



## IMPACT OF HUMAN LIKENESS ON ETHICAL DECISION MAKING ABOUT MEDICAL DILEMMAS

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### Abstract:

ix ABSTRACT Joseph A. Coram IMPACT OF HUMAN LIKENESS ON ETHICAL DECISION MAKING ABOUT MEDICAL DILEMMAS Humans are often represented in computer interfaces as graphical characters. These characters, or embodied agents, are used to increase people' s comfort level and humanize the interaction. While the impact of these characters has been studied in various ways, their influence on the ability of humans to make decisions of ethical consequence has yet to be explored. Interface designers have to make decisions in the design process that greatly influence how people interact with a system. If a seemingly insignificant design decision could have a significant impact on how a human reacts to the system, then that warrants exploration. This study presents online participants with an ethical dilemma delivered by a female conversational character, and explores the differences in decisions made based on the motion quality and human likeness of the character. In the five conditions, which vary in motion quality and human likeness, participants showed no significant difference in the ethical decision. However, the data indicated that male participants were significantly more likely to rule against the character when the motion quality was jerky or the visual appearance of the character was represented by a computer generated character instead of a real woman. These findings extend previous work on interpersonal judgment, indicating that a virtual person' s appearance can influence supposedly impartial ethical decisions.

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