Validating the new ‘Judge’s Dilemma’ and comparing C-Scores with the Standard MJT (Workers and Mercy Killing Dilemma)

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Introduction

- The Moral Judgement Test (MJT, Lind, 2002a, 2002b) as a moral competence measure, has been widely used in many different countries. It is composed of two dilemmas: the Worker’s and the Mercy Killing dilemma. Both dilemmas are supposed to elicit moral judgment competence in the same way, with the mercy killing dilemma being a bit more demanding. Indeed, studies in different European countries supported this: usually the C-score in the latter dilemma is slightly higher and stage 6 is preferred more clearly over stage 5 reasoning than in the workers dilemma.

- Recent studies conducted in Brazil by Bataglia (1998, 2001, 2002) and Schillinger-Agati & Lind (2001, 2003) and studies in Mexico (Moreno et al., 2000) showed that subjects reveal a considerably lower moral judgment competence in the mercy killing dilemma than in the workers dilemma. We call this phenomenon “moral segmentation.” Subjects seem to refuse to think about mercy killing (Lind, 2000).
Objectives

- To investigate the segmentation phenomenon in Brazil using an new dilemma, “Judge Steinberg’s Dilemma” (see appendix) which involved similar moral principles but did not raise an issue that was tabooed by Christian churches like the mercy killing dilemma.

- To test the validity of the new dilemma according to the three rigorous validity criteria set forth by Lind (2002a) in order to extend the Moral Judgment Test (MJT xt).
Methodology

✓ Subjects: 60 students in Brazil from university level (N=20), 10th grade (N=20) and 6th grade (N=20).

✓ Material: Judge Steinberg´s Dilemma with 6 arguments pro and 6 against the judge´s decision.

✓ Procedure:
✓ Analysis of the new subtest’s validity regarding the three validity criteria.
✓ Calculation of difference C-scores as indicators for segmentation.
Results
A. Validity Analysis

✓ The three graphics below show that the new subtest “Judge Steinberg” agrees well with the three validity criteria, yet not perfectly: levels 2 and 3 deviate are inverted.

✓ In meantime, we have identified some items as possible “culprits” and have revised them to better conform with the validity criteria.

✓ The revised subtest will again be submitted to the same rigorous test before it will be certified as valid.
Three Validity Criteria

1. **Stage order of moral reasoning preferences**: 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 (ex. four and five) should be higher than the correlation between more distant stages (ex. four and six).

3. **Cognitive-affective parallelism**: these scores should be systematically correlated with their moral competence score: high negative correlations between the C-score on one hand and attitude scores for stages 1 and 2 on the other; moderate correlations between C-score and attitudes to stages 3 and 4, and substantial positive correlations between C-score and attitudes to stages 5 and 6.
1. Preference Order

Preference Order
STAGE Haupeffekt
F(5,295)=35.50; p<.0000, Bataglia-2003b
2. Quasi-simplex Structure
3. Cognitive-Affective Parallelism
By “moral segmentation” we mean that, in regard to a particular moral dilemma, a person reasons on lower level of moral development than he or she does in another one.

An index of segmentation, we use the difference between the scores in the workers’ dilemma and the doctor’s dilemma. A negative difference score means strong segmentation; a positive difference score means “pronunciation” because dilemmas like “Doctor” and “Judge” should “pull” higher moral judgment competence than the workers’ dilemma.
Analysis of Segmentation II

While in European studies no segmentation was found, all our studies in Brazil showed segmentation, increasing in size from 6th and 10th grade to university level (see figure below).

With the new Judge’s dilemma, involving similar moral principle as the doctor dilemma yet dealing with the issue of torture rather than mercy killing, the segmentation phenomenon did not occur (see figure below).
by Level of Education

Source: Studies by Patricia Bataglia, Marcia Agati and Georg Lind.
Judge Steinberg’s Dilemma

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.
Pro Arguments
(new version)

✓ **Stage 1** – The judge has authority to decide and does not need to worry about future consequences;
✓ **Stage 2** – The judge is right because this is the best way to prevent the onslaught;
✓ **Stage 3** – The judge would have the approval of his peers;
✓ **Stage 4** – In such a extreme situation, the right of the victims weigh more than the rigths of the suspect;
✓ **Stage 5** – The judge, as a member, of justice, has the obligation of saving lifes;
✓ **Stage 6** – The judge must do what his conscience says. Saving victims life´s justifies an exception to the moral obligation of respecting life in general.
✓ (In the test, these items are presented in a random order.)
Contra Arguments
(new version)

- **Stage 1** – The judge should not have permitted the torture because he might get punished by his superiors;
- **Stage 2** – The judge would be risking his own reputation;
- **Stage 3** – He acted against his peers convictions and could lose the respect of them;
- **Stage 4** – Every judge must respect the law and torture is against the law;
- **Stage 5** – The torture disrespects the suspect’s rights and everybody has the same rights;
- **Stage 6** – The human life must be the highest moral value. The human life cannot be used as a mean to get to an end. It must be an end in itself.
References


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