Proposal for the AME – 2003 Conference in Krakow, Poland

PART ONE

1. **Title:** Moral Judgement Test Extended (MJT-xt): Validation of a new dilemma and comparison between answers given to Euthanasia Dilemma (MJT) and Judge Dilemma (MJT-xt).

2. **Preferred formats for the presentation (3 in order of preference):** poster symposium, paper symposium, paper presentation.

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5. **Abstract:**

   The Moral Judgement Test (MJT, Lind) as a moral competence measure, has been widely used in many different countries. It is composed of two dilemmas: the Worker’s and the Euthanasia dilemma. Recent studies conducted in Brazil by Bataglia (1998, 2001) and Agati & Lind (2001) showed particular characteristics so far not observed in the previous studies in Europe and North America. Both dilemmas, which are supposed to be equivalent in the measure of the moral competence, appear to trigger a different phenomenon in the Brazilian sample: the subjects, university students, presented much lower scores in the Euthanasia dilemma, when compared to the Worker’s one (moral segmentation phenomenon). **Goal:** We are interested now in investigating whether the use of another dilemma would lead to different results. In order to test this hypothesis, we propose a variation of the MJT test which is called Moral Judgement Test-Extended (MJT-xt). **Methodology:** 1) conduction of a validation study with a new dilemma - “The Judge decision”- MJT-xt) and 2) comparison between answers to both versions of the MJT. The validation process and the results from the comparison between MJT and MJT-xt administration to a sample of university students are described and discussed.
6. Media Needs: overhead projector

PART TWO

1. Summary:
The studies on moral competence in Brazil conducted by Bataglia (1998, 2001) and Agati & Lind (2001) presented an interesting phenomenon, i.e. subjects showed much higher level of moral competence in the Mercy Killing dilemmas of the Moral Judgment Test (MJT) than in the Workers dilemma. Such a phenomenon was also observed by Moreno (2000) in Mexico, but was not reported in years of previous studies with other cultures, yet found in studies of soldiers (Krämer-Badonin & Wakenhut, 1985), who reasoned on a lower level in military dilemmas than in civilian dilemmas. We were lead then to closely investigate those characteristics. Our first hypothesis, which was tested in our previous studies in Brazil, that lower scores and moral-segmentation would be related to lower quality of education showed not to be consistent (Agati & Lind, 2001).

Lind (2000) hypothesized that "religious oriented subjects suppress their autonomous moral judgment" when facing dilemmas with strong religious contents (Jensen, 1997; Rest et al., 1999), especially when these subjects bond with denominations that have a strong opinion on the issue of mercy killing. We tested this hypothesis in a study with a Brazilian. The MJT C-scores from subjects that show no commitment to religion were compared to those of subjects that report a strong commitment and involvement to religion. The results showed that there was no relation between commitment to religions and moral judgment competence. The phenomenon of moral segmentation persisted in both samples: religious and non religious (Bataglia, Schillinger-Agati et alii, 2002).

We considered two explanations: either is the moral thinking of the “non-religious” Brazilian subjects still more religious and denomination-ruled than that of European subjects, or as Bataglia (2001) suggests, specific cultural values in Latin-America rather than religious commitment explains this phenomenon. The values involved in the mercy killing dilemma like life, human dignity and law may be interpreted differently in Latin-America thus restrain the development of an autonomous moral judgment competence.

To test Bataglia’s (2001) hypotheses we introduced a new dilemma into the MJT involving the same moral values (life, law, human dignity) as the mercy killing dilemma, but does not relate to a strong opinion of the denomination to which the subjects belong (e.g. the Roman Catholic church). As a first step we have constructed and validated such a dilemma in order to be able to compare the level of moral judgment competence exhibited in both dilemmas. The hypothesis would be supported if the C-score on this dilemma was higher than the C-score in the Mercy Killing dilemma and at least as high as in the Workers dilemma.

The new dilemma, the “Judge’s Decision,” is about the issue of torture. It also involves the values life, human dignity and law, and thus, demands the highest level of moral reasoning, as does the Euthanasia dilemma. Dilemmas which involve moral values of life and human dignity require moral orientations on Kohlberg’s level six (Lind, 2002). Torture is an issue well known in Brazil in a context of military government and terrorism has been very much discussed especially after September 11th. The Judge dilemma (Lind, 2002) is used as follows:

Judge Decision
The secret service of a country in Europe has evidence that a terrorist group is planning a bomb attack on a much used bus for the next day. They intend to kill two hundred people. The group is known for its cruelty and uncompromising policy. The secret service gets hold of a woman who is considered to be one of the top-leaders of the terrorist group. There is evidence that the woman participated in the planning of that attack. The police believe they could prevent the attack if they could make the woman speak. They interview the woman for quite some time. However, the woman totally refuses to cooperate. The secret service fears that the woman would not speak before it was too late to prevent the attack. Therefore, they ask the investigating judge to allow them to torture to make the woman speak about the plans of her group. In this country, torture is not allowed by law. In spite of this, the judge gives permission to torture in order to prevent the bomb attack and to save the lives of many people.

Methodology:

Answers from 40 subjects about this dilemma are collected. The subjects have to reply to the following questions: How do you feel about judge’s decision? Was it right or wrong? What are the reasons for your opinion about the decision of the judge? [Was this an open interview or the MJT-ex?]

The sample was composed of 10 university-level students, 10 secondary-level students, 10 adults with from 5 to eight years of study and 10 adults with until four years of study. From those answers, 6 arguments pro judge decision and 6 arguments con judge decision are elaborated.

The responses were rigorously analyzed for theoretical validity using three criteria derived from the cognitive-developmental theory (Lind, 2002):

1. “The order of preferences: In a truly moral dilemma, subjects should prefer the stages of moral reasoning in the order of their number, with highest preference for stage six-reasoning and lowest preference for stage one-reasoning.

2. Quasi-simplex structure: The correlation between the preferences of neighboring stages (like four and five) should be higher than the correlation between more distant stages (like four and six). On other words, in the correlation matrix of all stages, the coefficients should decrease monotonously from the diagonal toward the corners of the matrix.

3. Cognitive-affective parallelism: If subjects present their own moral attitudes (rather than faked or socially desired attitudes), these scores should be systematically correlated with their moral competence score, with high negative correlations between the C-score on the one hand, and attitude scores for stages 1 and 2, on the other, and moderate correlations between C and attitudes to stages 3 and 4, and substantial positive correlations between C and attitudes to stages 5 and 6.”

When this analysis revealed lack of validity of certain items, these items were revised and the test was submitted again to a validity study of the newly developed dilemma using a validation sample of at least 60 university students.
Finally we conducted the study to investigate our hypothesis: whether the segmentation phenomenon would also persist in the new dilemma, which was not related to strong opinion of the subjects’ denominations but to the cultural values of their society (Brazil). We computed the MJT’s C-score separately for the workers’ dilemma and the judge’s dilemma. The results will be presented.

2. **Primary discipline:** psychology

3. **Age-level focus:** adults

4. **Three keywords:** moral competence, MJT validation and dilemmas

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