

Questionnaire on “Sensitive Markets”

M1 Class in Markets and Organizations

September 2013

This questionnaire is designed to record how you feel about the legality and the morality of certain kinds of market transactions. Each kind has at some time or other been considered to pose problems of ethics or public policy even when the transaction is willingly undertaken between consenting adults.

Of each kind of transaction, which consists of either buying or selling a certain kind of object or activity, you will be asked

- 1) whether you think it should be illegal for consenting adults to undertake it,
- 2) whether you consider it morally blameworthy for them to do so,
- 3) whether you personally would feel uncomfortable undertaking it, and
- 4) whether you think there is nothing at all wrong with undertaking it.

Please place a Y for “Yes” or a N for “No” next to the transaction in each of the four columns on the next page, in accordance with what you personally believe.

Please note that you should assume of all transactions that they are conducted only by adults exercising informed consent, and (if appropriate) that they are optimally regulated in whatever way you believe appropriate (eg that medical procedures are conducted by qualified medical practitioners in hygienic conditions and with appropriate standards of post-operative care).

Feel free to ask any questions. Do not turn over the questionnaire until asked to do so.

Object or Activity	Illegal?	Immoral?	Uncomfortable?	Nothing wrong?
Answer Y/N in all columns Paying for:				
A sympathetic listener to your personal problems				
Blood for transfusion				
A kidney for transplant				
Sexual intercourse				
Marijuana				
Fast-track access to a cancer specialist				
The right to vote in a national election				
Cocaine				
A handgun				
Extra tuition by a teacher at a public school				
An assault rifle				
Better grades in the end-of-course exam				
A surrogate mother to bear your child in her womb				
A painless and reliable means of committing suicide				
Being paid for:				
Listening sympathetically to personal problems				
Blood for transfusion				
A kidney for transplant				
Sexual intercourse				
Marijuana				
Fast-track access to a cancer specialist				
The right to vote in a national election				
Cocaine				
A handgun				
Extra tuition by a teacher at a public school				
An assault rifle				
Better grades in the end-of-course exam				
Bearing a child on behalf of another couple				
A painless and reliable means of committing suicide				

Results of the questionnaire:

A total of 98 individuals responded anonymously to the questionnaire in class on 11th September 2013. They were asked to provide their country of origin but told that they could leave this blank if they preferred. The following are the absolute numbers writing “Yes” under the various headings of the questionnaire. Since 98 responded in total and there were not many blank responses, these are close to being percentages.

Mode: Buy/sell:	Illegal Buy	Illegal Sell	Immoral Buy	Immoral Sell	Uncomfortable Buy	Uncomfortable Sell
Transaction:						
Listen	4	4	9	14	52	52
Blood	35	29	46	46	40	52
Kidney	45	45	47	51	54	70
Sex	32	39	59	56	81	82
Marijuana	47	48	20	47	37	48
Cancer	44	45	59	66	62	70
Vote	84	79	75	77	72	78
Cocaine	87	81	47	67	60	69
Handgun	65	67	49	59	68	64
Tuition	27	24	38	33	46	39
Rifle	79	72	66	66	75	72
Grades	81	76	89	86	85	77
Surrogate	27	23	44	39	66	63
Suicide	37	41	41	53	67	72

Some observations:

- 1) Most items have scores rising from left to right, except drugs and guns which, interestingly, have substantially fewer people believing it is immoral to buy them than think it should be illegal to buy them.
- 2) Drugs and (to a lesser extent) handguns also display a striking difference between the perceived immorality of buying and selling, with respondents disapproving much less of buyers than of sellers.
- 3) In most other cases there is not much systematic difference between responses about buying and those about selling, at least as far as illegality and immorality are concerned. But people tend to feel more uncomfortable about selling than about buying.
- 4) Trade in sex makes people feel very uncomfortable – more than anything else, except buying grades.
- 5) Trade in votes and trade in grades provoke the most consistently negative scores across modes.

There were some interesting national differences (not in the table). Most nationalities were too small in number to be a representative sample, but there were 42 French respondents and 12 Germans:

On whether it is immoral to buy sexual services, 30 out of 42 French respondents say “yes” but only 2 out of 12 Germans (though 11 out of 12 are “uncomfortable” with the idea).

On whether the sale of handguns should be illegal, only 25 out of 40 French respondents say “yes” (2 blank responses) but 11 out of 12 Germans.

On whether the sale of surrogacy services should be illegal, 16 out of 38 French respondents say “yes” (4 blanks) but only 1 out of 12 Germans.