Reviewer’s report

Title: Is the non-identity problem relevant to public health and policy? An online survey

Version: 0 Date: 16 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Rebecca Bennett

Reviewer's report:

This is a really interesting survey of opinion around the Non-Identity Problem. The actual survey seems fine. However a few improvements are need to how the survey is introduced and explained for clarity and accuracy.

1. Title. It is admitted in the paper that this is not really a representative survey of the 'general public' given that this is a highly educated group with high levels of engagement in philosophy and even in this area of philosophy. Thus using the term 'general public' in the title is misleading. The title of this paper should be adjusted to show this.

2. You need to be careful that you explain terms accurately and clearly in the paper:

In the abstract and in the paper you talk about 'non-counterfactual views of harm'. This needs to be explained to make sense to the non-specialist reader.

The most fundament issue in this paper is the Non-Identity Problem and it is currently not explained accurately in the paper. This does not seem to be a problem for the survey as examples are used rather than an explanation but it is important for this paper and for this journal's audience that the Non-Identify Problem is clearly and accurately explained. This needs another look

Similarly you must explain early on what you mean by 'impersonal'.

It also seems important to given the context of this paper to explain briefly what the disagreement is in this debate and to provide some references on each side so that the interested reader can explore this debate.

It is important that when you introduce a term or a example you explain it at this point. While the 14 year old girl example is explained later it is mentioned on p.8 but not explained at this point.

On p.26 you mention 'procreative beneficence' but no where I noticed was this explained or referenced.
3. On p. 8 you say that where this disagreement exists we should take public opinion - this is one argument but not necessarily one that is obvious here. Can you refer to a paper that argues this to give this a bit more weight and/or give a reason why we should do this to be a bit more convincing?

4. It is good that you identify the limitations of the survey. These could be made clearer in the abstract but that's not too much of a problem if the title is tweaked as mentioned in 1) above. However, it is also important to point out that other concerns about harm may have influenced the answers here - for instance with the 14 year old girl we would definitely worry about harm to that girl of having a child so young. So there are issues outside the welfare of any child born that will influence answers here.

5. P.29 It is stated that 'This survey suggests that the mainstream philosophical views of harm and blame are at odds......' If you want to claim that this is the 'mainstream' view then you need to reference this as a) you need to attribute this literature so that it is clear what you mean by this and b) you should also show that there are many opposing views to this so-called 'mainstream' view.

Because of time constraints I have not looked at the Annex information in any detail.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript
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