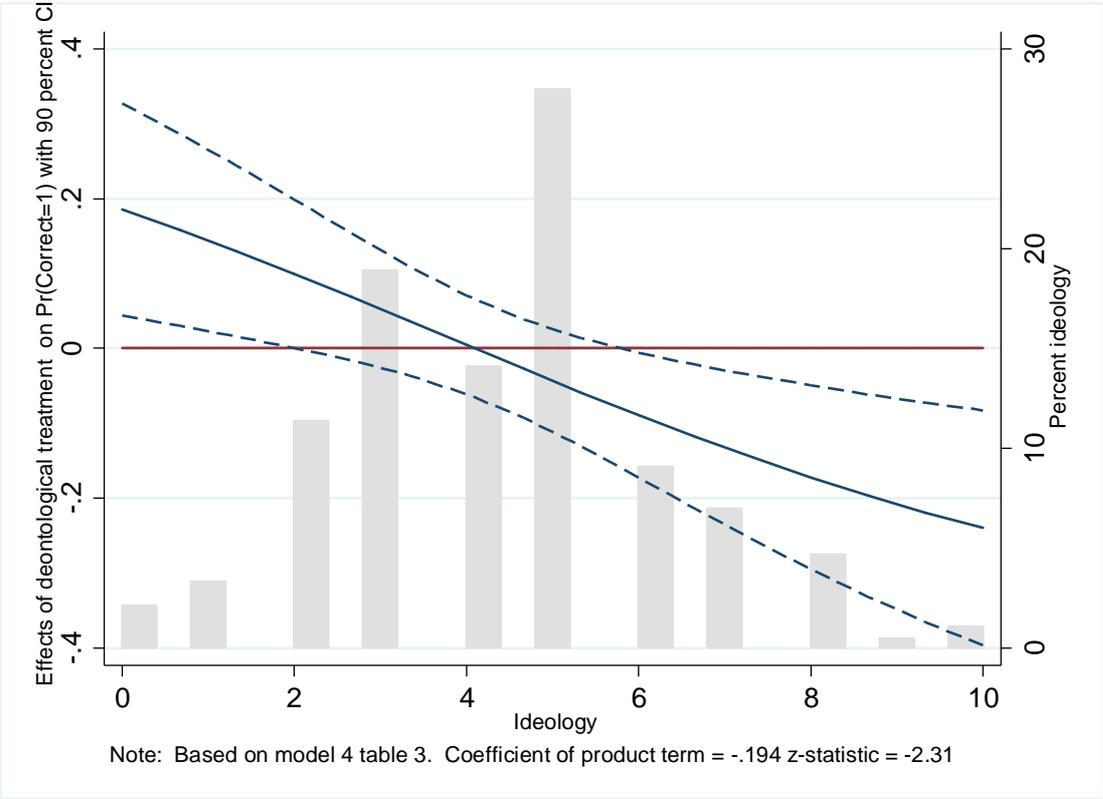| VARIABLES	(1) Trust	(2) Trust	(3) Acted correctly	(4) Acted correctly	(5) Evaluation decision	(6) Evaluation decision
Deontological treatment	0.553***	1.543***	-0.043	0.796**	0.480**	1.930***
	(0.146)	(0.365)	(0.158)	(0.396)	(0.224)	(0.551)
Ideology	-0.052	0.056	-0.104**	-0.014	-0.083	0.077
	(0.040)	(0.054)	(0.043)	(0.058)	(0.061)	(0.082)
Deontological treatment*Ideology		-0.229***		-0.194**		-0.334***
		(0.077)		(0.084)		(0.116)
Sociodemographic and attitudinal controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constant cut 1	-1.540***	-1.086***				
	(0.375)	(0.402)				
Constant cut 2	0.231	0.700*				
	(0.370)	(0.400)				
Constant cut 3	2.783***	3.277***				
	(0.397)	(0.429)				
Constant			-0.172	-0.572	4.191***	3.485***
			(0.401)	(0.437)	(0.567)	(0.615)
Observations	661	661	661	661	661	661

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

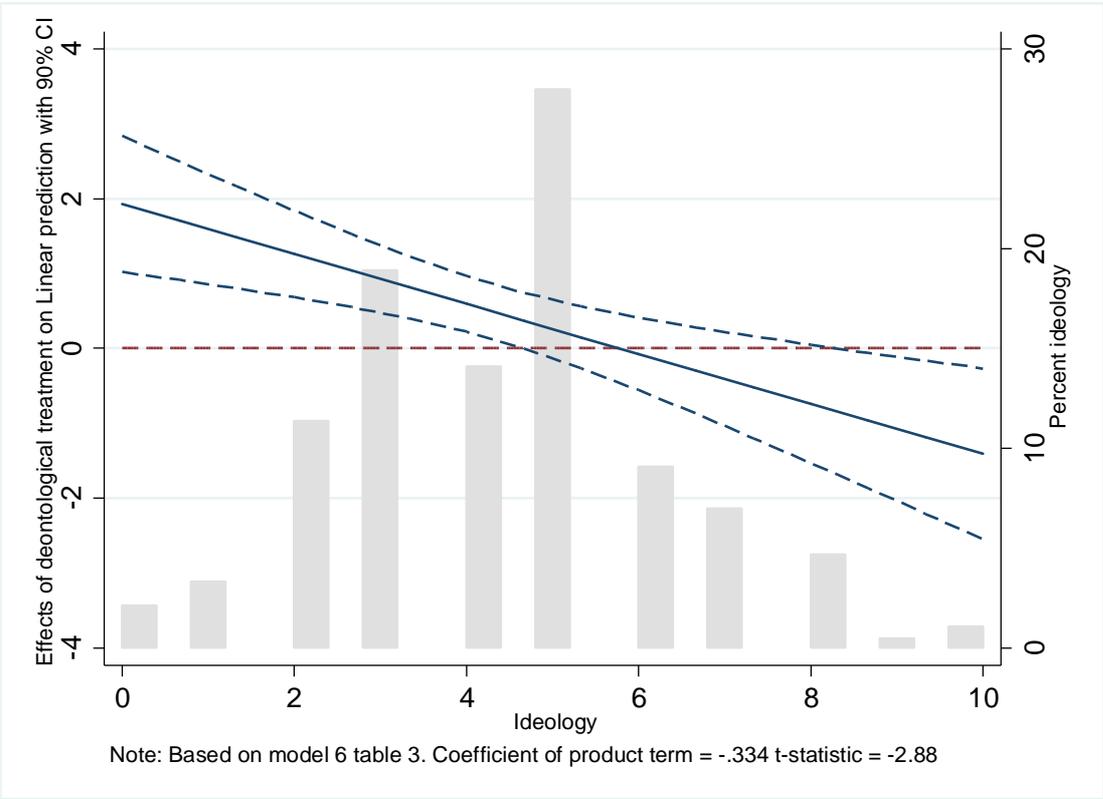Note: Models 1 and 2 ordered logistic regression; models 3 and 4 logistic regression; models 5 and 6 OLS regression

Figure 2: Average marginal effect of deontological treatment on trust in the mayor across the left-right ideology scale

Note: Based on model 2 table 3

Figure 3: Average marginal effect of deontological treatment on the probability of considering that the mayor acted correctly across the left-right ideology scale

Note: Based on model 4 table 3. Coefficient of product term = -.194 z-statistic = -2.31

Figure 4: Effect of deontological treatment on the evaluation of the mayor's decision across the left-right ideology scale

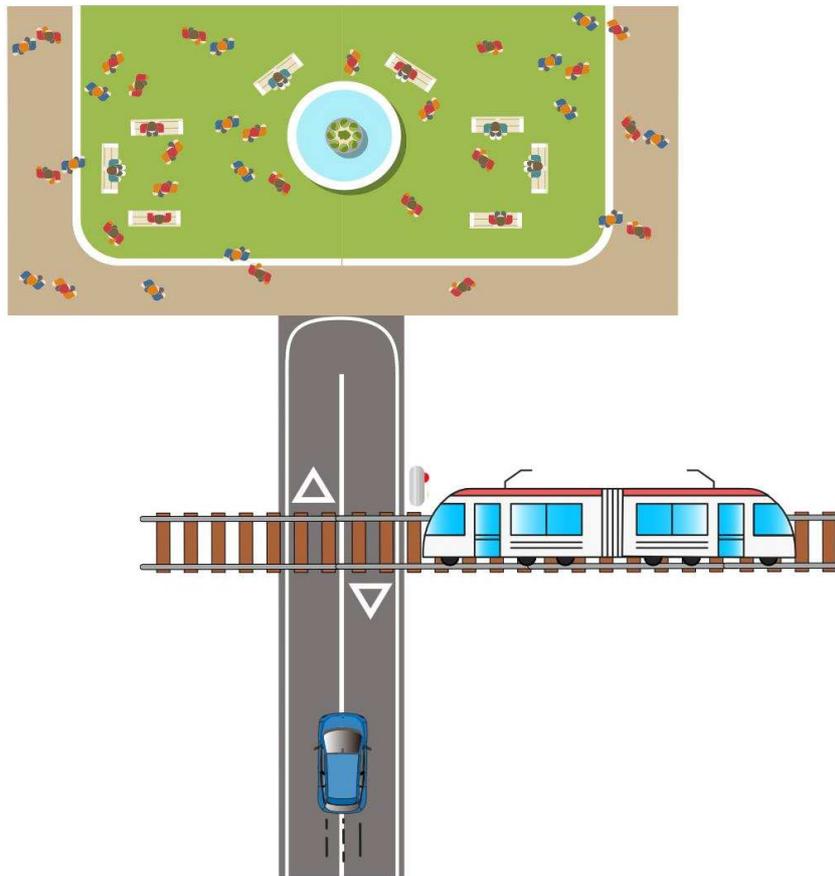Note: Based on model 6 table 3. Coefficient of product term = -.334 t-statistic = -2.88

Original treatment materials and wording

Deontological treatment vignette

Ahora lee con atención la siguiente situación hipotética, después te haremos algunas preguntas sobre ella
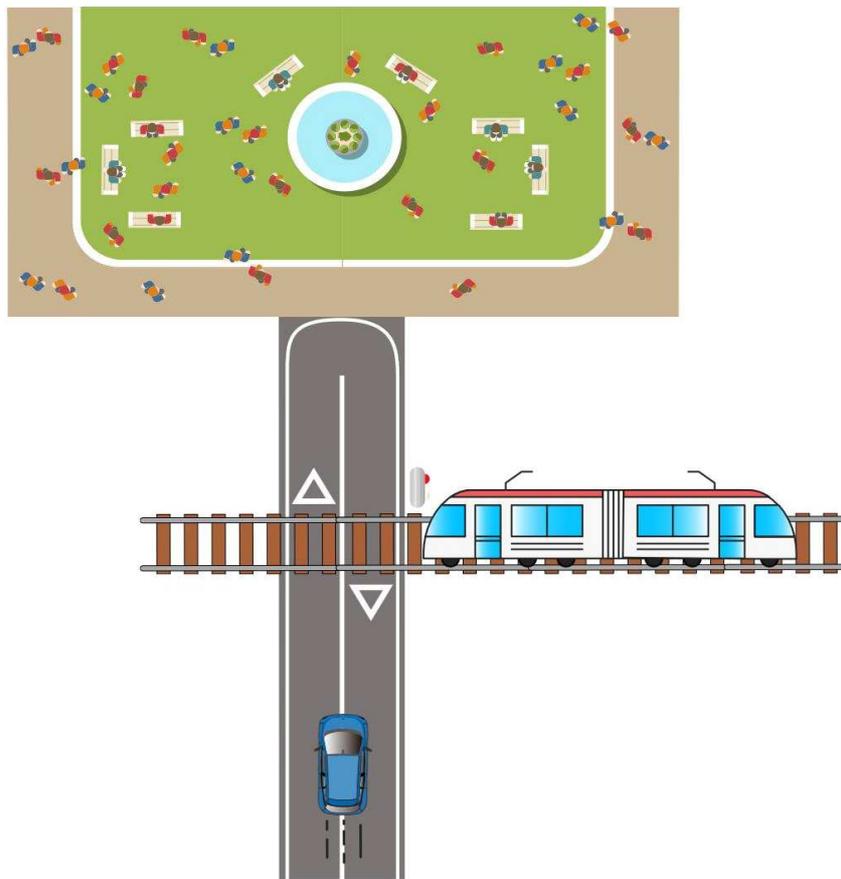
Un coche bomba se dirige hacia la plaza de una ciudad. El coche explotará al llegar a la plaza y las 50 personas que se encuentran allí morirán. La única forma de evitar el atentado es bloquear la calle que lleva a la plaza con un tranvía. Como muestra la imagen, el tranvía está detenido en una intersección entre la vía del tranvía y la calle que lleva a la plaza. El alcalde de la ciudad puede ordenar que el tranvía cruce la intersección justo antes de la llegada del coche bomba. Si da esta orden, el coche bomba chocará con el tranvía y se detendrá. Sin embargo, a consecuencia de la colisión los 10 pasajeros del tranvía morirán. El alcalde rechaza ordenar que el tranvía cruce la intersección antes de la llegada del coche bomba argumentado que "sacrificar a 10 personas inocentes está mal, incluso si con ello se logra salvar a otras 50 personas inocentes"

Utilitarian treatment vignette

Ahora lee con atención la siguiente situación hipotética, después te haremos algunas preguntas sobre ella

Un coche bomba se dirige hacia la plaza de una ciudad. El coche explotará al llegar a la plaza y las 50 personas que se encuentran allí morirán. La única forma de evitar el atentado es bloquear la calle que lleva a la plaza con un tranvía. Como muestra la imagen, el tranvía está detenido en una intersección entre la vía del tranvía y la calle que lleva a la plaza. El alcalde de la ciudad puede ordenar que el tranvía cruce la intersección justo antes de la llegada del coche bomba. Si da esta orden, el coche bomba chocará con el tranvía y se detendrá. Sin embargo, a consecuencia de la colisión los 10 pasajeros del tranvía morirán. El alcalde ordena que el tranvía cruce la intersección antes de la llegada del coche bomba argumentado que "es mejor salvar a 50 personas inocentes, incluso si para ello es necesario sacrificar a otras 10 personas inocentes"

Question wording and operationalization of variables

Variable	Wording / Coding
Dependent variables	

- Trust in mayor	- El alcalde descrito en el texto que acabas de leer, ¿te inspira personalmente, mucha confianza, bastante confianza, poca o ninguna confianza?
	    0. Ninguna confianza / Do not trust at all
	    1. Poca confianza / Do not trust very much
	    2. Bastante confianza / Trust somewhat
	    3. Mucha confianza / Trust completely

- Mayor acted correctly	- ¿Crees que el alcalde descrito en el texto ha actuado correctamente?
	    0. No / No
	    1. Sí / Yes

- Evaluation mayor's decision	- Ahora indica qué valoración te merece la actuación del alcalde. Puntúala de 0 a 10, sabiendo que 0 significa que la valoras "muy mal" y 10 que la valoras "muy bien". (0-10 response scale with 0 meaning that the respondent thinks the mayor decision was extremely bad and 10 meaning that the respondent thinks the mayor decision was extremely good)

- Mayor is rational	A continuación vas a leer una serie de expresiones que la gente puede usar para describir a un político. Indica si cada expresión describe "bastante bien" o "bastante mal" al alcalde del texto que acabas de leer. La expresión "es racional" describe al alcalde
	    0. Bastante mal / Not too well
	    1. Bastante bien / Quite well

- Mayor is ethical	A continuación vas a leer una serie de expresiones que la gente puede usar para describir a un político. Indica si cada expresión describe "bastante bien" o "bastante mal" al alcalde del texto que acabas de leer. La expresión "es ético" describe al alcalde
	    0. Bastante mal / Not too well
	    1. Bastante bien / Quite well

Independent variables	
- Deontological treatment	- Variable that takes the value 1 for those exposed to the deontological treatment and the value 0 for those exposed to the utilitarian treatment
- Ideology	- Cuando se habla de política se utilizan normalmente las expresiones izquierda y derecha. ¿Podrías indicar, por favor, donde te colocarías en una escala de 0 a 10, en la que el 0 significa "extrema izquierda" y el 10 "extrema derecha"? 0-10 response scale with 0 indicating extreme left and 10 indicating extreme right
- Education	Coded 0 for those with primary education or less, 1 for those with secondary education, and 2 for those with some university education
- Gender	- Coded 0 for men and 1 for women
- Age	- Age in years
- External political efficacy	- ¿En qué medida dirías que a los políticos les importa lo que piensan las personas como tú? 0-10 response scale with 0 indicating that politicians do not care at all about what people like me think and 10 indicating that politicians completely care about what people like me think